METHODOLOGIES IN PEACE RESEARCH

A conference exploring methodological, empirical and ethical aspects of research into peace, conflict and division

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METHODOLOGIES IN PEACE RESEARCH

A conference exploring methodological, empirical and ethical aspects of research into peace, conflict and division

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Methodologies in Peace Research

The conference *Methodologies in Peace Research* was organised in Tromsø from 21 to 23 March 2007 in cooperation between Centre for Peace Studies (CPS), University of Tromsø, Norway and Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), University of Tampere, Finland. The conference addressed the critical and timely issue of research methodologies in peace and conflict studies, including empirical and ethical aspects of research into peace, conflict and division, widely defined.

Despite the substantial body of literature on research methods and the high level of interest and activity in peace research, little attention has been explicitly devoted to research methodologies in peace research. There are relatively few easily accessible or available academic works, journal articles or textbooks which deal specifically with the methodological, empirical, ethical and safety-related challenges of carrying out research into areas of tension and stress or into post-conflict and divided societies.

A key objective of the conference was thus to explore methodologies in the context of actual research projects from a range of substantive topics. The conference discussed the possibility of an overarching approach to peace research which may transcend fixed disciplinary thinking. The linking of methodology to peace research provided a meaningful opportunity for reflecting on important and relevant issues encountered during the entire research process, from outset to completion. These lines of discussion were sorted under three main headings:

- Methodological issues
- Ethical dimensions of peace research
- Research in dangerous places

The conference had 35 participants and presented two keynote speakers – Stein Tønnesson and Dermot Feenan (ref. the conference programme on the next page). 21 papers were presented and discussed, out of which 18 are included in this volume. As most papers refer to ongoing work, the reader is advised to contact the author in question for possibly revised versions or updates if s/he wishes to quote from any of the contributions (the author's email address is included in the footer on the first page of each paper).

*Tromsø, November 2007*

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*) Lorna Tycho stup was in the end not able to attend the conference, but we are grateful to her for allowing us to publish her contribution as part of this volume of working papers.
From Peace Research to Peace Science: Relating Theory to Ethical Dilemmas by Researching Violent Conflicts

Marcel M. Baumann

Abstract

Many peace researchers are fascinated by violent confrontations or conflicts around the globe. This fascination led peace “scientists” to the desire to study the “normal” daily lives of people in violent conflicts, i.e., in “abnormal” situations. A massive trend towards empirical social research, field studies, and field observations followed. Theories were formulated, conflict transformation processes designed, and conflict resolution handbooks published. Out of this fascination and the practical consequences for research agendas, a new scientific debate is presently developing: Are there or should there be certain moral constraints or ethical barriers to empirical social research, being carried out in the midst of violent conflicts? This paper tries to elaborate on this question. Reflecting on my own research in Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Macedonia, I want to make the argument for a need of common basic ethical principles for the conduct of research in conflict-ripened societies. Peace science is not about pacification, nor co-optation, but a radical challenge to the status quo — a constant “trouble making” exercise. I once heard a nice description from an American friend who defined a peace scientist as a natural “troubblemaker”.

1. Introduction

We [in Northern Ireland] became the spoiled white children of Europe and the world has been fascinated about us. (Derick Wilson, 2000; interview with the author)

Many peace researchers are fascinated by violent confrontations or conflicts around the globe. This fascination led peace “scientists” to the desire to study the “normal” daily lives of people in violent conflicts, i.e., in “abnormal” situations. A massive trend towards empirical social research, field studies, and field observations followed. Theories were formulated, conflict transformation processes designed, and conflict resolution handbooks published.

Out of this fascination and the practical consequences for research agendas, a new scientific debate is presently developing: Are there or should there be certain moral constraints or ethical barriers to empirical social research, being carried out in the midst of violent conflicts? This paper tries to elaborate on this question.

The following anecdote can be used to understand the ethical dilemmas and moral problems arising during field research: A professor from the University of Michigan came to Northern Ireland because she wanted to research the “daily lives” and circumstances of Protestant youth living in a small enclave. She produced a questionnaire and asked the young people to complete it. There were two questions included, which give rise to moral sorrows and ethical questions:

- Do you hate Catholics? □ Yes or □ No
- How much do you hate Catholics? Please rate from 1 (no hate) to 10 (very much).

When I first arrived in Belfast, I was confronted with this story by Peter Scott and Joe Law, who are both activists with an NGO called “Trademark” that is working with young Protestants. Peter and Joe made it absolutely clear to me that they will not support such research activities any more. And they are right: Not only are they counter-productive to the cause of NGOs like Trademark — with the aim of moving young Protestants away from...
sectarianism — also, the scientific norms of peace studies as a “peace science” as will be explained in this paper are incompatible with the approach taken by the Michigan professor.

2. Unhappy?
2.1. A Critical “State of the Art”

“Unhappy” — this was the simple conclusion of Ekkehart Krippendorff, when he gave his farewell lecture in 1999. What led Ekkehart, who was one of the founding fathers of peace studies in Germany in the 1960s, to this sad though simple conclusion after 40 years of “peace science”?

Beyond the fact that his retirement coincided with the Kosovo war and Germany’s first ever military engagement since the end of the Second World War, Ekkehart made no bones about his dismay regarding two facts: Firstly, the dominance of “realism” and realpolitik within the agendas of political science and international relations. Secondly and related to this first point, peace science has never been able to go beyond the disciplines of political science and international relations. It has always been governed or dominated by the methodologies of the two subjects.

In January 2007, Ekkehart issued a short statement together with Johan Galtung which was directed (as a letter) to the governing body of the “German Society for Peace and Conflict Research”: While iterating the “peace by peaceful means” doctrine in it, they made it absolutely clear that peace research becomes peace science when it acquires an applied and normative character. After the conflict has been diagnosed, peace science has to develop therapies to enable its peaceful resolution.

In the generation of such therapies, peace science relies by and large on qualitative research designs and principles. Qualitative research can be defined as science which does not use quantitative data or statistical methods to produce knowledge (the “Michigan professor’s approach”). Qualitative science has to be distinguished from natural science, e.g. physics or biology. The methodology used by natural scientists can be described as the isolation of processes or phenomena from their social contexts thereby generating “reproducible” results. The central research instrument is the experimental method. In other words: Science takes place within the isolated and artificially designed laboratory. The social contexts as well as any social interaction are excluded since they are deemed irrelevant for the natural science approach.

This exclusionary, isolationist approach cannot be a sensible way to conduct social science in general — least of all for peace science in particular, for that simple reason that the core subject of social science is the individual living and acting within a social environment. Both are interdependent and subject to each other. Whereas the natural science approach is focused on identifying rules that govern individual behavior, the social science approach aims to analyze and understand the motives that are the basis for any social interaction.

These general features of social science are highly relevant for conducting peace research in deeply divided societies and in violent contexts. There is, however, one additional point to be made: Peace research is by definition a normative science. Its normative character derives from the fact that peace science was originally developed as a science dedicated to “peace” as the ultimate value and goal. Finding ways to realize this value was meant to be its central scientific task. Thus, peace science has always been both a critical as well as an applied science. It was never a neutral or value-free academic discipline. A non-isolationist, socially defined, normative and applied “science of peace”, which aims to provide the affected community with “peace prescriptions”, will always be confronted with problems and

4 Krippendorff (1999).
5 Ibid.
6 The original German name is: “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung e.V.” (AFK). See the association’s webpage: http://www.afk-web.de (accessed: 19.03.2007).
7 This broad definition is used by: Strauss/ Corbin (1996: 3).
9 Ibid.: 14.
10 Ibid.
challenges, e.g. with ethical dilemmas. Put simply, one way of dealing with ethical barriers arising during field research on the ground is: Expect them to happen!

Peace science is not about pacification, nor co-optation, but a radical challenge to the status quo — a constant “trouble making” exercise. I once heard a nice description from an American friend who defined a peace scientist as a natural “troublemaker”. Coming back to Krippendorff’s unhappiness, I would argue that it is the peace scientist’s destiny to be unhappy since an appropriate definition of “peace scientists” is “natural troublemaker”.

With this characterization we could take the critical “state of the art” to another stage or level: The “peace medicine” that is required from the peace scientist (see the letter from Galtung and Krippendorff quoted above) also leads to a more general question: How should peace science deal with the future, or, to be more specific, what answers can peace science give to future threats, dangers, crises or fears?

Bernhard Moltmann, a peace scientist from Frankfurt who has been involved in peace research for 30 years, made a personal assessment that peace science has severe difficulties in dealing with the future: Reflecting on his own activities over the years he acknowledged that if peace scientists are asked for analysis, it is only after a conflict or war has already started or a dangerous crisis has developed. They are almost never consulted for recommendations that go beyond the management of the actual crisis situation. In other words: Peace science has failed to deliver a new notion of science which is directed towards the future and aimed at developing ideas, strategies and theories that can be applied to future threats or crisis scenarios.

Looking at it from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, peace science has still to take a final step: The main challenge is to seek profound answers to challenges and problems arising in the future, by allowing utopian thinking ahead of current trends. This means that knowledge should be produced which can be applied before new wars erupt and violence substitutes peaceful solutions. Ideally, peace science becomes a radical, challenging and non-conformist science and can therefore be defined as applied futurology — though not science fiction.

What is Peace Science?

A socially defined, ethically aware, normative and applied science. It aims at producing new knowledge which is prescriptive in character: peace medicine (Galtung). Through its linkage of theory and practice (practical research) the ideas and theories are relevant for the daily lives of the people that are studied.

Peace science is a radical challenge to the status quo, a trouble making activity. Its prescriptive character goes beyond the analysis (diagnosis) of current violent situations, war or crises, in that it tries to generate ideas and theories for use in the future. Thus, peace science is a critical and applied futurology.

2.2. „Being in the Middle by Being at the Edge“? Searching for the Natural Laboratory

In contrast to natural science approaches, empirical field studies do not pretend to simulate reality and generate laws therefrom. Peace science in violent societies cannot be reduced to a controlled arrangement nor can it use experimental manipulations of conditions. Rather, it tries to reach an emphatic understanding of the people affected by the situation: „Being in the middle by being at the edge“ could be an apt description of the conduct of field research. Therefore, it aims to analyze certain phenomena in their natural setting without attempting to manipulate any variables.

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11 Moltmann (2002: 357ff.).
12 The “scientific correctness” of natural science is usually traced back to its experimental method which is undertaken in the laboratory and produces scientifically “correct” results: the method uses a controlled arrangement and the manipulation of conditions in order to systematically observe particular phenomena with the intention of defining the influences and relationships which affect these phenomena.
13 This term was originally used as a brilliant description of the role of mediators from a Quaker perspective. See the title of the book by Williams/Williams (1994).
Violence is not a sociologically fragmented phenomenon that occurs “outside” the arena of everyday life for those affected. It is part and parcel of life for the millions of people who live under oppressive, repressive, or explosive politicomilitary conditions. If we are to understand peace and conflict, it is to the people themselves, to the social dynamics and cultural phenomena that inform them, that we must turn.  

An optimal way to do research in the midst of violent conflicts and deeply divided countries is to adopt a three-phase approach:

1. “helicopter perspective” (descriptive approach)
2. “natives’ perspective” or “indigenous perspective” (understanding and empathy)
3. back to the helicopter (self-reflection and critical analysis)

While the object, i.e. the phenomenon, is chosen, the researcher starts from an outsider-position: He looks at something he has gained some interest in and about which he wants to know and learn more. The aim is to accumulate or generate knowledge. After this process of identification and description, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon is sought. The most effective way is an ethnographic approach: field studies, observations and interviews.

However, Clifford Geertz — the most prominent protagonist of the Verstehen-approach — issued the helpful warning that the idea of doing field research to analyze people in their “natural laboratory” should not give rise to the assumption of ethnographic research being superior to other approaches. For their part, protagonists of the quantitative research approach like Gary King or Robert Keohane reject Geertz’s method and fundamentally dispute his scientific status in general:

If we could understand human behavior only through Verstehen, we would never be able to falsify our descriptive hypotheses or provide evidence for them beyond our experience. Our conclusions would never go beyond the status of untested hypotheses, and our interpretations would remain personal rather than scientific.

Against this criticism Stephen Ryan, a prominent peace researcher from the University of Ulster, defended Geertz’ Verstehen-approach and claimed that there is a significant lack of anthropological research regarding ethnopolitical conflicts. But Stephen also made two important reservations: First, he warned of the potential danger inherent in the fact that the search for empathy and understanding of the perceptions and motives behind acts of violence could lead to the justification of murder, human rights abuses, ethnic cleansings etc. Secondly, Stephen argues that anthropological approaches should not promote some kind of post-modern “hermeneutic egalitarianism” in the sense that any other methodologies or approaches become disqualified.

Taking these arguments for granted, the indigenous perspective is not sufficient either. We have to get back to the helicopter at some stage of the research process. Otherwise the danger of ethnographic seduction looms.

2.3. The Danger of Ethnographic Seduction

Ethnographic seduction is a complex dynamic of conscious moves and unconscious defenses that may arise in interviews with victims and perpetrators of violence, which undermines critical detachment.
Ethnographic seduction results from an intensive process of internalization by the researcher: Lengthy studies and intensive thinking can lead — though not necessarily — to an uncritical and non-reflexive self-identification with the subject. This self-identification becomes problematic or even dangerous, if it is accompanied by a loss of critical detachment. There are plenty of examples that can illustrate this process towards ethnographic seduction: The economist Benjamin Ward tried to analyze what he called the “ideal worlds of economics”. His aim was to elaborate the liberal, radical and conservative economic world views in a comparative framework. Interestingly, Ward made some personal remarks in addition to his “scientific” conclusions: After reading a plethora of books and articles by liberal economic theorists and reflecting on and intensively analyzing them, he confessed that he “became himself a liberal” and thus lost his critical detachment — it seemed that the “ideal worlds” became part of his own world. The same internalization, as he named what had happened to him, reoccurred after studying socialist books and articles (the “social ideal world”).

Internalization processes can have serious consequences for field research practices in violent societies because the danger of ethnographic seduction is significantly higher if you are confronted with overt acts of violence than with “economic ideal worlds”: Watching or observing violence, recognizing the consequences of it, seeing victims and letting tears flow — it is hard not to be “seduced” if you are outside of the helicopter.

On 18 November 2002 I was on the ground in East Belfast (Northern Ireland) for direct observation. Since May 2002, the area has seen daily riots between Catholics and Protestants, whose residential areas are strictly separated (commonly called an “interface area”) and divided by high walls (so-called “peace walls”). I was in the area almost every night from 1 October until 20 December 2002. On one particular night in November I was on the Protestant side (called “Cluan Place”). Cluan Place is divided by a “peace wall” from the Catholic residential area, “Short Strand”. Around half past eight, serious stone-throwing started with both sides being involved. Suddenly, I observed that somebody was standing on the roof of a Catholic house bordering the “peace wall”: He fired a shot of rounds into Cluan Place less than 10 meters from my position. The situation escalated, pipe-bombs and stones continued to be thrown, people ran (including myself) into all directions and Cluan Place became empty very soon. The Protestant community reacted angrily, shouted at the police present in the area, old ladies were in tears.

At this stage I lost my critical detachment and was ethnographically seduced: I interpreted what had happened as a Catholic or an IRA attack on a Protestant area, and also as an attack on me because I was present in the area at the moment of the shooting. I hated the IRA that night; I had luckily escaped physical harm. It took me some weeks to leave the happenings behind and to analyze the events in a more differentiated, critical way: Both sides were involved in heavy riots and violent confrontations in East Belfast and both sides were suffering from the situation. Neither side is solely to blame, neither the IRA nor the Protestants.

This short personal episode illustrates why it is important to leave the native perspective at a critical stage of the research process and go back to the helicopter again.

3. An “Ethical Lens”: Theory versus Practice versus Ambition

3.1. The Goldfish-Bowl Dilemma: Scientific Disturbances?

People are sick of being researched. (Kelly Persic)

We are researched to death. (Roisin McGlone)

People in Northern Ireland often complain that they are “prosecuted” by a whole army of international researchers every year:

We have hundreds of Americans coming over each year who want to implement peace processes for Northern Ireland. (…) We decided just to let them! (Jim Auld)

23 Kelly and Roisin both work for NGO “Inter-Com” based in West Belfast (previously called: “Springfield Inter-Community Development Forum”). Interview with the author; 31.10.2002.
Jim is the director of the NGO “Community Restorative Justice Ireland” (CRJI). He generally takes a skeptical view of researchers and was reluctant to talk to me; he also expressed the same skepticism towards journalists.

In 1999 at a time when the political peace process in Northern Ireland was in a serious crisis and an official review of the “Good Friday Agreement”, which had been signed in 1998, was in progress, a very extraordinary event took place that was largely overlooked at the time: George Mitchell, a former American Senator, had chaired the talks which had led to the Good Friday Agreement and was again in charge of the review talks in 1999. When the talks reached a critical stage, he made a quite remarkable decision: He strongly advised the parties who were involved in the “review talks” to create and maintain a total “media black-out”: No participant should talk with the press; nothing should be made public because the media were seen as serious spoilers of the whole process! Smyth and Darby reacted to Mitchell’s decision by raising two rhetorical questions:

Would George Mitchell have admitted researchers to information about the talks? Are researchers to be trusted or are they likely to behave in any more or less trustworthy ways than other observers?

These questions refer to serious ethical problems peace science has to overcome during field research. Yet, they are not completely new questions. The Austrian psychologist Schuler demanded in the late 70s and early 80s that ethical reflection about the consequences of field research for the people examined is necessary. Schuler warned that researchers should be aware of the potential negative consequences of their research practices. By and large these ethical questions or dilemmas are still ignored or underestimated today. From the very outset peace science should avoid developing into a negative force: becoming a spoiler of the process that is being researched. Peace scientists should not act as investigative or “sensationalistic” journalists.

The consequences of ignorance or underestimation of ethical questions can be summarized by the so-called “goldfish-bowl” dilemma: In places like Northern Ireland the “researched society” makes people feel as if they were in a goldfish bowl, observed 24 hours a day by journalists, police and army personnel, international observers, human rights activists, community workers and by “ethnographically oriented” researchers.

This goldfish-bowl situation can have dangerous and threatening consequences: In the November night of 2002 in Cluan Place mentioned above, I not only lost my critical detachment through ethnographic seduction after the shots had been fired. I also lost my temper and suffered a breakdown because I was not only almost shot – I was also harassed, intimidated and shouted at by a local resident: “Look at that bastard watching. Go watch your own streets!” I had no choice but to leave the area. The sad thing about this story was that I was verbally attacked by a lady with whom I had previously had tea together on many occasions in Cluan Place. It took me a long time to regain access to Cluan Place afterwards. It needed mediation by a highly respected local community worker.

Many “investigative journalists” told me about similar problems whenever they were “documenting” violent episodes. David Lister, the London Times’ Irish correspondent, explained his difficulties when he was investigating loyalist violence.

3.2. The “Applied Science” Dilemma

The second and probably the most important dilemma for peace science is what I would call the “applied science” dilemma. Galtung and Krippendorff (“unhappy!”) have hoisted the flag quite high with their letter to the German Peace and Conflict Research Association: Peace

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24 Interview with the author; 19.11.2002.
28 This term was coined by Jim Auld. Interview with the author; 19.11.2002.
29 David Lister. Interview with the author; 13.11.2002.
science has to be normative and applied. While it is easy to make such claims — and I would agree with them in principle — it should also be kept in mind how difficult it can be to identify the right “peace medicine”.

But far more important is a critical and quite sensitive concern: Researchers are outsiders to a conflict situation and their contributions (their prescriptions) have to be judged as to the potential harm they might cause. In other words: Injecting peace medicine from outside might produce short-term gains, but it could also cause severe damage in the long term. This problem has been widely discussed within the development assistance strategies a couple of years:

The fact that aid inevitably does have an impact on warfare means aid workers cannot avoid the responsibility of trying to shape that impact. The fact that choices about how to shape that impact represent outsider interference means aid workers can always be accused of inappropriate action. There is no way out of this dilemma.30

In this context Mary Anderson has developed the so-called “Do No Harm” approach: outside assistance has to be self-critical and self-reflexive enough to judge whether the specific strategies applied do more harm than good.31 To a large degree, peace science has still to find a similar self-critical approach that is ethical and moral in nature. “Ethics” is broadly defined as a moral and normative order generally accepted by society. It determines certain values and principles. Ethical deliberations and thoughts go beyond babbity and parochialism; rather, they are essential for peace science. One basic ethical principle is to acquire a “Do No Harm” attitude towards your own research agenda:

We offer tools for a journey, we never offer solutions. (David Holloway)32

This statement summarizes the approach taken by David who works for the NGO “Community Dialogue” which is involved in mediation projects in North Belfast. It could well describe a “Do No Harm” peace science approach. Can it also be used as a precept for peace science with the consequence that there are limits for “peace prescriptions”? This question, in turn, takes us to what I call the “applied science” dilemma: Should peace science not only offer “tools for a journey”, but “solutions” or prescriptions?

This question becomes very relevant regarding two difficulties: Firstly, regarding the problems connected with “morality of violence” (Brandon Hamber)33 and, secondly, when the question of dealing with the past comes to the table.

3.2.1. Morality of Violence: Combatants/ Perpetrators/ Terrorists — “delete as appropriate”

There were days when I talked in the morning to a victim of political persecution and in the afternoon with a military officer who had been responsible for the repression. These days were stressful because they demanded radical swings in empathic understanding. (Anthony Robben)34

The question of “morality of violence” has two dimensions for peace science, i.e. a practical and an ideological one. Both are interdependent and not easily separated from each other. The quote from Robben belongs to the practical dimension: How can a researcher manage to talk to victims of violence on one occasion and to perpetrators on another while keeping his critical detachment? It needs a lot of sensitivity to be able to master the “radical swings of empathic understanding”. In addition, openness and honesty toward the interview partner — who must not be seen as “data deliverer” nor “informant” — is required. Good practice tells us that researchers should inform their interview partners at the beginning of the interview — after a self-introduction — whom they have talked to before and with whom they are going to talk as well. This is not only part of an ethically based good practice in field research, but reliable

30 Anderson (1999: 146f.).
31 Anderson (1999).
32 Interview with the author; 20.11.2002.
33 Hamber (1999b), online source.
34 Robben (1996: 97).
experiences (including my own research) give reason to claim that such procedures are fairly
well accepted by victims and by so-called “terrorists”. Therefore, the “results” of these
interviews are of better quality than those from interview situations where the researcher leaves
the “informant” in doubt about himself and about his other interview partners:

Outsider status in a researcher will usually raise concerns about trustworthiness in certain
local communities within violently divided societies. Nationality and previous work are
factors in this, and it is not unknown in violently divided societies for researchers to be
suspicious and accused of espionage.\(^{35}\)

The word “so-called” in front of “terrorists” was chosen deliberately. It takes us to the
ideological dimension of the “morality of violence” problem: Who can be classified a
“terrorist”? Or, in other words: What can be classified as a “terrorist attack”?\(^{35}\)

To make a long story short: There is no universally accepted definition of “terrorism”.
Schmidt and Jongman collected more than 101 different definitions.\(^ {36}\) Brian Jenkins claimed
that to name an armed group as “terrorists” always implies a moral judgment.\(^ {37}\) This negative
moral judgment is part of a strategy to demonize and de-legitimize certain groups or
individuals:

It is possible to define terrorism objectively as long as we define it in terms of the quality
of the act, and not in terms of the identity of the perpetrator nor the nature of the cause.
This removes us from the dilemma of “one man’s terrorist, is another man’s freedom-
fighter.” Of course, choosing to define terrorism in this way is itself a value judgment. It
is a backhanded way of saying that ends do not justify means. (Brian Jenkins)\(^ {38}\)

People might have forgotten that it was Dick Cheney who called Nelson Mandela a
“terrorist” and voted against a petition calling for his release when he was a congressman. From
the perspective of peace science the only sensible conclusion is to drop the word “terrorism”
from the scientific vocabulary.\(^ {39}\) A more successful way is to seek an understanding of political
violence in sociological terms, i.e. by applying a discourse analysis of violence:

Rather than defining violence a priori as senseless and irrational, we should consider it as
a changing form of interaction and communication, as a historically developed cultural
form of meaningful action.\(^ {40}\)

The meaning of violence should be the focus of peace science in order to understand the
“morality of violence”. It is a rather uneasy and uncomfortable debate, for the victims and the
perpetrators of violence alike, but a debate that cannot be evaded. It cannot be avoided if it is
accepted that conflict-ridden societies have at some stage to find a way out of violence and
towards lasting peace. It is, therefore, the duty of peace science to foster this debate with the
explicit aim of reaching a social consensus within the post-war or conflict society on how to
judge the use of violence during the conflict on a moral basis:

Violence during times of political conflict is by definition a political action fraught with
the hidden hands of political agendas and posturing. It is for this very reason that
consensual strategies for dealing with the past should be sought. It is only through taking
control of the apparatus of memory and history that societies coming out of violence can
begin to engage with and develop constructive collective memories of the conflict.\(^ {41}\)

To develop these common collective memories of the conflict the “morality of
violence”, i.e. the meaning of violence, has to be reconstructed: This reconstruction can be done
by a (critical) discourse analysis of the strategies used by armed groups — like the Irish
Republican Army (IRA) — to justify or legitimize their acts of violence. Violent acts are seen as
part of an interpretative discourse process, which takes place within the community from
which combatants are recruited, e.g. the Basque community or the Catholic community in

\(^ {37}\) Jenkins (1980: 10).
\(^ {38}\) Jenkins (1992: 14).
\(^ {39}\) I have explored this point in two articles where I made that decision: Baumann (2003) and Baumann (2004).
\(^ {41}\) Hamber (1999b), online source.
Northern Ireland. This process aims to legitimize acts of violence so that violence becomes self-affirmative and independent.\(^{42}\) From an anthropological perspective politically motivated violence is a calculated “performative act”,\(^{43}\) which has to be judged on its “performative quality”:\(^{44}\)

Violence without an audience will still leave people dead, but is socially meaningless. Violent acts are efficient because of their staging of power and legitimacy, probably even more so than due to their actual physical results.\(^{45}\)

Seen within this framework violence by groups like the ETA\(^{46}\), the ANC\(^{47}\) or the IRA was directed against the “institutions” of apartheid, the British crown or the Spanish central government. According to their “discourse processes” violent acts were not directed against the community, i.e. not against individual members of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland or the White Afrikaaner community in South Africa.

This point was reinforced in July 2002, when the IRA made a public apology to the “innocent victims”, namely to “non-combatants” killed during IRA acts of violence:

While it was not our intention to injure or kill non-combatants, the reality is that on this and on a number of other occasions, that was the consequence of our actions. (…) We offer our sincere apologies and condolences to their families.\(^{48}\)

These discursive legitimization strategies, however, cannot be left unchallenged. The example of the police can be used to illustrate this point: Police officers, for example white police men in South Africa or Protestant police men in Northern Ireland, were seen as “legitimate targets” because they were manifest institutions of “foreign rule”. They were the representatives of British rule or apartheid respectively. But the moral challenge with such legitimization strategies is the following: a police officer was not only a “military” civil servant, but also a private citizen, a family man, a father and a civilian. And he might not have even been a supporter of the government he was serving under. For a large part of his life he was indeed a non-combatant. Only through the eyes of the IRA, the ETA or the ANC could he be seen as a legitimate target.

But we can even go one step further and ask the question from a diametrically opposite point of view: is it feasible to classify armed combatants like the IRA not as “terrorists” but as “victims” too?

This point might seem reasonable if we look at the circumstances of the families and the biographies of the individuals involved in violence: Not only did they serve very long prison sentences, but their families were destroyed, “innocent” lives were ruined, while many family members, who had no IRA-connection, were murdered. One example out of many is Tommy McKearney, a former IRA-member who served 17 years in prison: All his three brothers were murdered and he almost died himself during the famous IRA hunger strike in 1980. Tommy and his family are also victims of the Northern Ireland conflict.

The difficult debates about the “morality of violence” can be brought to one simple conclusion: Trying to compare or value “suffering” is doomed from the very start. Charles Villa-Vicencio, who was the National Research Director of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, issued a warning that reflects precisely this direction:

The whole process becomes unfortunate, if you start to compare suffering.\(^{49}\)

This warning takes us back to the “applied science” dilemma. The necessary prerequisite for any country to put an end to its violent conflict and start a process towards

\(^{42}\) Apter (1997: 10).

\(^{43}\) Aijmer (2000: 1).

\(^{44}\) Schröder/ Schmidt (2001: 5).

\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) “ETA” is the abbreviation for “Euskadi Ta Askatasuna” which can be translated as “Basque Homeland and Freedom”

\(^{47}\) “ANC” is the abbreviation for “African National Congress”.


\(^{49}\) Charles Villa-Vicencio. Interview with the author; 17.06.2003.
reconciliation is an inclusive definition of “victim”: There can be no hierarchy of victims; no one can claim ownership of “victimhood” for himself. Rather, everyone, who died as a direct or indirect consequence in the conflict should be qualified and treated as a “legitimate” victim. Only on that basis can societies move forward. But in reality, communities keep being torn apart with each side claiming to be the “real” victims, thereby denigrating the other side’s suffering. Thus, the central question for the applied and normative “science of peace” is: How do we get societies to a point where they are ready to recognize the other side’s suffering and start to abandon cognitive hierarchies of victimhood? In other words: What kind of peace medicine is required?

3.2.2. Prescriptions and Remedies for the Past

Finding the right cure for past atrocities is quite an uphill task. A lot has been written on “dealing”/“managing”/“overcoming” the past (again: “delete as appropriate”) and since the South African experience quite a number of “truth commissions” were designed around the world. It is disputed whether the medicine “truth commissions” lead to forgiveness and reconciliation in South Africa:

I will never forgive my torturers. Because for 24-hours a day it reminds me that I’ve been tortured. So, I am not asking for revenge, but don’t ask me for forgiveness. (Sonny Venkathratnam)

Sonny was a prisoner on Robben Island, his middle ear was removed with a spoon and they also cut his penis, though clearly there were completely different voices, too. But Sonny’s statement is the core of the dilemma confronted by applied science: With what right can peace science claim or postulate that the affected societies or communities should forgive or become reconcile? What moral and ethical justification can be identified that allows us to tell a suffering community that it has to recognize the other side’s suffering? There is no universal remedy in dealing with the past, indeed there are ethical constraints and dilemmas which should be recognized by peace science, namely that the peace medicine “truth commission” can have very dangerous and counter-productive effects:

Unhappily, “truth” can be used as a weapon as well as a shield.

This was the conclusion of David Bloomfield, who was the Victims Commissioner for Northern Ireland until 1998. David was very cautious not to propose a truth commission for Northern Ireland. If there is any consensus at all in Northern Ireland today, it is the negative or skeptical “common sense” that Northern Ireland is not ripe for the truth of the violent past. A positive sign is that there is an overarching consensus within Northern Irish society that the past cannot be left “untouched” and that is has to be dealt with, but there is no plausible agreement on how to do this:

Post the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland it is clear that a broad level of consensus on the need to uncover the past is not forthcoming.

Whatever might be the right way of dealing with the past in Northern Ireland or in post-war societies in general, if we look at peace science through the “ethical lens” it should be clear that “peace medicine” should not take the form of recommendations that post-war societies should be transformed into Aldous Huxley’s “Island” or into a pre-modern version of “Ladakh”. Post-war societies will never be free of conflict. Conflicts will still arise in the future. The right peace prescription can only cure a society of its divided past, heal its memories and re-establish a society’s capacity to establish common institutions for peaceful conflict management.

51 Sonny Venkathratnam; Interview with the author; 05.06.2003.
53 Hamber (1999a), online source.
4. Summary & Conclusion

This paper has sought to argue the case for a concerned ethical awareness on the part of the researcher. This awareness is essential to overcome or solve the dilemmas confronting the peace scientist: the “goldfish-bowl” dilemma and the “applied science” dilemma are the most prominent ones in this respect.

Looking at peace science through an ethical lens makes it obvious that there needs to be a scientifically as well as morally based “do no harm” attitude when doing research in the middle of violent conflict. Researchers should neither pretend to be nor act as (investigative) journalists.

The affected communities on the ground — sick of being watched, observed and researched — have to be able to realize that peace science has normative aims, i.e. identifying the right peace prescription, but not investigative aims.

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Ethical Issues in Peace Research – Informed Consent
Stian Bragtvedt

Abstract

This article will examine some ethical aspects regarding the concept of informed consent. In the summer of 2006 I did my fieldwork in Nepal and looked at the peace process in the country. At one point I travelled around the countryside as a journalist. Was this ethically justifiable, and would it be justifiable to use the data in my master’s thesis? These questions will be discussed and I will argue that using the data is justifiable in light of the consequences for the participants. I will also argue that consequences for the people one studies is the most important factor when evaluating whether research practice is ethical.

My Fieldwork

In Nepal I travelled the countryside with an interpreter, introducing myself as a journalist. Pretending to be a journalist was not only a conscious strategy on my part to get more information, but it was done because I thought – at that time – that I would be writing and publishing an article about the Maoist movement for the Norwegian paper Aftenposten. After receiving advice from an Indian journalist, I made myself a set of fake press cards, which said that I was a freelance journalist and Asia correspondent. I believe these cards convinced the Maoists who saw the cards that I was a journalist who had the goal of making a good story about their movement (which was, in fact, true at the time). This opened some doors to me in the district of Dhading, where I travelled to meet a troop from the Maoists People’s Liberation Army (PLA). When arriving at the district headquarter of Dhading (bearing the same name as the district itself), and explaining my journalistic motives, the Maoists agreed to let me accompany them for two days on their “public awareness program”. This was a campaign where the Maoists soldiers travelled around the countryside and helped the farmers with their work during the day while trying to promote their political views and explain the need to make Nepal a republic. I doubt that the Maoist cadres would have gone through the trouble of having me and my interpreter with them for two days and providing us with food and lodging during the whole time if I had not presented myself as a journalist. During the trip I got to meet and talk to a troop of 30 PLA soldiers, as well as discuss the political situation for several hours with Siber, a member of the regional bureau, and Lama, the political commissar of the troop. This was an interesting experience, and different from the other interviews I did during my fieldwork. But, is this research practice in accordance with ethical principles?

Failure to get proper informed consent

An argument weighing heavily against my use of the data in my thesis is my failure to get informed consent. The Maoists consented to being written about in a newspaper article, not to being researched for a master thesis. One could say that I used deception to gain access to areas I would not otherwise have gotten access to. In response to this I argue that my intention at the time was to write a newspaper article, not to gather data for my thesis. It was my belief and intention that I was going to sell the article to Aftenposten in Norway. Therefore, my failure to get informed consent was unintentional. But, there is another important point here that needs to be examined, and that is that my fieldwork was paid for partly by the Centre for Peace studies and Lånekassen in Norway. I was in Nepal with a different purpose than journalism, and shutting this out of my mind entirely was not possible.

I was doing research and that made me a researcher, but I was also in Nepal as a human being. Simply switching off the part of my brain that focused on the thesis would have been impossible. The next logical question to ask therefore becomes whether my intention of being a journalist can be defended, when I knew perfectly well that I was also doing fieldwork.

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I am the only one who can answer this question, but I pose the question because I think it could be useful for other researchers, as well, when trying to judge if their research practice is ethical. For my own part, the failure was unintentional as my research question at the time – Why did the Maoists in Nepal decide to join the peace process? - Did not make my trip to the countryside very relevant as a way of gathering data about the research question. To answer the research question, I needed to interview decision-makers in the Maoist’s organization about strategy and the reasoning of the party leadership. This was not something I could hope to achieve during a two-day trip to the countryside in Nepal. Therefore it is not a case of me using the journalist strategy to get important information for my thesis. It is rather a case where I am on a fieldwork, but then decide to do something else for a week.

But this is not just a question of the intention of the researcher. It is my view that the intention of the researcher is only important because it can have consequences for the people one seeks to study as well as the researcher himself. What we should be asking is: What are the potential consequences of this breach of informed consent? One problem with not getting informed consent and still using the data in my thesis is that it could damage the reputation of social scientists on a general basis. Not following the rules of ethical research may create doubts about other researchers and their intentions, as well as raise scepticism towards researchers seeking to do interviews in the field.

There is also the question of what consequences using the data may have for my informants. For the researcher it is not possible to know about all potential consequences. He can make decisions based on qualified guesses, and most of the time these qualified guesses will be correct. But here we touch on one of the main points of informed consent, namely that this decision should be made by the research subject. It is a decision that can have major consequences for the situation of the informant, and thus, it should be his decision and not the researcher’s decision after returning from the field. If the informant is opposed to the use of data in a thesis, but the researcher uses it anyway, social science as a field has a problem. And even though the researcher might actually know more than the research subject about the potential consequences of publication, it should still be the decision of the informant.

Arguments For and Against

There are also strong arguments for using the data in the thesis and travelling as a journalist. As mentioned above, the consequences for the informants are the most important factors when deciding whether an action is ethical or not. In this case I see very few consequences for the Maoists I interviewed in the Nepali countryside. There is no risk of identification, as I do not have their real names. Furthermore, there is a very small chance that someone in Nepal will read my thesis, let alone try to identify any of my informants.

I also think that the nature of the information I gained during the trip can serve as an argument for making it public in my thesis. The Maoists saw me as a journalist and therefore decided that it could be useful for them to talk to me because I could create publicity for their case abroad. Here it should also be mentioned that Norwegian foreign aid minister, Erik Solheim, had visited Nepal a month prior to my visit and I doubt that his visit had slipped the Maoists memory. One can view my encounter with the Maoists as an exchange. I gained information from them and they gained publicity from me. In this light, the problem now becomes that I failed to live up to my part of the deal since the article was never published. With that said, there is still potential for publicity upon completion of my master’s thesis. But it is no doubt that an article in Aftenposten probably would have been the Maoists choice if they got to choose between my thesis and the article. With this in mind, there is no doubt about the fact that the information I gained was tailored by the Maoists for publishing purposes. I got access to what Goffman calls “the frontstage performance” of the Maoist organization – in other words, they presented themselves in the best possible light. A Norwegian Maoist said in a discussion about this issue that “naturally, you only show the front side of your house”. In my case, this statement rings true and I was most definitely shown the frontside of the Maoist house. Because of this, using the data in my thesis is justified. If the information I was given from the Maoists was not meant for public eyes, the case would have been different. But since the Maoists gave me information for publishing purposes, publishing it in my thesis is justifiable.
It can be argued that using the information is still problematic since turning off the part of my brain that was doing fieldwork was not possible. As I see it, however, this would not achieve anything. It would not change the fact that I got the information without proper consent. It would also leave the Maoists with zero publicity, as opposed to the little amount they would have gotten from my thesis. I argue that the data can be used in the thesis, but it should be done with the understanding that gathering data as a journalist is a practice that can be questioned. It is the consequences that are important, and the intention of the researcher is only important because it will have consequences. What my intention was when I left for the countryside is important because it says something about whether I think it is ok to use data in my thesis without the informed consent of the informant, and something about whether I will do it again. With the understanding that the practice is questionable from an ethical point of view in mind, this will limit my willingness to present myself as a journalist again. Therefore, I would say that using the data is legitimate, as the consequences for the informants will be roughly the same whether I use the data or not. My intention at the time I gathered the data is only important if it has further consequences for informants. Since the damage, in terms of failure to get informed consent, has already happened, I think using the data is defendable.

Another question we should look at is the question of the nature of informed consent. In other words, how informed is informed consent? In David Silverman’s book from 2006 he raises this question and points to several limitations of the informed consent model (Silverman 2006). He quotes Amir Marvasti who points out the fact that in qualitative research the nature of the research project might change during the course of the research process, which might make it difficult to properly inform research subjects about the nature of the project. Another thing to keep in mind is the difference between explaining one’s research project, and explaining one’s research project in a meaningful way. There is a difference between what one says and how the recipient understands what one says. The researcher should not be overly optimistic about the possibility to inform research subjects in a meaningful way about their research. When I explained to people that I was working on a master’s thesis in Norway, they were often uninterested because this had nothing to do with their reality. Explaining the purpose of my research project was not of interest to all of my informants. With that being said, it should also be noted that there is some danger involved when using this argument. It can lead to the researcher brushing aside informed consent because “they are so far from our culture, they cannot understand it anyway”. This way of thinking will lead the researcher towards ethical pitfalls very quickly.

Silverman, at the end of his chapter on ethical issues, says what I think is the most important thing to learn from my experience: “It may appear to be unfortunate that there are no hard and fast solutions to such dilemmas [of getting informed consent]. However, it reminds us that the very act of being alert to such potential issues is a hallmark of the ethical researcher (Silverman 2006:330). For me, this was the most important experience from my trip to the countryside of Nepal. Social situations will arise and there are no easy solutions. One cannot foresee all potential problems or challenges that will arise during fieldwork, especially in conflict areas, and it is therefore important to be explicit about one’s field experience and to lay the ground for debate on ethical issues and field practice. It is my opinion that ethical guidelines are means to an end, and that end is ethical research practice. When using ethical guidelines we are often in social contexts that are different from the ones we are accustomed to. It is important to acknowledge the fact that these guidelines are dependant on this context. Another example from my trip to the countryside as a journalist serves to further illustrate this point.

**Interviewing the Oppressed?**

When I met with the Maoist platoon in rural Nepal, I got the chance to interview both the leaders and the soldiers. The problems connected to interviewing the leaders have already been discussed at some length, but the interviews with the soldiers raise other issues.

When I interviewed the soldiers their leaders stood by them, and it seemed to me that they were instructed pretty clearly on what to tell the journalist (me). When I took their picture, the leaders also instructed them on how to stand and how to hold their weapons properly. It
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appeared to me that the leaders held a great degree of power over the soldiers. I also suspect that the soldiers did not have much choice regarding whether or not they wanted to be interviewed by me. This was connected to social structures both within Nepali society and in the context of a guerrilla army platoon where obedience and respect for one’s commanders are important values. Caste was also a factor. The leaders were from the warrior caste and the soldier was a dalit, (an untouchable.) The dalits are the people suffering the most from the caste system, and they are looked down upon by the higher castes.¹ There were clearly social structures at work that gave the soldiers no choice but to be interviewed by me since the leaders had decided that it was beneficial for the cause. In other words, I did not have the proper informed consent for interviewing the soldiers. What would be the ethical course of action in this situation?

What I could have done was to refuse to interview the soldiers. Then I would not have broken any formal ethical guidelines or interviewed anyone against their will. But I think this would not have helped the situation. Rather, it could have created a feeling that the soldiers were not “good enough” to be interviewed by the journalists, or it could have been interpreted by the dalits as another example of how only members of the warrior caste were good enough, while they, themselves, were not interesting or smart enough to be interviewed. It would also have created an awkward social situation, which might have led to me loosing respect among both the Maoist leaders and the soldiers. It could also have been perceived as a refusal of the hospitality offered to me by the Maoists.

On the other hand, I could have chosen to interview the soldiers and not used the data in my thesis. Having taken this course of action would have meant avoiding an awkward situation while at the same time not using data that other researchers might argue had been gained in an ethically questionable manner. But in my view, this would have been ignoring reality and simply taking the path of least resistance. What I see as important in this situation was the fact that there were social structures at work that clearly placed some people above other people in the social ladder. The leaders of the platoon had a large degree of power over the lives of the soldiers. Of course, this is probably the reality in a lot of conflict areas, and it can be argued that oppressive social structures are necessary for an efficient military organization. But this is not the most important issue as I see it. The important thing to me is that oppression took place in front of me and, in a way, I also participated in this oppression. If I had refused to report it, or refused to do the interview, the oppressive structures would still have been there. Indeed, the situation I was in when doing the interviews was just one expression of the structure. Because of this, I think it is important to report these structures upon encountering them. Perhaps the structure is necessary for an efficient military organization, but whether this is the case or not, people should be made aware of it and it becomes the duty of the peace researcher to take on this task. Galtung states: “Without values, peace studies become social studies in general and world studies in particular” (Galtung 1996: 13). In my view, values are a prerequisite for doing research in an ethical way. Without values, the ethical guidelines become an end in itself, when they should rather be seen as a tool for achieving what is important, namely ethical practice. According to my values, it is not right to refrain from reporting oppression because one needs to protect the interview subject from the researcher. It is more important to acknowledge that there exists an oppressive social structure and to inform people about it. Preventing the social structure from manifesting itself by refusing to interview the soldiers would not have made it go away. The researcher would just not have witnessed it. This argument is based on my conclusion that there are no negative consequences for the soldiers connected to me if I should chose to use the data in my thesis. It is an argument for peace researchers to remember that values play a part in the craft of peace research. The researcher should never forget that he is not only an observer of the world, but he is also a participant in it.

Conclusion

The most important insight I gained from these two experiences was that there are, as Silverman points out, no hard and fast solutions to ethical research practice. Instead, fieldwork is a continuous negotiation between ideas about the right thing to do and the reality in which one

¹ Interestingly enough, the Maoists claim to be fighting for an end to oppression based on caste.
works. This is not to say that ethical guidelines should be disregarded or considered futile. Ethical guidelines are a prerequisite for ethical practice, and thinking that an “on the spot” approach to ethics in the field is possible is dangerous. But ethics are more than guidelines. They are also practice, and thinking that ethical practice will follow automatically from ethical guidelines will quickly lead the researcher into dire straits. Explicitness about field practice is necessary for a debate on these issues. This debate will not necessarily provide researchers with all the right answers, but that makes it all the more important to ask the right questions.

References


In search of a social theory of metaphor

Alina Curticapean

Abstract

Using examples from EU accession discourses in Bulgaria this paper highlights several major traditions in thinking about metaphor while evaluating their usefulness for the student of social and political life. It engages with the cognitive theory which revolutionized the study of metaphor by arguing that metaphor is primarily a kind of thinking or conceptualization and only derivatively a matter of language. While not wishing to deny the usefulness of cognitively inspired analyses, this study suggests that locating the analysis of metaphors within a discourse analytic framework which openly addresses the inherent ambiguity of metaphors and issues of context, power and subjectivity would benefit those interested in the socio-political aspects of metaphor.

Introduction

Professor Gibbs was being interviewed by Israeli security personnel during a check-in for a flight to Tel Aviv. When questioned about the reasons of his visit to Tel Aviv he replied that he had been invited to a conference on metaphor. The interviewer then asked: ‘What’s a metaphor?’ The professor hesitated for a moment and the interviewer’s question followed sharply: ‘You’re going to a metaphor conference and you don’t even know what a metaphor is?’ And it did not end here. The professor was taken away by security guards and interrogated for almost an hour. He was allowed to leave only after one of the hosts of the conference, an Israeli professor, intervened on his behalf.

Confronted with the same question, not in the stressful arena of security guard interrogation but in the nevertheless demanding setting of providing a persuasive argumentation on how to study metaphors in social and political contexts, I seem to run into similar troubles. My hesitation, as supposedly Professor Gibbs’s, is due to the multitude of perspectives on metaphor. There has not been one mainstream in the study of metaphor. Rather, the increasing number of scholarly works on metaphor are characterized by a number of controversies as scholars disagree on a number of essential issues, such as, the existence of metaphorical meaning, whether metaphors reflect or constitute reality, the truth value of metaphors, the location of metaphor (at the level of words and language as opposed to thought and context), the possibility of non-linguistic realizations of metaphor, the main function of metaphor (e.g. heuristic, rhetorical, cognitive) or the differences between metaphor and other tropes (e.g. simile, comparison, analogy, metonymy). To make it even more complicated, the way these aspects are discussed varies from discipline to discipline.

Traditionally, metaphors have been studied by scholars in the fields of philosophy, linguistics and literature studies and rhetorics (e.g. Perelman 1982). In recent decades, metaphor analysis has been introduced and become increasingly popular in other academic areas such as anthropology (e.g. Turner 1974), sociology (e.g. Rigney 2001), communication (e.g. Hahn 2003), economics (e.g. Koller 2004), cultural studies (e.g. Tannen 1998), social policy (e.g. Schön 1979) and political science and international relations (e.g. Beer and De Landtsheer 2004).

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1 Adapted from Glucksberg 2001: 3.
2 The central question is whether a metaphorical statement possesses another (metaphorical) meaning in addition to its literary meaning. The answer depends on the conception of meaning and theory of meaning as well as on the general attitude towards metaphor. Some scholars, such as Paul Ricoeur, invest metaphors with meaning whereas others, such as Donald Davison, deny metaphor any other meaning than the literal one.
3 See Johnson 1981 for a review.
4 See Knowles and Moon 2006 and Kövecses 2002 for introductions.
5 For a comprehensive list of works see Beer and De Landtsheer 2004, pp.31-2, n.2 and n.3.
As metaphor research became increasingly popular in a variety of disciplines, the number of studies mounted. Already in 1979, Booth wrote ‘No matter how we define it, metaphor seems to be taking over not only the world of humanists but the world of the social and natural sciences as well’ (p.48). He observed that bibliographies show more metaphor titles for 1977 than the entire history of thought before 1940. From this Booth reasoned that if the increase continues at the same rate, by the year 2039 there will be more students of metaphor than people on earth (p. 47). Booth’s extrapolation might be a little exaggerated, but the growing academic interest in metaphor can not be denied. It is also visible in the arrangement of conferences, the establishment of two journals and of an international association dedicated to the study of metaphor. The conference on Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM) has been arranged every second year since 1995 and two out of a series of ten Euresco conferences on metaphor research have been organized so far. This series of conferences is mainly funded by the EU within its Human Potential Program. As concerns the journals, Metaphor and Symbol (Metaphor and Symbolic Activity until 1996) has been published quarterly ever since 1986 and recently an on-line metaphor journal has been established at www.metaphorik.de. Moreover, the Researching and Applying Metaphor International Association was created in 2006 with the stated purpose of advancing the study of metaphor, encouraging the development of methods in this area of study and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation.

All these aspects prove beyond doubt that metaphor analysis has been gradually accepted as a theoretical and/or methodological framework in a wide variety of disciplines. This paper starts by outlining several approaches to the study of metaphor and continues by exploring the possibilities of giving the study of metaphor a stronger socio-political dimension. The discussion begins from linguistics, not only because it is a field which has long been preoccupied with the concept of metaphor, but also because linguistic approaches have served as sources of inspiration for the study of social and political metaphors. Most of the attention is concentrated on the cognitive theory in the form advanced by Lakoff and Johnson. While acknowledging the importance of the cognitive theory of metaphor, this paper argues that those interested in the socio-political dimension of metaphors might want to take their analysis a step further and suggests that Foucauldian discourse theory could be helpful in this respect. The theoretical argument is illustrated with examples from my current research on EU accession discourses in Bulgaria.

The linguistic mind: ‘what is metaphor?’ and ‘what is metaphor for?’ or from semantics to pragmatics

Starting from the domain of linguistics, this section looks at how metaphors have been conceptualized within the major areas of semantics and pragmatics. The intention is not to provide a comprehensive list of theories of metaphor, but rather to highlight some major traditions in thinking about metaphor while evaluating their usefulness for the student of social and political life. It should be said from the beginning that all these theories agree on the general definition of metaphor as describing ‘something in terms of something else’ that derives from Greek verb ‘meta-pherein’ meaning ‘carry over’ (which is itself a metaphor, of course!) We have inherited the earliest semantic analyses of metaphors from classical philosophy. For instance, Aristotle’s definition of metaphor based on the substitution of one name for another in Poetics and in Rhetoric remains influential to this day. According to Aristotle, metaphor ‘is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy’ (Aristotle quoted by Ricoeur 1978: 13). Aristotle’s view of metaphor is a very broad one since it subsumes tropes in general under the category of metaphor. Aristotle’s definition assumes that each name or word has a proper or literal meaning

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6 Tropes are usually divided into metaphor, discussing something in terms of something else, metonymy, in which the whole is described in terms of a part and synecdoche, in which a more comprehensive term is used for a less comprehensive one or vice versa. Sometimes irony is also classified as a rhetorical trope (e.g. Burke 1969). This paper operates with a broad understanding of metaphor which does not pay particular attention to further possible sub-classifications.
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through which the proper name is attached to the proper form. Metaphor, then, breaks this literal meaning dyad and creates figural meanings. In the Aristotelian substitution model of metaphor, the focus is on the aesthetic and stylistic aspects of meaning production. As Aristotle put it in *Rhetoric*, metaphor gives ‘perspicuity, pleasure and a foreign air’ thus elevating and ornamenting language.

The substitution theory of metaphor is quite problematic. First, what is substituted for what is unclear. Take as an example the metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY. According to the substitution theory, journey is a substitute for something else. But what could it be a substitute for? What would be the proper word? Isn’t it that the existence of the metaphor is precisely due to the fact that it expresses something that cannot be said otherwise (i.e. literally)? Secondly, and in direct relation to the first point, the metaphor ‘journey’ is not decorative or superfluous – as substitution theory would have it – but rather necessary for describing a specific situation. These problematic aspects, together with the location of metaphor at the level of words\(^7\) limit the usefulness of the substitution model for the student of social and political matters.

While the substitution theory addresses questions related to the nature of metaphor (‘what are metaphors?’), two other approaches – the *interaction* and the *cognitive* models – move the focus from the meaning towards the uses of metaphors by asking ‘what are metaphors for?’ (Ortony 1979: 4). In what follows I shall briefly introduce each of these positions in the study of metaphor in turn, insisting more on cognitive theory in the form proposed by Lakoff and Johnson as it represents the starting point for many studies of metaphors in social and political contexts.

In *Models and Metaphors* (1962), Max Black proposes an *interaction* view of metaphor\(^8\) introducing a *cognitive* dimension. In a subsequent article, he calls metaphorical thought a ‘neglected topic of major importance’ and proposes to get a better grasp of it by pondering ‘what is to think of something (A) as something else (B)?’ (Black 1979: 32). According to Black, metaphor is not located at the level of words or names but rather metaphorical meaning is created in the interaction between the two terms of the metaphor. Moreover Black underscores the importance of context in the interpretation of metaphors. As he puts it, a metaphorical statement ‘will be identified by quoting a whole sentence, or a set of sentences, together with as much of the relevant verbal context, or the nonverbal setting, as may be needed for an adequate grasp of the actual or imputed speaker’s meaning’ (Black quoted in Forceville 1996: 7).

The cognitive dimension introduced by Black was picked up and extended by numerous other authors, Lakoff and Johnson among them. In their highly influential book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that ‘[O]ur conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature’ (1980: 3). That ‘[M]etaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action, and only derivatively a matter of language’ (ibid.: 153), reformulated more succinctly by Lakoff as metaphor is ‘not a figure of speech, but a mode of thought’ (1993: 210) is certainly one of the central tenets of the cognitive theory of metaphor. As metaphor is a kind of thinking or conceptualization, it follows that metaphors are not in any way extraordinary but they are part of ‘our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3). In other words metaphors ‘are among our principal vehicles for understanding’ (ibid.: 159).

From the cognitive perspective, metaphor is defined in terms of correspondences or mappings between elements within source and target domains\(^9\). For instance, the metaphor

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\(^7\) According to Ricoeur (1978), the Aristotelian approach of metaphor, restricted to the study of changed meanings of words, has been followed up to the twentieth century, until the realization that the basic semantic unit is larger than the word.

\(^8\) Black’s theory of metaphor is sometimes popularized as the ‘projection’ approach, e.g. Ankersmit and Mooij 1993.

\(^9\) Different traditions use different names for the two terms of the metaphor. For example in the metaphor STATES ARE PERSONS, ‘states’ represent the ‘primary subject’, ‘target’ or ‘tenor’ and ‘persons’ represent the ‘secondary subject’, ‘source’ or ‘vehicle’. For consistency reasons, the couple of terms ‘target’ – ‘source’ will be used throughout this article.
STATES ARE PERSONS consists of a source domain (persons) and a target domain (states) and a mapping between these domains (properties or features that persons and states have in common). In this metaphor, some of the features of persons are used to highlight some of the features of states. That is, when states are metaphorically conceptualized as persons, it is entailed amongst other things that states have motives, gave goals, can be weak or strong, sick or healthy (Chilton 1996: 56-7). Hence we can talk about states’ desire to survive or to dominate.

Lakoff and Johnson distinguish between CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR and linguistic expressions of it. Consider the following examples:

(a) We are moving towards this union naturally and our citizens should naturally enjoy their rights to the full

(b) we can say even now that if Bulgaria continues to move in the same direction at the same speed, we shall reach the goal that we have set ourselves

(c) we are convinced that Bulgaria is reaching the end of a long way. We are determined to go through the last steps in this process

(d) Let us go back to the question why Bulgaria and Romania may encounter more obstacles on the road to the European Union

(e) I am confident that Europe wants Bulgaria to be admitted. It would very much suit us to believe that someone outside is on our way. But that is simply not true

(f) This is the last regular report. This means practically green light from now

(g) This event [the signing of the Treaty of Accession to the EU] is one of the historic milestones for our country in its recent history

(h) I think that Bulgaria boarded a long time ago not only the train, it is in a rocket carrying us to Western Europe

(i) Parliament must adopt a road map indicating the precise timetable for addressing the main issues of Bulgaria’s membership in the EU

Following cognitive theory, these examples represent far more than metaphorical linguistic expressions. Cognitive linguists would argue that they are expressions of the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY; the metaphorical link is between the concept areas EU ACCESSION and JOURNEY. And they would suggest that our understanding of Bulgaria’s EU accession is at least partly shaped by our understanding of ‘journey’. Cognitive theory sees the connections between concept areas as correspondences between elements within source and target domains (see Table 1).

10 I follow Lakoff and Johnson in using small capitals when referring to CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS. Metaphorical expressions of conceptual metaphors are spelled in small cases and are italicized.

11 Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Katya Todorova, Bulgarian National Radio, Horizont, ‘Nedelya 150’ (‘Sunday 150’) weekly political talk show, 23 January 2005; italics added.

12 Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, bTV. ‘This Morning’ broadcast, 15 June 2004; italics added.

13 Declaration of the National Assembly of Bulgaria in support of Bulgaria’s membership in the EU, 17 June 2004; italics added.

14 Interview with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, ‘V Desetkata’ weekly political talk show, bTV, 17 April 2005; italics added.


16 Interview with Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Gergana Gruncharova, Nova TV, ‘Hello Bulgaria’, 7 October 2004; italics added.


18 Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, bTV. ‘V Desetkata’ talk show, 20 June 2004; italics added.

19 Address by Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov to the members of the 40th National Assembly, 11 July 2005, Bulgarian National Assembly; italics added.
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Target domain: EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY
- POLITICAL PROCESS
- POLITICAL ACTORS
- PROGRESS/REGRESS
- REGULATION OF THE PROCESS

Source domain: JOURNEY
- DIRECTION
- SPEED
- DISTANCE
- MEANS OF TRAVEL
- OBSTACLE
- TRAFFIC LIGHTS
- DISTANCE SIGN
- ROAD MAP
- ...

Table 1 The selection of map-able features in the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY

However, not all the aspects of the source necessarily map onto the target and some mappings are more extensive than others. For instance, the journey metaphor appears in all of the examples above, yet they display different mappings: (a) illustrates the journey metaphor by highlighting, in addition the direction of movement, the naturalness of the journey, (b) emphasizes direction and speed, (c) approaching the finishing point of the journey, (d) and (e) obstacles for the journey, (f) traffic lights, (g) distance signs, (h) means of travel and (i) road map (see Table 2).

Table 2 Examples of correspondences or mappings in the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY

Journey is not, however, the only way to conceptualize Bulgaria’s EU integration. Some metaphorical expressions in which the family metaphor with its two different forms – EU ACCESSION IS RETURNING TO THE EUROPEAN FAMILY and EU ACCESSION IS JOINING THE EUROPEAN FAMILY – appears include:

* the symbol ‘⇒’ should be interpreted as ‘possible correspondence between the source and target domain’
The completion of the negotiations means a lot. This does not merely mean 31 chapters on which separate negotiations have been completed. These are not only agreements on quotas, on milk, on eggs, on wine, etc. They mean something much more: Bulgaria has become part of the European family.

Bulgaria is returning to the family of European nations to which it brings its millennial history and unique culture.

I have no doubts that in less than three years we Bulgarians will rejoin finally the family of the European democracies.

In the examples given so far, the target domain EU ACCESSION is conceptualized through two different source domains (JOURNEY and FAMILY). The metaphors are not in conflict with each other, but each of the metaphorical mappings highlights a different set of features. The journey metaphor through prioritizing characteristics such as direction, means of travel, speed, obstacles on the road, road signs and movement regulations highlights aspects such as the goal (or destination) of the integration process, ways to achieve it, impediments/aspects facilitating the process and the regulation of the process. The family metaphor highlights a whole different set of issues. By emphasizing aspects related to family relationships, such as marriage, courtship, engagement, wedding, divorce, partners, relatives (e.g. brother) etc. it brings to the fore the kind the relationship between the candidate country and the EU and the conditions on which the accession is made. While highlighting some features, each metaphor obscures others. For instance, every time the journey metaphor is used, the aspects related to the relationship between the EU and the acceding country remain hidden.

The cognitive theory’s epistemology is based on ‘experiential’ or ‘embodied’ realism. It argues that the human conceptual system has its origins primarily in everyday bodily experiences that are projected onto more abstract categories. Lakoff and Johnson’s assumption is that our physical experiences give rise to more abstract concepts through metaphorical mapping. For example, standing up signifies health and lying down represents illness. This translates metaphorically in up is more/good and down is less/bad. Based on this notion, Lakoff and Johnson distinguish between orientational metaphors (which have to do with spatial orientation e.g. UP IS MORE), structural metaphors (cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another, e.g. ARGUMENT IS WAR which is the example used by Lakoff and Johnson or EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY and ontological metaphors (that is, ways of viewing activities, emotions, ideas, etc. as entities and substances, e.g. STATES ARE PERSONS).

Another important aspect is the conventionality of metaphors. Conceptual metaphors can be placed along a continuum, with ‘conventional’ metaphors at one extreme and ‘novel’ metaphors at the other. The former are well known and widely used within a community whereas the latter are less common. If the JOURNEY BY TRAIN form of the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY is quite frequent in the discourse of Bulgaria’s EU accession, as in the following example:

What we have done is placing the train on steady rail tracks: the train progresses in a definite direction at a definite speed. From now on we would not let this train to be stopped.

the JOURNEY BY CART variant is certainly far less common:

We knew that we had to pull the cart for both countries [Bulgaria and Romania]. And that was precisely what we did.

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20 Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, bTV, ‘V Desetkata’ talk show, 20 June 2004; italics added.
22 Lecture by Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, ‘Bulgaria’s new role in the region after its accession to NATO and as a potential EU member’, 12 May 2004, Bulgarian National Palace of Culture; italics added.
23 Interview with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, bTV, ‘This Morning’ political talk show, 6 October 2004; italics added.
24 Interview with Bulgarian Minister of European Affairs Meglena Kuneva, Bulgarian National Television, Channel 1, ‘The Day Begins’, 6 January 2005; italics added.
Metaphoric linguistic expressions reflecting a conceptual metaphor can also be more or less conventional. The cognitive theory claims that metaphor use is mostly unconscious and argues its case by using mostly conventional conceptual metaphors and their respective conventional linguistic examples.

Viewing metaphors as concepts that structure thought allows us to see their importance in a new light. Lakoff and Johnson suggest that:

Metaphors have entailments through which they highlight and make coherent certain aspects of our experience.

A given metaphor may be the only way to highlight and coherently organize exactly those aspects of our experience.

Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (p.156)

To return to one of the examples mentioned before, namely EU ACCESSION IS JOINING THE EUROPEAN FAMILY, the family metaphor generates a network of ‘entailments’. We can imagine at least two scenarios for becoming part of a family: marriage and adoption. Let us discuss the marriage scenario in more detail. It requires two partners who have previously been lovers/fiancés (but it can also be a marriage of interest or an arranged marriage) partners make commitments to each other, each is assumed to take certain responsibilities, they are to make decisions together and others have various roles vis-à-vis the couple (e.g. that of extra-marital lovers/suitors). The wedding metaphor highlights certain aspects of reality and hides others. The cognitive theory suggests that the metaphor is not merely a way of describing reality but its acceptance provides grounds for certain actions. According the wedding metaphor, the candidate country has to follow its commitments by e.g. continuing the implementation of reforms, assume responsibilities through, for instance, securitizing the Eastern border and avoid extra-marital affairs, such as making certain agreements with the US which contravene to the EU’s stance. The marriage metaphor also brings to the fore the gendering aspect: who is the groom and who is the bride?

The cognitive theory has opened a new door to the study of metaphors for social and political analysts. It has shifted the concern from metaphor as meaning-producing towards the ways in which meaning-producing metaphors structure the ways in which people make sense of the world (Mottier 2005). For the student of political matters, this implies that it makes sense to study metaphors because an investigation of metaphors in one sphere of politics, such as the EU accession, captures an important dimension of political thinking in that given area. According to Lakoff and Johnson the study of political metaphors is a meaningful activity as

[Political and economic ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms. Like all other metaphors, political and economic metaphors can hide aspects of reality. But in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more, because they constrain our lives. A metaphor in a political or economic system, by virtue of what it hides, can lead to human degradation. (p. 236)]

However, people are not equally positioned in influencing which metaphors are accepted. As Lakoff and Johnson put it, metaphors evolve in our culture for a long period of time but also many metaphors ‘are imposed upon us by people in power – political leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, advertisers, the media’ (p.160). Or even more decisively: ‘whether in national politics or in everyday interaction, people in power get to impose their metaphors’ (p. 157).

The cognitive theory has revolutionized the study of metaphor and it has sparked a number of empirical analyses of political metaphors. George Lakoff is himself the author of several of them. However, the cognitive theory of metaphor has also been sharply criticized. Some of the points of criticism are more general and others are especially problematic from the point of view of the student of social and political matters.
Critiquing the cognitive theory of metaphor

The purpose here is not to reiterate all the criticisms that have been levelled against the cognitive theory of metaphor. I rather summarize some general points of criticism and insist on those aspects which make problematic the application of the cognitive theory to social and political issues. One general point of criticism involves the adequacy of the metaphorical label used to characterize a set of linguistic expressions. For instance, I would suggest that the example ‘Which are Bulgaria's and our responsibilities in the final lap of our accession to the EU?’25 is an expression of the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY. But could it be that a more general mapping, such as EU ACCESSION IS MOTION, or a more specific mapping, such as EU ACCESSION IS A RACE, is a more appropriate characterization? If this aspect can be relegated to a matter of details, as the labelling of metaphorical mappings serves primarily their mnemonic identification (Santa Ana 2002: 45) the criticism related to the following example is more serious. To which conceptual mapping does the statement ‘We are all eager to see in our everyday life the benefits from our accession to the European family’26 belong? Is it EU ACCESSION IS JOINING THE EUROPEAN FAMILY as the European family suggests or EU ACCESSION IS A BUSINESS (which implies a cost-benefit analysis of accession) as benefits would indicate or maybe a MARRIAGE OF INTEREST by adding together family and benefits? Lakoff did not elaborate a clear procedure for grouping linguistic expressions into conceptual metaphors. Nor did he discuss metaphor ambiguity which is at the roots of the problem. As Deborah Stone has it: ‘Politics is more like art than science in that ambiguity is central. Some people think that is a good thing; others, a bad thing. But whatever one’s assessment, a type of policy analysis that does not make room for the centrality of ambiguity in politics can be of little use in the real world’ (1988: 123).

Critics of the Lakovian theory have also pointed out that many of its claims about thought are unverified or cannot be verified at all. As James Hampton remarked: ‘Lakoff’s game is easy to play, and hard to test’27. Vervaeke and Kennedy suggested an alternative hypothesis: instead of implicit metaphors structuring our thought, we change our metaphors to follow our ideas28. Another point of criticism concerns the circularity of argumentation in the cognitive theory: the existence of metaphor is taken as testimony that one domain is experienced in terms of another and then this hypothesized transfer of experience is used to explain how metaphors operate (see e.g. Billig and MacMillan 2005: 462, Musolff 2004: 32). For instance, cognitive theory would suggest that the existence of the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY represents evidence that EU accession is experienced in terms of a journey and the presence of the metaphor then structures our thinking of EU accession in terms of a journey. Furthermore, it has been noted that by concentrating on the cognitive function of metaphor the Lakovian theory neglects the other roles that metaphors can play in discourses, such as the rhetorical and heuristic roles of metaphors (e.g. Maasen and Weingart 2000: 34, Shinko 2004: 201-2).

One last general point of criticism that I want to raise here concerns the lack of attention to the non-linguistic realization of metaphors, which brings again to the fore the ambiguity of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson use verbal examples to illustrate their theory, but it is central to their argumentation that metaphor is a kind of conceptualization which is not restricted to language. Another well known proponent of the cognitive theory of metaphor, Zoltán Kövecses, makes the point even clearer: ‘if metaphors are primarily conceptual, then they must realize themselves in other than linguistic ways’ (Kövecses 2002: 52). However, cognitive linguists seem so preoccupied with establishing the cognitive basis of metaphor that they largely ignore

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25 Lecture by Bulgarian Foreign Minister Passy to students and lecturers at the Bourgas Free University, 11 October 2004; italics added.
26 Speech of Bulgarian Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg from the floor of the National Assembly on the ratification of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Union, 11 May 2005; italics added.
the problems raised by the specific form in which a metaphor is realized and how the form of expression influences on the meaning of the metaphor (see e.g. El Refaie 2003).

Consider the following cartoon from the Bulgarian newspaper Dnevnik:

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1 Ivan Kutuzov in Dnevnik, 7 October 2004

‘National politics and Eurointegration’

The cartoon pictures a man who has stripped off the traditional dress (notice the traditional hat, shirt and footwear) and runs naked towards an EU symbolized by stars. In the absence of an explicit verbalisation, we start wondering what could be the metaphor in this cartoon (if any) and what point does it make. Is this an expression of the conceptual metaphor EU ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY or rather a metonymical expression of the current (and possible intensifying after accession) emigration of Bulgarians to various EU countries? When metaphors are realized pictorially, often either the source or, more commonly, the target – as in the cartoon in Figure 1 – is not shown explicitly at all. Reading pictorial metaphors is hence not always as straightforward as cognitive linguists seem to suggest in their brief discussion of non-verbal realization of metaphors. Moreover, if we agree that the cartoon gives the metaphor an ironic twist, what could be the meaning of the metaphor in this context?

Cognitive linguistics’ understanding of context, power and subjectivity are also problematic aspects, especially from the perspective of those interested in the social and political analysis of metaphors. Let us take context first. It is not an uncommon practice for cognitive linguists to collect clusters of common metaphors, divorce them from the context of their usage and then hypothesize what experience such metaphors might express (Billig and MacMillan 2005). Metaphor analyses based on the study of dictionaries or thesauruses are not uncommon among cognitive linguists. Kövecses (2006), for instance, presented an analysis of metaphors for women and men in American slang on the basis of two American slang thesauruses. Even when the idea of context is part of the cognitively inspired analysis of metaphors, its understanding is restricted to the specific interaction only. As such, it ignores ‘the wider power relations or political events that set the stage for and structure a particular communicative local interaction’ (Mottier 2005). If we return to the cartoon in Figure 1, any attempt at reading the metaphor(s) would benefit from taking into consideration not only the importance attributed to Bulgaria’s EU accession at the time that the cartoon was published, but also the wider relations of power that characterize the Bulgarian context, such as the Balkanist discourse. This is not to say, however, that only one reading of the cartoon is possible.

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29 In Dnevnik the cartoon is published together with an article and both cover a common topic. ‘National politics and Eurointegration’ is the title of the article accompanying the cartoon in Figure1.

30 I am indebted to Christine Sylvester for the alternative reading of the cartoon as Bulgarian emigration.

31 See Forceville 1996 for an in-depth discussion of pictorial metaphors in advertisement.

32 Like Orientalism, Balkanism is organized around a set of binaries (rational/irrational, centre/periphery, civilization/barbarism) arranged hierarchically so that the first sign (‘Europe’) is always primary and definitional of the second (‘Balkans’), and so the second is always an internal effect of the first. The most fervent critique of Balkanist discourse, Maria Todorova, argues in her highly influential Imagining the Balkans, that the term Balkan has become ‘one of the most powerful pejorative designations in history, international relations, political science, and, nowadays, general intellectual discourse’ (Todorova 1997: 7). The rhetoric in this view amounts to ‘a persistent hegemonic discourse from the West, continuously disparaging about the Balkans, which sends out messages about
Forceville’s experiments involving verbo-pictorial metaphors in billboards show that although the central meanings tend to be strongly implicated, individual interpretations differ significantly from each other (1996: 165-99). Similarly, El Refaie (2005) finds a great deal of variation in the reading of political cartoons.

For those interested in the wider analysis of social and political metaphors, cognitive linguistics’ conceptualization of power is too narrow. Power is not a concept that Lakovian theory would be directly interested in. However, I argue that the implicit understanding of power is resonant with the conceptualization of power as power with a face – that is, the understanding of power as an instrument that powerful agents use to alter the free action of the powerless. Furthermore, the implicit conceptualization of power constrains the forms of political discourse that are taken into consideration in metaphor analysis to politicians’ rhetoric and main media reports and also informs the questions that can be formulated. Theorists of power-with-a face suggest the questions that we should ask in relation to metaphors: ‘How did the political elites, on the inter-governmental and/or on the domestic level, seek to impose their own metaphors?’, ‘How successful were they, and what were the consequences?’ As such, they ignore that all actors are situated within relations of power that delimit the field of what is possible for all social actors.

The narrow conceptualization of power is accompanied by an attendant belief in pre-constituted subjectivities. The cognitive-linguistic literature claims that metaphorical processes are one of the most important means, though not the only one, by which humans form concepts of, and reason about, their environment. Moreover, it argues that cognitive processes are linked to bodily experience. That subjectivity operates from the materiality of the body – or in the words of Lakoff and Johnson (1999) ‘[T]he mind is inherently embodied’ – is a valuable point. But the problem here is with the conceptualization of the ‘body’. Indeed, cognitive linguists tend to see the body as a ‘given’ and ignore a whole body of literature (e.g. Foucault, Butler) which has powerfully argued that embodied experience is the outcome of a learning, of ‘work’ and hence eventually a cultural product (see also Mottier 2005).

All the points discussed above and especially the lack of attention to the ambiguity of metaphors, the narrow conceptualization of context, power and subjectivity in the cognitive theory prompts us to find ways to take the analysis of metaphors in social and political contexts a step further. This paper suggests that the Foucauldian discourse theory could work as a rich source of inspiration for those interested in the analysis of social and political metaphors.

The socio-political mind: towards a discursive notion of metaphor

Turning to Foucauldian discourse analysis is no coincidence here. The intention is to separate metaphor from its predominant linguistic use and make it more suitable for social and political analysis. ‘Discursive’ here does not mean linguistic or conscious, but rather meaningful use. Or one might exchange the term discourse with praxis, since discursive refers to an ensemble of conscious, linguistic, behavioural and ‘material’ elements (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). ‘A discourse, i.e. a system of statements in which each individual statement makes sense, produces interpretative possibilities by making it virtually impossible to think outside it’ (Doty 1993: 302).

Discourse is powerful, but is powerful in a particular way. Discourse is powerful because it is productive. Discourses produce the objects they speak about. This, however, should not be interpreted as a denial of the existence of the material world. As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe clearly explained:

\[t\]he fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/ idealism opposition … What is denied is not that … objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different...
assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside of any discursive condition of emergence (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 108).

The categorisation of subjectivity as ‘what we are’ is exposed as ‘something entirely phantasmatic’ as there is no ground to subjectivity (Lloyd 1996: 1399). Subjectivity is not something that we have, nor something we achieve, rather it is what we ‘do’.

Against the prevailing understanding of power as an instrument used by powerful agents, Foucauldian discourse theory re-conceptualize power as a social process of constituting what actors are as social beings through systems of knowledge and discursive practices. Power’s mechanisms, from this position, are conceived not as instruments powerful agents use to coerce, manipulate or prevent the powerless from acting independently or authentically, but as boundaries that define the field of what is socially possible for all social actors. Hayward’s (2000) metaphor of ‘de-faced power’ or ‘power-without-a-face’ beautifully captures this conceptualization.

Scholars of power de-faced argue that all social actors are situated within relations of power, but this is not to mean that they are equally or similarly situated. Rather there are usually patterned asymmetries in the social capacity for action, meaning some actors are positioned such that they can act on power’s mechanisms in ways that shape the field of possibility for the others. But students of power de-faced do not reduce these positions to qualitatively distinguishable states of ‘powerfulness’ and ‘powerlessness’. Instead of asking ‘who has power?’ and ‘how is power used?’, they ask ‘how do power’s mechanisms define the (im)possible, the (im)probable, the natural, the normal, what counts as a problem?’ and ‘how do the workings of power produce (political) subjectivities?’.

What are the implications of discourse analysis for the study of metaphor then? Discourse theory shifts the analysis of metaphors from the level of thought to the level of discourse. Instead of analysing complex and even contradictory systems of metaphors operating below the surface of discourses, the discursive approach looks into the operation of metaphors at the level of discourses. From this perspective, then, metaphor can be described as a principle of arrangement and diffusion of knowledge. Within the order of discourse, metaphors are effective elements in the interplay of power/knowledge. Metaphors are not power itself but vehicles through which power operates or is resisted.

Discourse analysis suggests ways to read visual metaphors. It argues that although ‘individuals can read texts/images in multiple ways, they often do so by drawing on a range of discourses that are “out there”’ (Ali 2004: 274). Returning to Figure 1, in order to say that the cartoon has something to do with EU accession and Balkanist discourse, you have to already have an understanding of what EU accession and Balkanism imply. Because of the inherent ambiguity of metaphor, the same metaphor can ‘speak’ power in some contexts and resist power in others. In relation to the cartoon in Figure 1, could we suggest that the ironic twist (the chubby man running naked) undermines the hegemonic pattern of the journey metaphor?

Final remarks

This paper illustrates my journey in search of a fruitful methodology to be applied to the analysis of social and political metaphors. The beginning was troublesome.

Many roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel all
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down others as far as I could
To where they bent in the undergrowth

The road I chose took me to linguistics, a field where metaphor is at home. With the help of examples from my current research on EU accession discourses in Bulgaria I discussed the substitution, interaction and cognitive theories of metaphor. Once reaching the cognitive

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34 Adapted from Frost (1920).
milestone, I stopped for a while and reflected: could it be my destination? At first, I was tempted to answer in affirmative. The cognitive theory, in the form advanced by Lakoff and Johnson, has no doubt revolutionized the study of metaphor. It powerfully argues that metaphor is not just a matter of language, but rather a kind of conceptualization which is part of our mundane, every-day thinking. If our experiences and conceptualizations are organized in terms of metaphors, then politics, as part of the social domain, must also be perceived and constructed metaphorically. However, while not wishing to deny the usefulness of such studies, the cognitive theory remains a theory developed by linguists and primarily for linguistic use. I hit the road again and suggested that locating the analysis of metaphors within a discourse analytic framework which takes into account the inherent ambiguity of metaphor and issues of context, power and subjectivity would be more fruitful for those interested in the social and political aspects of metaphors.

References


Frost, Robert (1920), ‘The Road Not Taken’, Mountain Interval.


Children as researchers

Tove I. Dahl*

Abstract

What value might children have in research as collaborators or researchers and how might the academic community facilitate that? This paper looks at the unique perspectives children can provide when directly involved in the research process – acknowledging both the tremendous lessons to be learned and the great responsibilities that learning such lessons might entail. More specifically, issues related to methodological considerations, the nature of the research process itself (question identification and formulation, data collection, data interpretation and the sharing of results), potential risks and benefits as well as the ethics involved in such endeavors are addressed. Arguments are made that the benefits of involving children and youth in the research process can far outweigh the risks, and concrete illustrative examples are provided. Still, if children are to be directly involved in research, careful, thoughtful attention must be paid to the entire process in order to ensure justifiable success for the young researchers themselves, those they study and their adult collaborators.

Introduction

The aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami left tremendous devastation. Thousands of people died, more were left homeless, and entire regions had to be rebuilt from scratch. This set in motion an unparalleled engagement from outside organizations to help. Basic needs like food, shelter, health care and sanitation were provided for by the hundreds of organizations that stepped in. Of the 890 agencies involved in the post-tsunami operations in Sri Lanka, however, only 4% had a child focus in their activities, and the majority of those focused primarily on providing for children’s physical needs (Plan International, 2005). Aside from a small handful of those 4%, virtually none had prepared their staff to respond to children in other ways.

Meanwhile, substantial reconstruction work was being done by the residents of the afflicted areas themselves (Plan International, 2005). And what did the children do? They helped domestically – advising, encouraging and heartening friends, collecting and sharing food with others, helping with the cooking, caring for and helping siblings and older people, standing in line for goods and services, cheering up their parents, and playing with children whose parents had died. They helped with social services – bringing injured people to hospitals, distributing goods, typing lists of necessary information, helping maintain security at temporary shelters, helping trace scattered families and constructing coffins. They helped with reconstruction – cleaning, collecting things, dealing with garbage, repairing and building houses, building fences, clearing roadways and putting down gravel for new roads. They helped disseminate news and information, and they even gave feedback to helping organizations and led prayer groups.

Many were fatefully involved in the lives of others. Imagine the experience of this young Sri Lankan who was left on her own to cope with the aftermath:

I was going on a trip with my aunt’s family. I live with them. When the waves came, my father and I ran to warn another aunt. They did not listen to us. They shouted at us and we rushed back. Everyone was trying to board a bus. A girl cousin gave me her infant baby to hold while she got on the bus. I held the baby and could not enter the bus. Later I gave the baby to another passenger and tried to climb in. Then I saw a small boy cousin of mine struggling to get in. He was alone. I did not want to leave him there. So I got off the bus. We were left behind. I ran with my little cousin. We somehow managed to get into a van. It took us to a temple far away. We stayed there one day without knowing what happened to our families. I looked after my little cousin and tried to find our families. I told the police and the priest of the temple. They sent us to another camp nearby but my family was not there. On the third day a person from the

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village said he saw our family in another camp. We stayed in this camp for several weeks before we moved to a temporary house (Plan International, 2005) (p. 18).

As significant as her contribution and those of many other children were, I was struck, when I read about them, by how absent this picture of their tremendous resourcefulness was in the media and other reports from the aftermath. If all this activity did, indeed, take place, how did some come to know this, and so many others not?

Plan International came to know this through the children themselves. They conducted a large study in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand that went beyond what the adults saw and experienced in the aftermath (Plan International, 2005). For their study, they consulted directly with children and youth on their own terms about their post-tsunami experiences, gleaning also children’s recommendations for what can be done better before, during and after such disasters that may occur in the future. The findings are, of course, remarkable in terms of revealing what children are capable of. To me, they are even more remarkable in terms of invisible they were until someone thought to ask. On kids’ terms.

What else are we missing when we forget to include children and youth in research, forgetting to ask about their experiences, as experts, on their own terms, using their own words or expressions about their lives? As another young Sri Lankan bemoaned, “When we tried to tell the adults of any gaps in the services, they were angry with us. They told us that children should behave like children and not interfere in adults’ work. We do not think it was fair for them to say so” (Plan International, 2005)(p. 5). What a loss.

So starts the intellectual journey that these tsunami children’s stories led me to take, exploring what it takes to involve children directly in the research process. Though my journey took me back and forth from theory to practice to empirical studies to essays, I have tried to make sense of it all by structuring what I have learned along the way around two different ways that a skeptic might read the title of this paper: “Children as researchers?” and “Children as researchers?”. In trying to understand what the answer to the first question entails, I briefly present how children are regarded in different research traditions and what implications those perspectives have for how we involve children in any research process. In trying to understand what the answer to the second question entails, I present methodological and research design considerations for how we can effectively involve children in research, the many different ways we can involve children in the research process itself, and the risks and benefits associated with involving children at all. I end the journey with questions rather than answers about important ethical considerations that this new and quickly expanding research approach poses to us as adult researchers – both when responding to research done by children and, surely more and more, when collaborating with children in our own peace research.

Children as researchers?

If children ought to behave like children, what does that mean? What is a child? The way we think of them influences how we regard and approach them when it comes to the ethics and methods used in research on the youth experience (Roberts, 2000). The most basic definition of a child, as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is “every human being below the age of eighteen years” (UNHCR, 1989). However, that definition is much too simplistic in terms of how children are regarded in research.

Traditionally, in research, children have been regarded as objects of study – people to be acted upon by others and protected as objects in the research process (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002). They are assumed to be dependent upon adults. In this role, particularly in behavioral research, children are to be observed or involved in systematic experiments where their awareness or interpretation of the investigation’s purpose and outcomes are not valued or involved (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000).

Children have later become regarded as subjects of study in the research world. This is a more child-centered approach where children are regarded as thinking, acting, autonomous people (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). From this perspective, researchers take on a different kind of responsibility for children’s involvement, recognizing them as research participants with rights that warrant protection. Accordingly, when the
interests of the investigator fall secondary to the rights of the child, it becomes incumbent upon
the researcher to inform children of the nature of their research so that the children can choose
whether or not they wish to participate – even if parental consent has already been secured.

Most recently, in the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children in
research have become regarded as individuals who are active rather than passive in their
autonomy and who can help others co-produce new knowledge and understandings (P.
Christensen & Prout, 2002; McLaughlin, 2005). As individuals who act, change and influence
change in others, it has also been recognized that the social dynamics and interpersonal
relationships involved in carrying out research influences how youth (or anyone, for that matter)
engage in the research process. Ultimately, this influences outcomes and how they may be
interpreted (McLaughlin, 2005; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). From this perspective, then,
children are considered co-participants in the research process.

Regardless of which research perspective we operate with, the question remains
whether age should be regarded as a barrier or a variable in the research process. Childhood
poses barriers to research if one regards children, because of their age or lack of experience, as
vulnerable, incompetent and/or powerless (Morrow & Richards, 1996). From more traditional
research perspectives, those kinds of barriers would limit research. On the other hand, if
vulnerability is regarded as a matter of physical weakness or lack of experience, for example,
they can be treated as variables and accounted for in one’s research design. If one thinks of
competence related to how adult-like one is, then, again, age could be regarded as a barrier. On
the other hand, if one thinks of children as different from rather than lesser than adults, then one
can also treat the difference as a variable and account for that in one’s research design. Finally,
if powerlessness is a matter of opportunity, then that, again, could be treated as a variable and
accounted for in one’s design.

In her book on how to train children and youth to do research, Mary Kellett, drawing on
her own experience training children to be researchers, asserts that it is absolutely possible for
young people aged 12-14, and for gifted children aged 9-10, to conduct quality research
(Kellett, 2005b). Her belief in children’s ability to do research with other children has been
validated by a healthy production of interesting studies initiated, carried out and shared by
children at the Children’s Research Centre at The Open University in the UK. Roberts (2000),
like Kellett, summarizes that if children “are willing to give their views on subjects on which
they are in a sense ‘experts’… we should be willing to listen to what they have to say, and
incorporate their views into our understandings of what it is to be a child or a young person” (p.
235). In other words, if they can do it, let’s assist them and learn from their work.

Children as researchers?

These considerations about what a child is are most relevant when considering whether
we should do research with them at all. When reflecting on the possibility of children as
researchers, the first question worth raising is if there is any value added to our research by
involving children (Hill, 1997; McLaughlin, 2005). If so, what impact might findings from such
collaborations have? It is worth acknowledging that children are experts in their own right on
the experience of childhood. Any view they have on phenomena that involve them should
matter to others trying to understand those phenomena more fully (McLaughlin, 2005).
Likewise, their views may not be available to adults any other way than through other children
(Kellett, Forrest, Dent, & Ward, 2004). By allowing children to be involved in research the
research process with children, there are perspectives that may be shared and understood that
would otherwise be missed by adults.

After all, in many ways, though not necessarily all, children understand and experience
the world differently from adults (O’Kane, 2000). They also communicate differently from
adults. That being the case, it is natural to think that the research methods and ethical
considerations used with adults may not always be appropriate or sufficient when collaborating
with children. So, the way we involve children in the research process ought to take those
differences into account in how research is designed.
Indeed, involving children in research process will influence the kinds of choices we make about the role of the researcher, the methodologies we use, and the way we analyze and interpret the data (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002). It will also influence the ethical principles and practices we choose to follow. Because our approach to how we think about and involve children and youth in the research process does influence how research is conducted, it should not be surprising that involving kids in the data collection and interpretive process has been shown to influence the findings that research yields (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). Given this, what might be important methodological considerations when we choose to involve children as researchers?

**Methodological considerations**

Practical issues related to how we give young people voice through research and what methods we use to do that include (Fielding, 2004): (1) the caveats of speaking about others, (2) the caveats of speaking for others, and (3) how seriously young people’s voices are taken by those who it is important for young people to be heard by. In sharing what we learn from youth, it is important that when we do speak about or for them, we do so supportively. Better yet, it is beneficial to let youth speak for themselves and engage others in dialog with them. When possible, it can be particularly fruitful to let trained youth engage as (co)researchers where they can be a part of setting and carrying out the entire research agenda more or less on their own terms.

If we want to involve children as co-researchers with adults, or even independent researchers under adult supervision, the perspective of children as participants in the research process invites the use of more participatory-oriented methods of research. Let me briefly introduce three methods in draw from this perspective: phenomenology, Participatory Action Research and Participatory Rural Appraisal. In broad terms, phenomenology is perhaps more data oriented in focus than the more participatory methods of participatory action research and participatory rural appraisal. The second two tend to be more relational and social in focus.

**Phenomenology.** Phenomenology is a method that strives to ascertain an understanding of a phenomenon as it is subjectively experienced (Grover, 2004; Smith, 1995a). Phenomenology is regarded as a primarily qualitative method whose strength lies in its aim to yield both authentic and valid data from which beliefs or psychological constructs can be derived (Smith, 1995b). The goal is therefore to derive themes of meanings from the data that represent the world as the research respondents experience it, acknowledging the informativeness of both the participants’ and the researcher’s perspectives in the final analysis (Tesch, 1990). Given the nature of the phenomenological method, its strength lies in its explanatory more than its predictive power.

The researcher in the phenomenological tradition has a special responsibility to remain acutely aware of the data yielded, not transforming it in any way that changes the original message (or data) provided by the research participant (Grover, 2004). In fact, it is incumbent upon the researcher using this method to relinquish power and voice to the research subject and to acknowledge the researcher’s own potential biases in all aspects of the research process (Fielding, 2004). Since academic language is often used to paraphrase the experience of the person or group being researched, researchers therefore have a responsibility in this tradition to be as explicit as possible about how that is done.

**Participatory Action Research (PAR).** PAR is more a philosophy than a method, though a philosophy with clear methodological implications. The philosophy is rooted in the fair representation and empowerment of research participants (Nieuwenhuys, 2004). The goal of PAR is to engage in genuine collaborations through which one seeks knowledge that is useful to the participating group of people. A parallel goal is to use that knowledge in a way that empowers the research participants. As such, this philosophy is about using methods to contribute to social transformation.

The research process in PAR is important for facilitating learning among the research participants since the PAR goal is to actively involve participants in the construction of new knowledge that they can later use for themselves and others in positive ways (Nieuwenhuys, 2004). At the same time, the researcher has a responsibility to be sure that what is learned is
properly shared with targeted others who can use that knowledge to improve the conditions or circumstances of the research participants. In essence, an adult researcher working with children in the PAR framework serves as "a responsible person who is thinking and rethinking constantly what s/he is doing and is sharing this process of knowledge generation with the youngsters with whom PAR is carried out" (p. 215).

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). As already indicated, PRA is similar to PAR in philosophy, though it is even more specific in its methodological implications with the goal of fostering the use of research methods that are as transparent as possible to its constituent groups (O’Kane, 2000). Like PAR, in PRA, everyone involved in research – researchers and participants alike – are all considered co-constructors of knowledge. Coming in part from the tradition of Paulo Freire, this means that power, control and authority are all considered factors of the research process that must be explicitly addressed in the research design. Power relationships can be equalized in research with children by foregrounding children’s subjective experiences (Mauthner, 1997). Doing so, however, requires adopting a flexible approach that gives youth the power to influence the terms of their involvement. Research tactics frequently used in PRA encourage children to share their knowledge through the telling of stories or anecdotes about their daily lives.

In PRA, the process of data collection is regarded as important as the data itself, and it typically involves methods that are dialog and action-based (O’Kane, 2000). Because it is not taken for granted that participants are literate, reading and writing skills are relied upon less than other means of knowledge sharing such as the creation of visual impressions and other active presentations of ideas.

Research Design

Mindfulness. Experience suggests that building confidence in child participants and in the adults and other children associated with the research is important for the success of any methodology (Save the Children, 2004). In particular, Save the Children advises we be mindful of (1) respect for children, (2) children’s enjoyment of the research process, (3) flexibility of mind – remaining open and operating with as few assumptions as possible about the participating children, and (4) presence of mind – appreciating the importance of children’s experiences in the here and now.

Time. In order to create a positive environment for research, particularly with children, it may take quite a bit of time to get to know the people and relevant supportive bodies where research may take place (McLaughlin, 2005; Save the Children, 2004). Time not spent on this may have profound effects on the data collected. Likewise, when working with younger children, the work may take longer to complete than when working with older collaborators. If young collaborators are viewed as important for what we want to learn, then time, again, becomes an important factor to weigh in the formulation for the research design.

Research tactics. In research with children, research tactics, like methods, vary. Still, all have their strengths and weaknesses. As for all good research, it is important that whatever method and research tactics we choose to use, they adequately serve the question being investigated. One of the most important additional considerations when making methodological or tactical decisions when doing research with children is “Is it a child-friendly approach?” (Save the Children, 2004).

When surveying the particular research tactics used by youth researchers, you find that the range used is broad, including both qualitative and quantitative methods. It seems that any number of tactics can be child-friendly as long as they are appropriately adapted. For example, young researchers have been known to use quite conventional methods like questionnaires, focus groups, email correspondence, interviews, discussion groups, postal questionnaire surveys, text analysis, observation, standard scales, on-line think-aloud protocols, journaling, eliciting responses to world-choice or picture prompts, vignettes with responses, and polls. They have also been known to use some less used methods like activity-based sessions, let’s pretend work, the statement of wishes, 24-hour recall tasks, drawing, playing games, songs, mapping, drama, pots and beans, diamond rankings and model building (Alderson, 2000; Carnegie Young People Initiative, 2001; Hill, 1997; Mauthner, 1997; Morrow & Richards, 1996; O’Kane, 2000).
Regardless of which methods children actually use, creativity and triangulation have been found to be as important in research with child collaborators as in any other research (Hart & Tyrer, 2006; Hill, 1997).

The research process

Children can be involved in either primary or secondary research, though they have tended to be involved far less in the latter than the former (Save the Children, 2004). Secondary research – the critical examination and consideration of research that has already been done by others – is usually the first step taken prior to primary research. It does not involve the direct collection of information from research participants, and it can be important to the shaping of agendas for primary research. Though most of the research illustrations provided here come from primary research, it is important to keep in mind the important learning that can come from involving youth in secondary research as well.

Though any number of methodologies and research tactics may be used by young researchers, the research process itself has several steps that adults may choose to involve children in to differing degrees. For example, in primary research, children may be involved in question identification or formulation, the setting up of the study design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation and/or the sharing of the results. Again, however children are involved, that will likely influence the final outcome. To illustrate this point, I offer several concrete examples as food for thought.

When working with children as researchers, some degree of participation is necessary no matter which phase of the research process children are involved in (Nieuwenhuys, 2004). Nevertheless, there is quite a bit of uncertainty about how much one should involve children in decision-making, particularly when interested in informing change that may be effective and lasting (Sinclair, 2004). Drawing from Hart’s 8-step ladder model, Nieuwenhuys (2004) underscores that that adults can engage children’s participation at any number of levels – from pure manipulation, to decoration, to token participation, to being assigned tasks about which children have been informed, to being consulted with to do tasks that responsible adults have informed them about, to doing tasks that are adult-initiated but that children share in making decisions about, initiating tasks that children carry out themselves under the direction of responsible adults, or initiating tasks that children carry out while sharing decision making along the way with responsible adults. Clearly, the kind of tasks that children are involved in and the level of participation they are allowed will influence what we can learn from them. The kinds of “research agendas children prioritise, the research questions they frame and the way in which they collect data are substantially different from adults and all of this can offer valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge” counsels Kellett (2005, p. 8). However we involve children in the research process, it remains important for adults to be present for support, problem-solving and debriefing every step of the way (McLaughlin, 2005).

Question identification or formulation. Even when adults aim to work with research models that are youth-led, adult led or co-led by adults and youth, it typically is adults who have done the secondary research groundwork and who decide upon the kind of primary research that will be done thereafter (McLaughlin, 2005). That is something, power-wise, that is worth remembering, revisiting and reflecting upon in order to make the youth-, or the co-led perspectives to really work as intended.

In the actual formulation of the questions, children offer unique strengths. For example, they can be important for identifying appropriate topics, questions and parameters for interviews that other children will respond well to (Alderson, 2001; McLaughlin, 2005). Gillian Mann collected data from 7-11 year old refugee children about the experience of being refugees in Dar es Salaam (Save the Children, 2004). During her preparations, she befriended three teenage boys who had experience as refugees in Congo and Tanzania. As she got to know them, she told them about her main research questions and then asked the boys what they thought would be important to explore and why. They took on the task eagerly and offered lots of questions – some that overlapped with Mann’s initial questions and others not. Some of their questions included “How is life different for refugee children compared to Tanzanian children?”, “Do their [refugee children] parents allow them to speak of ‘home’?” and “What strategies do
children use to hide their refugee identity?” (p. 69). Eventually, two teenage Congolese girls joined the team in their discussions, and ten months were used to really fine-tune the final research questions and develop an appropriate research design. This process elegantly built on the principle of exploring what children themselves are interested in or concerned about, yielding, as others would predict, notable returns (Hart & Tyrer, 2006).

Some studies have also shown that children succeed in eliciting responses from peers that language, generational, power and other such issues between adults and children would hinder (Alderson, 2001; Kellett, Forrest, Dent, & Ward, 2004; Nairn & Smith, 2003). Alderson (2000) offers an interesting example from a study on a housing estate that had a high incidence of accidents and injuries. When adult researchers asked youth about it in various ways, the respondents were not very forthcoming with information. When the researchers instead asked kids themselves how to elicit the desired information, they were encouraged to “Ask us about our scars” – a strategy that resulted in rich data about the accident events at the estate (p. 143).

In another case from Durham, England, a paediatrician working with diabetics wanted to improve the health care delivery of the clinic he worked at (Cairns & Brannen, 2005). Recognizing the advantage that children bring to understanding and reaching other children, he sought the help of youth. The mandate provided was to evaluate the clinic and provide pointers for developing a better program for the diabetic young people who used the clinic. Through a program called Investing in Children, five youth and a project administrator were recruited to lead the project called The 730+ Project (730 injections being the minimum number of injections any diabetic may make in a year). The young 730+ group began by interviewing young clients from the clinic and eventually developed two lines of pursuit that they felt mattered most to the quality of young people’s clinic experiences. Their investigations clarified that the two main issues for youth were the quality of the physical environment of the clinic itself, and the kind of support and information they received about diabetes, especially when first diagnosed. The clinic and greater health community regarded this, and the 730+ group’s subsequent work, as a significant contribution to the clinic’s improved health care delivery.

Data collection. Because children are younger and not as experienced with research as their adult counterparts, there is a concern that children can or will not be as conscientious of the practical and ethical parameters related to data collection. With proper training and/or a healthy collaboration with others who are trained, this need not be a barrier to working with children as researchers.

In a study designed and conducted by 12-year old Paul O’Brien at the Children’s Research Centre, for example, there is clear evidence that young people can do thoughtful, rigorous work. O’Brien’s investigation involved asking 9-12 year olds about their experiences with death (of a relative or a pet) (O’Brien, n.d.). First, 160 students were surveyed with a questionnaire, and then eight were selected for a more in-depth interview. In the survey, it turned out that the vast majority of the children had experience with death, most having experience with the loss of both relatives and pets. The ten interview questions posed to the smaller subgroup of participants covered topics like how the children learned about the deaths, how they experienced them, how they dealt with them, how they were supported through them, and how they may have been affected by them in the long term afterwards. Because it was such a personal topic, O’Brien was sensitive about how he went about asking the questions. In his words:

I did all the interviews on the same day during school time. I was able to use the ICT suite to make it private so nobody could listen in. Each interview lasted about 15 minutes. There was a range of questions about different emotions and different stages of the bereavement. I was trying to make the students as comfortable as possible, as I knew it was an upsetting subject for them to talk about. I gave them a choice of taping the interview using a Dictaphone or for them to write the answers down on an interview sheet (p. 2) (O’Brien, n.d.).

In his selection of the research space and his commitment to helping the young people feel comfortable, O’Brien showed the same kind of sensitivity for his participants as his adult counterparts ideally would have. That he also opened up for alternate ways for the participants to respond was also worth noting.
Recognizing and valuing the value of youth expertise, in her Dar es Salaam refugee research, Gillian Mann collaborated with a 14-year old Congolese girl, Isabelle, during data collection (Save the Children, 2004). Though shy, Isabelle showed remarkable ability to connect with other refugee children and to find creative ways to do the originally planned research more effectively and with greater enjoyment for the participants. She used Congolese songs and make-believe games that engaged the children’s imagination, adapting games that the children already knew to help gather higher quality. As Mann summarized, “Each time we worked together, I learned new skills, new ways of doing things, and new things from the participating children” (p. 19). Isabelle also helped Mann establish relationships with families and children that otherwise might not have been possible.

Interpreting results. From a participatory standpoint, it is important that research conducted in the genuine spirit of collaboration involve children in data interpretation. Even children can be surprised by their findings. Of the many things O’Brien learned in his study in how children were affected by death, for example, he was most surprised to find that the children turned to their families, and especially their parents, for help processing the loss (O’Brien, n.d.). As he remarked, “It was strange that the only people the children asked for comfort from was their family… I would have expected children would really get support from their friends, especially as it seems everyone goes through it” (p. 4). His reflection is compelling and raises the question about who children, like those in the tsunami, might turn to when their parents are gone.

Allowing children to interpret their data does not preclude others’ from interpreting them. The same data can be interpreted by both children and adults. Such analyst triangulation is recommended as one way of verifying and validating one’s findings (Hart & Tyrer, 2006). When interpretations differ, however, involving all relevant parties can be of significant importance when it is a goal to use one’s findings to influence action (Jones, 2004). Jones (2004), for example, warns us that ignoring children’s input on how findings may be interpreted can have severe consequences – for children and others. In a case where both children and adults weighed the information on child labor practices around the world, children agreed with the adults that exploitative and abusive child labor situations should be eliminated, though they did not agree that all aspects of child labor are bad. A surely well-intentioned bill in response to the negative aspects of child labor practices, The 1993 Harkin Bill in the US, called for a boycott of all child-manufactured goods. This ended up being a decision that the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2002 claimed “led to thousands of child workers being dismissed, many of whom then faced destitution” (ILO, 2002, p. 89 as cited in Jones, 2004, p. 127). The ILO concluded that not involving children in the research interpretation process was extremely costly in this particular case, and illustrates how omitting children from this phase of the research process could cause far more harm than good in other cases as well.

Sharing results. In addition to the power of including children in the data interpretation phase of research, the ways in which children share their research can significantly impact who gets exposed to it and how it is understood and perceived. Children often present their work through the gray literature of newspapers, reports, posters, wall displays, graphs, pictures, tape-recordings, poems, videos, exhibitions and PowerPoint presentations like those shared on the web site of the Children’s Research Centre (Alderson, 2000, 2001; Kellett, Forrest, Dent, & Ward, 2004). Their targets are very often those in their most immediate environments who are most directly implicated by the results (Kellett, Forrest, Dent, & Ward, 2004). Though academic literature theoretically reaches a more widespread audience than the gray literature may, theory is not the same as practice. Suppose the goal of effective dissemination of results is to awaken interest, make the findings understandable and present them in a memorable way to relevant target audiences. That being so, children’s methods may be at least as effective or more for creating awareness and prompting change as the more conventional journal articles and book chapters of our fields. Consider the example that Alderson reported in 2001:

At the launch of the British Library of a report on pupil democracy in Europe (Davies and Kirkpatrick 2000), school students from Denmark and Sweden described the rights they enjoyed which are far less respected in many British schools. Then Emma and James from Article 12 sternly told the audience to stand up. ‘Sit down all of you who are
chewing gum’ ordered Emma. ‘And anyone who has not turned off their mobile phone.’ An eminent government adviser sat down. ‘And anyone wearing jewellery.’ After ten commands almost all the audience was seated. ‘If you were at school, you would have a detention and might be told not to attend school next day. But this has nothing to do with education, so why do schools keep doing this?’ Emma continued. At the end of their presentation, Emma again ordered everyone to stand and then to sit down if they disagreed with any of her ten statements. These were about making schools more democratic and nearly everyone remained standing, except for the government adviser who sat down at the second statement: ‘the convention on the rights of the child should be a part of the national curriculum.’ Article 12 vividly demonstrated how out of touch government policy on citizenship education was with most people attending the conference (p. 145).

Effective presentations can also facilitate action. A year into the 730+ project, after having expanded their inquiry to other implicated groups both within England and abroad, the young research group produced an exhaustive report that identified both the existing challenges as youth saw them, and suggestions for solutions (Cairns & Brannen, 2005). Two years into the project, the findings resulted in the rebuilding of the clinic with a space designated exclusively for young people, the beginning of a network of youth support workers for fellow diabetics, improved information provided to newly diagnosed diabetics and a new magazine targeted for young diabetics. In addition, they had learned about new insulin pump treatments in Sweden that had not been widely known or used in England. Through a presentation together with three Swedish youth to local health managers in Durham, the project group also brought about this new and better form of treatment to the community’s youth.

The thrill of communicating one’s results successfully should not be underestimated in this process. Getting our ideas across is as meaningful to a child as it is to adults. This came out clearly in 12-year old Dominic Cole’s feelings after having investigated the impact of brand name advertising vs. celebrity endorsements:

During the last ten weeks I had two pieces of very exciting news. The first piece of news was that I had been invited to speak at the Cabinet Office in London. I was to prepare a PowerPoint slideshow about whatever subject I wanted and present it to a room full of people in the Top Managers Forum. The second piece of news was that I had also been invited to do my presentation in front of hundreds of young people in Ealing Town Hall. I really enjoyed that too. You can see my PowerPoint presentation on the website it’s called ‘When can we have our say’ (Cole, n.d.) (¶ 2).

Risks and benefits

Though my illustrations exemplify that research with children is obviously possible and can yield interesting and important findings, there are clearly risks and benefits uniquely associated with doing research with children. When working with children as researchers, as when working with any other research partners, some difficult or even insoluble research dilemmas may arise (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002). Still, it is possible to examine the risks and benefits beforehand and make informed decisions about when and how to go about collaborative research with children.

Risks. Children may not fully understand their rights when involved in research – either as researchers or as participants. Save the Children (2004) recommends explaining these to children either verbally or in writing before getting involved. Children may also feel bound to their original intentions to participate even when they would rather not. Save the Children also recommends establishing clear ways for children to withdraw once they have begun participating.

Another risk is that children who serve as research collaborators may come to research underprepared to take on the responsibility and demands of research tasks (though training can take care of a lot of this if done appropriately for the targeted age group and the research design fits the training) (Hart & Tyrer, 2006). Because of the backgrounds of the children involved, entire studies may additionally require design renegotiation in order to suit the children that get involved.

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On top of these general risks, there are risks that are particularly salient for children involved in research situated in places of conflict. For example, research participants may reveal sensitive information that puts them or their fellow researchers at risk (Hart & Tyrer, 2006; Save the Children, 2004). Child researchers may put their own health and safety at risk just by being involved (Jones, 2004). They may also raise unrealistic expectations for positive change among their fellow participants. Likewise, they may also uncover information that is uncomfortable for them to process or manage (Puumala, 2007).

Though this is not discussed in the literature, one risk that is relevant for adult researchers who work in institutions of higher education and who collaborate with children is the cost related to time and audience. If research with children takes more time to complete than research conducted with other trained adult researchers, it can influence the rate of research output. Likewise, if the media most appropriate for children’s findings are in the gray rather than academic literature, then the value of our output may be viewed academically in negative (or, at best, neutral) terms. These matter to decisions related to tenure and promotion and are therefore not trivial considerations, particularly for junior faculty.

Benefits. Weighing in the balance with risks, of course, are the benefits that make the risks worth taking and accommodating. Most compellingly, doing research with children is directly beneficial to the children themselves. Also important, though, is how useful findings elicited by from children researchers are to adults interested in learning more about the world as children experience it.

As for the benefits to young research partners, through such collaborations, one obvious one is that children can develop the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully conduct research (e.g., communication skills, organizational skills, data collection skills such as observing and interviewing, analytical skills) (Hart & Tyrer, 2006; Nairn & Smith, 2003). Other skills that children might develop are metacognitive and critical thinking skills through the appraisal of one’s own and other’s research, organizational skills through pulling the whole research endeavour off, logical and lateral thinking skills through the selection of an appropriate methodology for one’s question, ability to handle large amounts of information through the collection and management of data, higher order thinking through data analysis, and sharpened writing and communication skills though the formulation and dissemination of one’s findings (Kellett, 2005b).

It has also been found that doing research can also raise young people’s self-awareness, self-confidence and ability in making more accurate judgements about things they have studied (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). For children situated in places of conflict, research also offers them an important learning opportunity – one where they can be a part of identifying problems, but also solutions to those problems (Hart & Tyrer, 2006). This experience can also be fun and stimulating for them. It can also provide an opportunity for them to cooperate with adults and other children with the effect of promoting respect and trust. In a 1997 study done by Khan in Bangladesh, for example, 11 street children ranging in age from 10 to 15 interviewed 51 other street children ranging in age from 7 to 15 about what issues they thought were most important regarding children’s worth, dignity and rights (Alderson, 2001). The purpose was to provide useful information groups who were planning services to help them. The children identified eleven crucial issues, many of them involving torture and poor treatment by adults (even police), and difficulties for girls in terms of the work they are driven to on the street and its implications for later marriage prospects. Not only were these findings important for the children’s own self-awareness, they also reached a larger audience. The children shared their findings in four research reports that they were instrumental in producing.

Children can sometimes take what they learn through research and act on it even more directly. In a 1995 study done by International Save the Children Alliance with street boys in New Delhi, twelve 7-17 year old boys learned that 76% of their money was spent on food (Alderson, 2000). Having learned this, some of the boys, with help, took an intensive course on how to cook and serve food to others. They then found a location to cook in and opened up a restaurant. In the spirit of learning from their experience and research findings, they even served some of the food to other street children for free.
Clearly, young people often speak a common language and are able to raise issues with other young people that adults might not be able to (Kellett, 2005b; McLaughlin, 2005). This can be beneficial during any of the research tasks associated with the research process, even the piloting of materials (Save the Children, 2004). With young collaborators, then, the range and quality of data collected can be enhanced. On the flip side, children who help generate data can also develop a sense of ownership over the findings, and later be used to help present the findings to new audiences for the whole research team with greater impact than adults may achieve on their own.

**Ethics**

Given the risks and benefits associated with doing research with children, when one chooses to involve children as researchers, what ethical principles are important to consider? Though ethical principals in research with children are ultimately about safeguards to protect them, the answers about how to do that are not simple. Why? Because research with children entails an elegant balance of the desire to empower children through participation and the need for associated adults to act professionally within agreed ethical norms (Hill, 1997; McLaughlin, 2005).

We therefore need to weaken what we take for granted in more conventional research paradigms and find ways to enter children’s experiences and cultures of communication (P. H. Christensen, 2004). More discussion is needed about the ethical questions relevant for this process since, once kids are viewed as social actors rather than objects, the ethics of working with them becomes more complex. This raises new ethical dilemmas and new responsibilities.

Typically, ethical standards are stronger in the areas of how informants are recruited and informed about a study, how informants give consent to participate and how to deal with anonymity and confidentiality (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002). However, these matters are problematic in research with children (Roberts, 2000). In addition to preparing children for informed consent, for example, we should perhaps also be equally explicit about preparing them for informed dissent – particularly when doing research in paces of conflict.

Where ethical standards are not typically as strong (or are outright weak) is in the areas of how to involve children in the research process and design, how to include them in the interpretation of data and how to involve them in the dissemination of results (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002). Another area typically overlooked by ethical standards are the potential benefits or consequences research findings might have for other children and what researchers do with that. Also, where are there committees with child members or children as consultants that are used to help evaluate research that involves them? Because of these kinds of things, Roberts (2000) warns that “it is dangerous to assume that because a piece of research has been passed by an ethics committee then it is ipso facto an ethical piece of research” (p. 95) (Roberts, 2000).

Three ethical issues that therefore deserve special attention for research with children – in addition to the usual ethical considerations when doing research with adults – include recognition that: 1) children have different competencies than adults, 2) children are potentially vulnerable, and 3) adults may interpret data from children any way they please (and that’s a caveat) (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Accordingly, it is important to think ethical symmetry when identifying one’s overarching ethical principles for research with children – both as collaborators and as study participants.

**Ethical Symmetry.** The principle of ethical symmetry is about being ethically strategic in how one orients one’s work in terms of the rights, feelings and interests of children – as much with children as with others (P. Christensen & Prout, 2002). The starting point of ethical symmetry is the view that the ethical relationship between a researcher and informant is the same, whether the informant is a child or an adult, and, through extrapolation, whether the researcher is a child or an adult. Even though the nature of the relationships in the various researcher-informant constellations is different, the commitment to applying the same ethical principles in all, even if through different means, is the same. This may influence the methodology we choose, how we collect, analyze and interpret data, and what kinds of other ethical practices we use. With this as a starting point, there are a number of questions that
Children as researchers need to think through in order to make good decisions about ethical symmetry. I offer just a few from the literature.

**Ethical questions.** Not all of the following questions are relevant for all research with children. However, many are and ideally require the establishment of some structural parameters beyond what individual researchers can take on alone. Nonetheless, many of the questions are within the purview of individuals to weigh and are worth considering and accommodating in research program designs even where structural parameters do not yet exist.

Who should be responsible when it comes to determining and monitoring the ethics for doing research with children?

- How do we provide for the safety and welfare of both the child and adult research staff? (Save the Children, 2004)
- Who is ethically responsible for child-led research, and who should set those standards and monitor their practice? (Kellett, 2005a)
- How should we go about securing ethical approval for youth-led research when ethics committees typically want the research agenda, questions and methodologies figured out before doing research and research with children is about, in part, giving youth more direct involvement in shaping those very things? (Nairn & Smith, 2003)

What kinds of parameters are important to consider regarding the adults who do research with children researchers and the kind of training both adults and children receive before beginning data collection?

- How do we prepare adults working with children researchers to do ethically appropriate work? (Save the Children, 2004)
- What background, skills or training ought researchers directly involved with children have? For example, should their identities and criminal histories be checked? (Hill, 1997; Save the Children, 2004)
- What should we ensure in the training of children researchers? (Save the Children, 2004)

What special needs does research with children collaborators raise when it comes to matters of recruitment, consent and confidentiality?

- Should co-researchers also participate with informed consent? (McLaughlin, 2005)
- How do we reach groups of children who are literally or metaphorically voiceless (e.g., street children, children unable to fill out questionnaires or participate in interviews, profoundly disable children, displaced children or Moslem girls)? (Roberts, 2000)
- How will we recruit children, keeping in mind appropriate representation? (Save the Children, 2004)
- How should we prepare children to easily make the decision to choose or not to choose to participate as collaborators? (Save the Children, 2004)
- When ought it be necessary or desirable to obtain consent from parents or guardians? (Hill, 1997)
- What should be the legal age for children consenting to participate as researchers? (Hill, 1997; Kellett, 2005a)
- How should we assure children’s confidentiality (Mauthner, 1997)? This can be challenging when family members or teachers close to the subjects might seek insider information even when they know about the confidentiality aspect of the project.

How should we deal with research incentives?

- Should we offer compensation or incentives to children involved in research – either as researchers or as participants? (Save the Children, 2004)
- From whom should we gain approval to employ youth and pay them directly for their work? (Nairn & Smith, 2003)
- How should we clearly communicate to children what we as researchers can or cannot do? (Save the Children, 2004)

What about when things go wrong?
- How do we ensure that we don’t distress children through research? (Hill, 1997)
- What if research among peers doesn’t go well? Then what? What are the ramifications and consequences for the individuals, the project, the methodology?
- How do adults and children alike exit research interactions that may cause or awaken potentially painful experiences? (Save the Children, 2004)
- How should we care for children who may need support after being involved in our research? (Save the Children, 2004)
- What do you do if children report abusive situations to other children? (Hill, 1997)

How far should we go in including children in the sharing of the findings?
- If participatory research is about dialog, research with children must be about aligning our work with children’s own experiences, interests, values, and everyday routines, while enabling them to express and represent their thoughts on their terms (P. H. Christensen, 2004). That so, whose language do we use when soliciting or reporting our results? Adults’ reinterpretations of what children express, children’s own expressions, or both?
- How should we address the personal costs for academicians who choose to do research with children (balancing quality output with expanded time frames for project completion and the use of non-traditional publication venues)?

The research question and context of the research conducted will determine which ethical considerations are most relevant to any given study. Nonetheless, careful consideration beyond what is usual in other research is warranted in order to ensure ethical symmetry in our work with children as collaborators and participants.

Journey’s end… for now

We are never fully aware of all the information that might be relevant to any given research question (Koslowski & Thompson, 2002). Differences in age, prior knowledge and culture all add their own dimensions to the kinds of answers we may find. Research is therefore a process of trying to identify the most relevant information to one’s questions and findings. Still, it will always be an inexact science. Accordingly, in their general tips to researchers who collaborate with children, Save the Children (2004) underscores that “there is no ‘right’ or ‘perfect’ way to involve children in research” (p. 72). The best decisions are based on good research questions, research designs that are appropriate for the people, place and time involved, sound ethics, and proper training for all involved. In the end, they advise that “doing something is always better than doing nothing” (p. 72).

What is necessary to better facilitate high quality participation in practice is: (1) clarity of purpose, (2) clarity about which children are involved (who is and, more importantly, who is not), (3) considering how we interpret what children say and understand what they mean, (4) considering how to weigh children’s views along with those of other stakeholders, (5) making participation meaningful, (6) evaluating the impact of children’s participation, and (7) following appropriate ethical standards (Sinclair, 2004).

With that, so ends this particular chapter of my intellectual journey pursuing the stories of the tsunami children and many others, exploring what it takes to involve children directly in the research process. It is clear that there is value in giving voice to children. As the tsunami children in Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Thailand, the street children in New Delhi and Bangladesh, and the refugees in Dar es Salaam have illustrated, even children in desperate situations would like a say. They and Paul O’Brien have also shown that many children would even be willing to be trained to solicit their say in scientifically appropriate and robust ways. Many, such as the tsunami children, the Bangladeshi children, Paul O’Brien, Dominic Cole and the 730+ group, have opened adult eyes to things that were previously unknown or overlooked, and the presentations of their findings have been powerful. Likewise, many of the findings, like those of the 730+ group and the New Delhi street children, have already made a difference. Likewise, the tsunami children have been instrumental in helping Plan International identify...
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how to make decisions related future disasters better. Indeed, what we have learned through children has prompted meaningful work and activities that have been of great importance.

This paper has been framed by scrutinizing the notion of “children as researchers”. How we think about children and how we think about research will ultimately determine the extent to which we will ever find ourselves collaborating in our own research with children. There is a growing movement to think anew about children and research, using children’s expertise and skills in ways that can be important to our understanding of the world as children experience it – even in desperate situations. Unquestionably, we have a lot to learn from young collaborators in peace research, and much has been done already to help us get started. Let’s go.

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Appreciative Inquiry as Research Methodology

Abstract

This paper delves into the world of appreciative inquiry (AI), considering it theoretically as a research methodology. Constituting a seemingly new approach within the field of peace and conflict research, this paper looks to the background of AI and provides a description of the main principles and assumptions that drive the approach. Further, the paper discusses some of the substantive and epistemological critiques that the approach faces, and reviews some of the possible consequences of the use of appreciative inquiry in relation to research. One of the main implications of using appreciative inquiry as part of a methodological framework is foreseen through the discussion as effecting not only the way in which questions are asked (focusing on the positive) but also whose questions are asked, thus constituting a foundation for reflexivity and participation in research.

Introduction

If conducting research were to be viewed as a journey, then methodology could be understood as that which informs the researcher about the guiding principles of how to make the journey, what to take into consideration in planning for it and what kinds of things to expect along the way.1 This conference paper forms a part of the methodological ponderings related to my PhD research project on conflict sensitivity in development. As such, it is a theoretical paper, which attempts to look at the possible implications of adopting appreciative inquiry (AI) as a part of the roadmap for a journey aiming to explore, unveil and further develop positive modes of implementing development interventions in a conflict affected setting.

Using the metaphor of research as a journey, an AI-guided trip2 does not lead the researcher on a “package tour” where every detail is fully planned out months ahead of time. A study using appreciative inquiry as an approach to research is something more like “interrailing,” a journey entailing improvisation and a certain amount of risk. Starting out with a general vision of the direction and idea of the type of trip one is about to embark upon, an AI-guided journey leaves ample room for the unexpected to happen along the way. As on any journey, however, there are certain arrangements that can be made and provisions to take along. In this paper, I aim to shed light on what these arrangements and provisions might be in terms of a research journey in the field of peace and conflict research. I will start out by looking briefly to the background and history of appreciative inquiry and providing a description of the main principles and assumptions that drive the approach. This will be followed with a discussion of some of the substantive and epistemological critiques and questions associated with appreciative inquiry. Finally, I will review what has been written by Jan Reed in her recently published account of appreciative inquiry in relation to research. In closing I point preliminarily to the aspects of AI which seem most relevant for my ongoing research and which therefore are in need of further contemplation.

Origins and Meaning of Appreciative Inquiry

The birthplace and co-founding of appreciative inquiry happened in the context of a doctoral program in Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio in the collaboration between David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in the 1980s.3 AI

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1 According to Niiniluoto (1980), methodology refers to exploring the underlying assumptions and starting points of various research methods and techniques. In other words, appreciative inquiry does not refer here to a method as such.

2 The idea of appreciative inquiry as a journey is borrowed from Liebler and Sampson (2003), who use it in their discussion of AI in peacebuilding.

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was originally developed as part of Cooperrider's PhD studies as a conceptual reconfiguration of action research. Cooperrider and Srivastva claimed that going beyond questions of epistemology, appreciative inquiry has as its basis a metaphysical concern: it posits that social existence as such is a miracle that can never be fully comprehended. Proceeding from this level of understanding then, they began to explore the uniqueness of an appreciative mode of inquiry. More than a method or technique, it constituted for them “a way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study.” They went on to state that “[s]erious consideration and reflection on the ultimate mystery of being engenders a reverence for life that draws the researcher to inquire beyond superficial appearances to deeper levels of the life-generating essentials and potentials of social existence.” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, 131)

The approach taken by Cooperrider and his colleagues was, at the time, very different from established methodologies of organizational research. Drawing on research from fields such as organizational behavior, psychology, medicine, education and sociology, they challenged the traditional theories of change and created a new set of ideas. (Liebler & Sampson 2003, 56) A theoretical foundation for taking Cooperrider's work forward was provided by Ken Gergen's seminal work Toward Transformation of Social Knowledge from 1982, which critiqued existing research traditions. It pointed to a new direction in social theory development that built on the interaction between research and practice. This orientation also paid attention to the processes of developing ideas as people got together to “co-construct” interpretations that could have a powerful impact on the the way they acted. (Reed 2007, 24)

With this background, AI has experienced a process of growth and development from 1980 to the present through use and further shaping, primarily in the field of organizational development (OD) study and practice. Whitney, Liebler and Cooperrider (2003, 27) provide their definition of appreciative inquiry through an inspection of the meaning of the two words involved, as follows:

**Appreciate, v.**
- Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems.
- To increase in value, e.g., the economy has appreciated in value.
- Synonyms: valuing, prizing, esteeming, honoring.

**Inquire, v.**
- The act of exploration and discovery.
- To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.
- Synonyms: discovery, search, systematic exploration and study.

Whitney et al. (2003, 27-28) describe AI further as being both a philosophy of positive change and a methodology for high-participation, a form of collaborative transformation at the heart of which is an understanding that human systems move in the directions that they focus their attention on. It thus constitutes a call to shift the focus of attention from what they call deficit discourse (vocabularies produced by problem-oriented approaches to scientific research) to positive discourse. As such, AI is a deviation from investigation of problems to a curiosity about living potential, key success factors, images of an ideal future, and hope. Another way to portray appreciative inquiry is to look at it as something that constitutes a process with a specific aim and approach. Reed has described the process in this way as follows: AI focuses on supporting people getting together to tell stories of positive development in their work that they can build on (Reed, 42).

Although the bulk of experience with AI has been in the OD practice of building organizational, management and leadership capacity in businesses, there is also documented use of the approach in the public and non-profit sectors as well as in the broader field of development (Whitney et al., 26, Liebler et al., 62, Reed, 25). A somewhat newer trend seems to be the use of appreciative inquiry in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding practice.

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(Whitney et al., 26, Liebler et al. 61-62). While the evolution of AI as a research methodology has progressed least of all in comparison to what has been seen in the practical fields (Reed, 45), the academic field of peace and conflict research appears to be but a fledgling in terms of AI applications. Schwoebel & McCandless (2003, 187-201) present a strong case for converging AI with peacebuilding and development and forging it into a useful methodology for the academic and practical pursuits of both. They base this argument, amongst other things, on the mutual belief (of the fields of AI on the one hand and peacebuilding and development on the other) in the possibility of win-win solutions. It is as part of this forging process – bringing the fields of appreciative inquiry, peacebuilding and development research and practice together – that I see my own endeavor to explore the utility of AI with regard to my research on conflict sensitivity in development. Before looking more closely to the possible implications of using AI as research methodology, I will next give an overview on the one hand of what has been described as constituting the core principles and assumptions driving the approach, and take a look at the criticisms that the approach has faced on the other.

**Principles and Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry**

As the debate and experiences of application widened across the community of AI practitioners since the late 1980s, a number of ideas about the approach were refined. These ideas have become the crux to understanding – and communicating appreciative inquiry. Most importantly, AI is guided by five key *principles*: concepts and values on which the approach is based. Secondly, there is a set of *assumptions* that are said to flow from the principles and that guide action. Finally, there are certain processes of appreciative inquiry that have been defined, which are extrapolated from the principles and assumptions and define the ways in which they are put into practice. (Reed, 26) I will limit the discussion here to the principles and assumptions of AI, leaving the consideration on processes for a future venture on developing the closer methodical approach to my research.

**Principles of AI**

The five key principles of appreciative inquiry are the constructivist principle; the principle of simultaneity; the poetic principle; the principle of anticipation; and the positive principle. All of these principles were formulated already in Cooperrider's first descriptions of appreciative inquiry (Reed 2007, 26-27). These key principles of AI establish links between theoretical developments across a range of disciplines such as human development, interaction, organizational and learning theories, and serve as the starting points for the approach.

**The Constructivist Principle.** The constructivist principle states that we collectively make meaning of our world. In other words, our thoughts about the world and what we believe to be real in it are created in our conversations with one another, through mutual interpretation and construction. These exchanges between people lead to agreement about how we collectively perceive the world, how we should act in it and what we mutually accept as the “truth.” When and where in the world we live, what our habits, occupations, traditions and teachings are, and how we view our very identity all contribute to how we interpret the world. This means that there are just as many different stories of what is happening and how it is taking place that exist alongside each other as there are different people interpreting the world. In terms of (research methodology based on) AI, what is of central interest in the constructivist principle, are the processes of construction; the way that people can come to tell different stories about the past, present and future and the way that these stories have the power to shape and reflect the way people think and act. (Reed, 26; Liebler et al. 58-59)

**The Principle of Simultaneity.** The principle of simultaneity recognizes that change and inquiry are simultaneous processes, and contains the idea that the seeds of change are embedded in the questions we ask. Therefore according to this principle, inquiry (or a research process)

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5 Other links between the fields of AI and peacebuilding and development are noted by Schwoebel et al. (2003,195) as mutual emphasis on process and outcome ownership by participants; the tradition of using existing local resources and indigenous capacities; and foundation on the assumptions about the desirability and possibility of fulfilling people's potential for human development.
itself is understood as an intervention in the way that it has the capacity to stimulate reflection and thought, which in turn lead to different ways of thinking and carrying out activities. This is an important point to be acknowledged throughout any work adopting AI as its foundation, research included. (Liebler et al. 60; Reed, 26)

The Poetic Principle. In the same way that poems are open to endless interpretations, the stories of people's past, present, and future constitute endless sources of learning, inspiration, interpretation and possibility. Stories carry with them meaning and truths that elude even the most sophisticated documentation systems. The poetic principle acknowledges that people and their worlds are like open books being continually authored by people themselves as well as co-authored together with other people that interact with them. What we choose as a relevant “plotline” at any given moment of storytelling about our lives and experiences depends on what we find to be of most interest or relevance at the time of narrating it. The task for an appreciative inquiry in terms of the poetic principle is to support people through this individual and collective process of authoring, engaging their attention and energy in a way that makes it accessible to them. (Liebler et al. 59-60; Reed, 26)

The Principle of Anticipation. The anticipatory principle assumes that the way we think about the future will shape the way we move to the future. It recognizes that our behavior is based not only on what we were born with or have learned from our surroundings, but also on what we anticipate; what we think will happen in the future. If we see the future as being full of possibilities, for instance, we tend to move toward those possibilities. On the other hand, if we feel that the future does not hold anything valuable in store for us, we are easily drawn to feel that there is no point in moving on as it would just seem like a waste of energy. For an AI process then, this implies starting off with an image of the future that is based on what works well in the present. Acting according to this principle within a research process is seen as directing energy toward exploring ways in which a desired vision of the future could be developed further. (Liebler et al. 60; Reed 27)

The Positive Principle. The positive principle –also known as the affirmative principle– carries with it the idea that if image leads to action, then positive image leads to positive action. The principle suggests further that people are naturally drawn to ideas and images that energize and provide nourishment. Thus in terms of research, focus on asking about the positive in the phenomenon being studied is foreseen e.g. to engage people on longer term and more deeply in the study process. The idea is simple: capturing people's interest is seen as an effective way of ensuring involvement, and the most effective way to capture interest, in turn, is by inviting people to explore positive questions. In terms of research, the positive principle is most important for the way questions are asked. (See Liebler et al., 61; Reed, 27)

Assumptions of AI

Important as the five principles described above are as starting points for appreciative inquiry, the community of AI-practitioners and thinkers found them to be somewhat abstract. Therefore a set of assumptions has been drawn up by the AI-community, essentially translating the principles into statements that appreciative inquiries can begin with. The development of the assumptions has been a result of a long process of discussions, research and theorizing, moving slowly toward more practical guidelines for applying AI to endeavors of change and research. Although presented in the literature as definitive statements (for the sake of easier communication), the assumptions remain open to challenge, questioning, and new formulations by those who encounter them (Reed, 27, 29) and decide to apply AI in practice. Due to the focus of this paper being on the role of appreciative inquiry as a methodology, i.e. on the underlying principles versus hands-on practicalities of the approach as a method, suffice it here to present the assumptions in the following as a brief list (Reed, 27-29), leaving open a possible broader discussion.

- In every society, organization, or group there is something that works.  

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6 This assumption comes close to what Mary B. Anderson calls “connectors” or “local capacities for peace” in her description of conflict contexts always having two kinds of realities. (Anderson 1999).
What we focus on becomes our reality.
Reality is created in the moment and multiple realities exist simultaneously.
The act of asking questions influences the subject, group or society involved.
People are more confident and comfortable in their journey toward the unknown future if they carry forward parts from their past as they know it.
What is carried forward to the future should represent what is best from the past.
Valuing differences is important.
The language we use creates our realities.

Reflecting the five principles of appreciative inquiry with this list of assumptions, it can easily be perceived that at least to some extent the latter does flow naturally from the former. As a point for further deliberation of AI as research methodology, I would, however, prescribe closer scrutiny as to the value added of having a separate list of assumptions, instead of, for instance integrating the two into one somewhat more diversified corpus of principles. By comparison, Liebler and Sampson (2003, 56-58) list only three major underpinnings of AI (in addition to the principles) as follows:

- Image and action are linked.
- Groups move in the direction of the questions they ask.
- All human systems have something to value about their present or their past.

Criticisms and Questions

Schwoebel and McCandless (2003, 198-199) claim that appreciative processes, theories and practices are well suited to the investigation and transformation of complex problems within challenged peacebuilding and development contexts. They do, however, issue some warnings. A set of critiques that they bring forth, and which are relevant in terms of considering the use of AI as a research methodology, surround questions of “critical” versus “positive” thinking and/or a debate within the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding on problem-solving paradigms versus AI's focusing on the positive. (See also Reed, 39-41 for a similar discussion on criticisms and questions for AI) Just as accusations of being unrealistically positive can silence proponents and actors of social change, so too can accusations of being negative succeed in silencing victims of social injustice, since it shifts focus away from the system and toward the individual. Seeking out and acknowledging the positive is accepted by these writers, but they emphasize the potentially insulting and adverse effects of not fully appreciating the entire realities that people face – this in turn possibly preventing people from being able to focus on the good. Here they allude to the likely negative effect that concentrating merely on the positive may have in situations where severe trauma has been experienced. They call for recognition of the commonly acknowledged point that grief and trauma need to be owned and processed before people and societies are ready and willing to go on with constructing future visions. (See also Huyse 2003; and Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall 2005 for discussions on the necessary elements of reconciliation after violent conflict.) Further, Schwoebel et al. (2003, 198-199) resign from the notion that problem-solving paradigms always and necessarily limit options and close down creative thinking. They refer to the long traditions in the practice of problem-solving at community level through participatory processes with their proven track record of empowering people, building community and eroding hierarchy.

Yet another point of criticism issued on appreciative inquiry, is on its epistemological orientation (Reed, 40, Schwoebel et al. 188, 199). Referring to their call for an overall theoretical and methodological adaptation of the approach, Schwoebel et al. (2003, 188) claim that the epistemological foundations of AI especially need to be reconsidered if it is to be useful to academics and practitioneres of different learnings. “Not all believe that everything is 'constructible’” they state, “or that we have ultimate power to create our life opportunities and re-create the circumstances that steer our experiences. Many of these, it may be argued, we are born with or born into. Such conditions can be structurally determined by institutions, environmental conditions, or cultural practices that surround us.” The authors claim further that this type of epistemological reconsideration would be likely to serve AI's ability to tackle
complex social and structural problems such as poverty, and other manifestations of structural and direct violence. (ibid., 199) Granting that there may be a point to this, what is most puzzling in their critique is that they do not seem to claim genuine ownership of the problem and thus do not point to any directions of how the issue of epistemological reconsideration should be tackled.

Reed picks up on the point of criticism of AI discussed by Schwoebel et al., which is linked to, and illustrates the difficulty with the use of constructivist thought: the question of power. Appreciative inquiry can easily be accused of non-engagement with issues of power, portraying the world as a benevolent place in which the possibilities for future action are unconstrained. This of course, is a clear departure from the many real experiences of life, in which issues of power and authority play a major role. Reed claims that if we accept the idea that the social world is constructed, this applies to power as well as all other aspects of the social world. While pointing to the element of construction in these areas may be useful in terms of re-examining our thinking, Reed cautions us not to deny, but rather take into consideration the impact and effect on participants of AI-processes of these constructs. (Reed 40-41) Based on the key principles of appreciative inquiry introduced earlier in this paper, one route to an epistemologically reconsidered AI-approach might be found through complementing the constructivist foundations of AI with elements of pragmatism (combining theory with practice), critical theory (challenging established truths) as well as feminist theory (awareness of and taking up strategies to deal with issues of power). (See Reed for discussions on the way in which AI links to social constructivism and critical theory; and pragmatism, 55-58, 186, 194-196)

Despite the questions and criticisms toward the approach, Schwoebel and McCandless are prepared to recommend the use of AI within the spheres of research and practice on peace and development. Instead of blind ideological application of AI, quoting Bushe, they call for a “disciplined and reasoned approach,” or rather; they claim that AI must be theoretically and methodologically adapted. They suggest a genuine and thorough consideration of, and remaining dynamic and responsive to the particular contexts within which appreciative processes are carried out.7 Depending on the timing and current situation of the context then, AI may not be appropriate as an approach on its own. Schwoebel et al. propose that one way in which contextual adaptation of AI-guided processes may happen is through a form where problem-solving and empowering (appreciative) approaches are viewed as mutually reinforcing and thus used side-by-side or in some combination (2003, 198-199).

**Appreciative Inquiry & Research**

What does all of what has been reviewed here about the principles, assumptions and criticisms of appreciative inquiry imply in terms of research? Jan Reed has taken up the challenge of exploring and explicating some of the possible connections between AI and a range of positions and ideas that research offers. Reed (2007, 42, 47) indicates to one way of approaching the question of links between AI and research by returning to her description of AI as something that focuses on supporting people getting together to tell stories of positive development in their work that they can build on. She claims that this description already suggests a number of points to inform research. Breaking down the sentence into parts and following Reed’s prognosis, AI can thus be seen to inform research in at least, but not exclusively, the following ways:

- **Supporting people:** AI research adopts an engaged as opposed to a disengaged stance by facilitating active input of participants exploring the phenomenon being studied.
- **People getting together:** AI research is communal and collaborative in the way that it involves collective interaction to share and explore experiences related to the research topic.

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7 This is well in line with the notion of conflict sensitivity, which I interpret as largely being a question of context specificity. In studying modes of conflict sensitivity, my aim as a researcher is naturally to be sensitive in my own practice, i.e. take into consideration the specific nature of the context being studied.
Appreciative Inquiry as Research Methodology

- **Telling stories**: AI research evokes the language that people use to express ideas, and takes particular interest in the “telling processes.”
- **Positive development**: AI research focuses on change and innovation and has an interest in the generation of visions and plans for the future. The process is based on unveiling past experiences of achievement and activates people to envision and plan for the future.
- **Changes in the workplace**: AI prescribes special attention to the specific setting of the phenomenon being studied (“the workplace”) as well as understanding its context.

Another way of thinking through the implications of using AI as a research methodology is by mapping the approach against other research frameworks. This might provide a way of thinking about what it is that AI research can offer in the development of knowledge and understanding. Using AI as a research method, on the other hand, may imply a shift in the emphasis of thinking toward the processes of inquiry, i.e. the way in which information is gathered and interpreted. Based on her own experience of mapping AI within the broader field of research, Reed concludes that it is no easy task or a simple question of slotting AI into a particular school of thought. Instead, she portrays AI in the Wittgensteinian sense as showing “family resemblance” to various different research models: It can be linked to and shows different characteristics that can be related to a number of ideas and traditions across a range of methodologies, but does not match up to any one exactly or exclusively. (Reed 45f, 53)

Set on an axis of quantitative and qualitative research orientations, Reed refuses to set AI exclusively in either camp: available data can be collected for both through AI activity. With this said, she admits that the research frameworks that most closely reflect the interests of AI are qualitative. Further, Reed points to social constructivist research and critical theory as two fundamental worldviews with significance for AI.8 Social constructivism shares with appreciative inquiry the interest in meaning and interpretation rather than measurable facts. Both hold to the notion of worlds as negotiated and co-constructed, and in terms of research, both social constructivism and AI are concerned with ensuring that the meanings the world has for those involved in the study thereof, are understood. These shared tenets between the two approaches are expressed in the constructivist principle of AI. Critical theory, in turn, links to AI with its interest in developing challenges to (established) ways of thinking, and shares an interest in searching for data that is able to question generally accepted assumptions. There are two main ways that Reed sees critical theory as being able to provide a useful addition to the practices of AI by stimulating reflection: First by prompting AI-guided research to reflect on taken-for-granted images of the activities and organizations being studied, and secondly by sensitizing AI researchers to issues of power. For critical theory, issues of power are strong shapers and drivers of the social world. In AI-guided studies, then, issues of the commissioning process (such as who decides on the content and funds the study as well as power differences within the group activities during research) need to be taken into consideration in the way activities are planned, carried out and reported. (ibid., 54-58)

Reed claims that yet another way of looking for AI's contribution to research could be by contrasting the use of appreciative inquiry in the OD (organizational development) context with that in research use. One evident difference is in the degree to which AI research is public, in comparison to the private nature of organization-specific OD activity. Rather than being commissioned or endorsed by a specific organization, AI research may be stimulated by questions and interests outside or across organizations. Such external drivers of AI-guided research fit well together with the notion of broader and more general conceptual and theoretical interests. What is perceived as interesting is not just how organization or group X does Y, but more generally in the ideas about how Y is done. Such interests would then naturally stem from a general interest in how certain issues or phenomena can be thought of. (Reed, 188-189, 47)

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8 In addition to social constructivism and critical theory, Reed sees ethnography, case studies, narrative methodology, and action research as other relevant methodologies linking to and informing AI.
Key Issues for Research

Finally, in this section I will review what Reed has defined through her extensive work with and on appreciative inquiry as the key issues that arise for researchers to consider when using AI: the issues of basic approach as well as roles and relationships that permeate all stages and settings of research. Reed organizes her exploration of the key issues around the various themes and dimensions that are evident in discussions of AI on the one hand, and the issues of person and relationship that may not be so fully explored in texts, but which can become evident in the course of carrying out AI-informed research. The themes arise from discussions within the field of OD – identified as inclusivity and focus on the positive. And the dimensions, in turn, are informed largely by Reed's own “experienced dimension” of AI research; presented as being about the chronology of research, the position of the researcher, and questions of power and control. (Reed, 69-70)

Inclusivity

Inclusivity in AI refers to the aim of involving as many people as possible in the study in a collaborative and communal way. AI inherently argues a strong case for broad and diverse inclusion in order to ensure that different voices, ideas and perspectives may be heard from diverse positions. The reasoning behind this is that inclusivity is seen as leading to a richer picture of the phenomenon being studied. In terms of implementing a research project, the questions for the researcher to ponder and prepare for in terms of inclusion are ownership and responsibility. Who is the moral (and possibly legal) owner of the study? Who is to take responsibility for the outcome of the study; its possible failures and mishaps? And who gets credit for success? There is an inherent contradiction in this in that the more and the broader the involvement in a study, the more likely it is that there will be more confusion about responsibility and ownership. Reed suggests that adopting an inclusive approach entails thinking through how differences can be managed during the research process. This can be done, e.g. by issuing processes of discussing, presenting and deciding between potential differences in ideas and views between the researcher and the participants. (Reed, 70-74)

Focus on the Positive

Discovering the positive alludes to an approach whereby the conversations and stories told within the framework of a study are about achievements and successes. Although this focus on the positive gives AI its distinctive nature, it can pose more problems with regard to research in comparison to change processes within organizations. The theoretical concern is that through focusing on the positive, and thereby neglecting the negative stories, one ends up producing a partial account of the phenomenon being studied. The question raised is whether the positive focus does not offer only limited understanding. On the other hand, all research is in some way partial. Research always has a focus, an area of interest; and in an AI-guided affair this focus happens to be on exploring achievement. On pragmatic grounds, the positive focus is likely to encourage participants to provide information more willingly in a non-threatening atmosphere. Moreover, a focus on the positive has credibility if the claims that the researcher makes for the study are equally focused and are related to other studies in the same field. Such a claim might be, for instance, that the AI study should be read as part of a larger body of work on the same phenomenon, and that the approach taken aims to redress the balance in that body of work, which has traditionally explored the phenomenon through explication of problems and deficits. In other words, in order not to experience loss of credibility, an AI-guided study needs to be clear about its aims and the extent to which it manages to achieve them. Finally, in terms of the positive focus there are some general implications for the way AI research is carried out, which in turn link to the relationships between participants and the researcher. Participation in an appreciative research process can be an unexpected experience, especially if people have been more used to discussing phenomena of the social world through a problem-solving orientation. Therefore, AI's focus on the positive may in fact create suspicion and puzzled feelings among people participating in the research. This is especially relevant for contexts of conflict, as people who have suffered of violence and loss can easily perceive the positive focus as a way of
silencing them from telling the truth. What Reed suggests is that AI-research needs to be open and collaborative throughout the process, making room for generous listening, and needs to be sustained over time, allowing for reflection and appraisal of initial reactions to and ideas about AI. (Reed, 74-77) This last point links to the next key issue of pacing and sequencing the study.

**Chronology of Study**

Chronology in Reed's account calls attention to the sequence and pace of research activities and choices. As in any research process based on reflexivity, the chronology of AI-research is usually meandering, with the different phases of study more or less blurred together. Nevertheless, AI projects do have a chronology centered on the ideas that the participants and audiences of the research have of the development of the study. The point here would be that if the researcher forgets about the past or future in the process of a research project, it can potentially make the present seem quite puzzling. In terms of sequencing, the spectrum of various research approaches can be described through two extremes: responsive sequencing and predetermined sequencing. The former is what might be found e.g. within the ethnographic tradition of cases where 'virtually nothing in planned in advance;' where the various stages of study follow one another in a more or less unpredictable way; and where the research questions are extremely broad and the sources of data uncertain. And the latter, predetermined sequencing, would be research with a clear chronological structure of e.g. planning-sampling-data collection-analysis-dissemination. In terms of chronology, appreciative inquiry falls somewhere in between these two extremes. On the one hand, its interest in the unexplored calls for responsiveness to the context and specific setting of the research, which often cannot be predetermined. On the other hand the focus of AI-research on what works well within a certain area of life does entail some pre-planning and thought. What does this two-way-pull imply for a research process, then? Reed claims that it constitutes a need for the researcher to be able to argue a case both for an inductive development of the study with ideas and opportunities for data collection arising along the way; as well as for a focus on what is going well in the setting, following from the rationale behind AI and a specific interest in the issue that has triggered the study. (Reed, 77-80)

The second aspect of chronology identified as a key issue for AI-research, is pacing. What this refers to is that estimating timings of research can be difficult in AI-research, due e.g. to the inclusive and engaging nature of the study. People participating in the study have lives outside the framework of research and may in many cases be primarily bound to other responsibilities and commitments. Moreover, the interpersonal tasks involved in an AI-research process contribute to the difficulty of pinning down any certain pace of study. What can be done about this in preparing for research then? Reed suggests that processes of learning and debate should be engaged in by the researcher at the outset of the study, in order to be able to get some kind of indication as to when an actual research phase can begin and how long it should last. (Reed, 80-82)

**Position of Researcher**

The issue concerning the researcher's position deals with whether the researcher is part of the culture, organization or group being studied (an insider) or whether s/he has come to the world being studied from the outside simply and only to carry out the study. It is often the case, however, that researchers occupy shifting and ambiguous positions vis-a-vis the worlds they are studying. It is thus not always easy or even possible to define the position of the researcher on the insider-outsider axis. Whatever the case, the researcher's position is always a reflection of membership, alliance and interest. Therefore, the position adopted or held by the researcher affects every phase of the research process from defining the research questions and constructing the research design to the analysis and writing of results and finally the dissemination of the study. Be it an insider position or outsider status, both positions place relations between the researcher and the participants in particular contexts. This is not to say that one position is better than the other, but rather that positionality always shapes the development of collaborative research. The important point is for researchers to be able to account for themselves in the field, be aware of and justify how their positions and interests are imposed at all stages of the study. (Reed 82-85)
Power and Control

Power and control, as the final category of Reed's list of key issues for AI research, refers to the different types and processes of influence that participants may or may not have on the research process. For AI, the creation of communality and collaboration in the study process necessarily prescribes thinking about issues of power and control. Power is seen in this context as something that the researcher co-constructs and responds to together with the participants of the study. Reed explains that the effects of power on the research process are displayed in three distinctive areas: on the way that research is initiated; on the way of working together, and finally on the way that research is received and responded to. It is of course true, that power differences exist inherently in the researcher-participant relationship; thus, what is again of prime importance is a) awareness of the potential and actual power differences and b) making them explicit. Strategies may also be needed to minimize inequities and imbalances in order to give space for participant concerns to be raised in a fair and equal manner during the process. This can be done, e.g. by constructing the research process as a genuine two-way movement of learning and information exchange versus the researcher merely collecting data and thus constituting a one-way process. (Reed, 85-87)

Unfinished Business

This paper has delved into the world of appreciative inquiry by considering it theoretically as a research methodology, as opposed to actually applying it to a specific research context. The primary focus of my PhD research project is on the ways that an infrastructural development intervention in a conflict affected setting in rural Nepal has succeeded in wisely and positively taking into consideration the conflict realities of their operational contexts, thereby possibly contributing to a broader, holistic peacebuilding project. Contained in appreciative inquiry, there are not only technical issues concerning how to explore ideas and information but also theoretical issues concerning what this information is about – that make sense in terms of my research task. Further, AI shows how engagement and participation by people who have traditionally been thought of as the subjects of research, can in fact contribute to the development of knowledge, and how traditional structures of power and influence can thereby move toward more open and democratic research practice. These are points to be explored in more detail in connection to my research design. One of the main implications of using AI as part of a methodological framework is foreseen as effecting not only the way in which questions are asked but also whose questions are asked. Reed's account is inspiring in the way that it describes appreciative inquiry as posing an opportunity to move away from research where studies are led by specific individuals who take sole responsibility and credit for them, toward an idea of collaborative research, in which direction and responsibilities are shared between the researcher and the participants. I find this of specific value for doing research in conflict prone contexts, due to the peace promoting and empowering potential that this type of study may be seen as having.

References


**Web Sources**

http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu
Mothers have the right to speak out – but keep silent.
Difficulties of conducting research in a militarized society

Mechthild Exo

Abstract

This paper reflects on a fieldwork conducted in Nagaland, one of the seven north-eastern states of India, at the borders to Burma. Interviews were conducted with representatives from the Naga women’s organizations to enquire about their influential practices to transform the Indo-Naga armed conflict. The Naga Mothers Association facilitated the ceasefire agreement of 1997 that is still maintained. At the time of fieldwork (January 2006) Nagaland was and has continued to be a militarized society. This paper reflects what this meant for the research process.

The paper structures the obstacles that hindered the research process into three aspects: 1) mobility restrictions, 2) an altered language as an effect of war and repression, and 3) trans-cultural translation. In a first step these obstacles are described with examples from the fieldwork, while the resulting consequences are discussed in a second step. The consequences include concrete actions and deliberations that made it possible to complete this Master’s Thesis project as well as thoughts that go beyond this specific research. The Worldism concept (Agathangelou/Ling), its principles, and suggestions for a method are introduced as an approach that conceives world politics as an exchange and struggle between multiple ontologies and epistemologies under asymmetric power relations. Worldism intends to enquire „into the invisible, the unsaid, and the silenced”.  

Introduction

The Naga indigenous people fight for the possibility of self-government. A few years after the decolonization of India (1947) the conflict entered into armed struggle that continued until 1997. The fieldwork was conducted in January 2006, the 8th year of official peace talks between the leaders of the NSCN-IM, on behalf of the Naga people, and the Government of India. The interest of the fieldwork was to find out how the Naga women developed their authority for an effective involvement in the peace process and what ideas they pursue. The Naga women’s agency cuts across established concepts of “the political”, especially the dominant concept of sovereignty. First, with a differing legitimation of authority: The women are not integrated into existing political structures - of neither the Indian state nor indigenous structures - and they do not intend integration, but e.g. campaign to delegitimate the Indian electoral system. Second, with their situational activities for social transformations and a solution of the conflict which are not parts of a zero-sum-competition for power or any clear-cut identity-difference opposition: To give a few catchwords: people-to-people dialogues, mediation in inter-community conflicts, their motto „human integrity”, high value of every human life, of connections between people, and of the needs of the people for a good life.

The established rules for the so-called „scientific study“ of facts as separated from values are not useful in particular for the specific research interest of this project on the Indo-Naga peace process. Rules for the „scientific study of peace and war“, as e.g. formulated in the textbook by J. Vasquez and M. Henehan with this same title, claim to be the only way to gain academic knowledge: Formulate hypotheses in causal relations between variables,
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operationalize the variables and collect data by the criteria of representativeness, reliability, validity etc. to test your hypotheses. However, research that follows these rules is unable to enquire social practices that exist beyond the established understanding of conflict resolution. The reestablishment of sovereignty and the monopoly of force of the state is the universal aim e.g. of the UN concept for peace consolidation.5

The state-community struggle (...) is bound to produce results in favour of either the state or the community (...). The prospects of peace according to this discourse are decided in a game that is admittedly of zero-sum character.6

State-building is not understood as an open process of debate about varying possibilities, but "twentieth-century 'good governance' is based upon the superiority of Western forms of government and their adaptability to all societies."7

The above sketched „science“ is here considered as only one among many narratives of knowledge. It was understood as counterproductive for this research to operationalize some variables in the planning of a research design or only to write down hypotheses. This was due to the intention to enquire into something that is not part of anything familiar to the researcher or respectively to western theories. The intention was exactly not to further universalize the specific western world descriptions, but to acknowledge a differing ontology and its interactions with other descriptions, including the dominant western.

Such a research approach is different from the idea that there is an objective reality that can be mirrored by procedures of empirical research. There cannot be an accurate, „true“ representation of reality. All descriptions of the world are human creations. The world as we understand it is created by language usage and the human mind. Richard Rorty writes:

To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human language, and that human languages are human creations. (...) The world does not speak. Only we do.8

Language does not simply mirror reality. As a social phenomenon language is culturally performed and contributes to the construction of reality. All we can know about reality is conditioned by language.

So it is through culture and language in this sense that the production and circulation of meaning takes places. (...) [S]ince the „cultural turn“ in the human and social sciences, meaning is thought to be produced – constructed – rather than simply „found“. Consequently, in what has come to be called a „social constructivist approach“, representation is conceived as entering into the very constitution of things; and thus culture is conceptualized as a primary or „constitutive“ process, as important as the economic or material „base“ in shaping subjects and historical events – not merely a reflection of the world after the event.9

Therefore, the interviews were not seen as a means to collect objective knowledge and to test a hypothesis. Instead, they are a form of intersubjective dialogue. The subjectivity of the Naga women expresses their interrelatedness, the discourses they are living with and the way in which they relate to these discourses. The meetings and interviews are also influenced by my position as a European woman influenced by the western science system that claims to provide cognition independent of context and tradition, but also by feminist, poststructural and postcolonial theory and a critical activist background. The intersubjective dialogue cannot be independent of power.

The fieldwork and the time before and after were filled with difficulties to overcome the various obstacles of doing research in a militarized society and to represent the voices of the marginalized. I was warned not to choose this topic for a Master’s Thesis, because I might not

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7 Zanotti, Laura: Governmentalizing the Post-Cold War International Regime: The UN Debate on Democratization and Good Governance. In: Alternatives 30/ 2005: 481.
be able to complete the work, or even not gather any information at all. It was not impossible to bring back information on the women’s involvement in the peace process. All contacted persons were very willing to participate in the research and contributed information. Still the research process was hindered in many ways and a very crucial aspect of the enquiry remained most unclear: the women’s ideas on a future political order.

**Obstacle No 1: Mobility restrictions**

The most obvious counteractive measures to the Master’s Thesis project had a materialistic and bureaucratic background: A scholarship was denied because the region for fieldwork was considered as unsafe area and the permit to enter this „restricted area“ was obtained only after several frustrating, time consuming unsuccessful attempts and on very restrictive conditions.

The denied scholarship was the first experience that showed me that entering the field of peace and conflict studies on the level of practical fieldwork is very different from other fields of empirical research. I had already conducted some of my studies in India, including a small research project in Bombay. Each of these projects was financed with a scholarship and it appeared very likely that the same organization would support the field trip for the Master’s Thesis as well. However, this time it was denied. The reason: The plan was to visit an area with limited safety. I had to recognize that doing conflict research by visiting a conflict area is not understood as an appropriate practice – at least not when it comes to funding. Direct communication and the attempt to gather information that are otherwise not available than in face-to-face contact with the people in the conflict region was not supported. Against this odd the fieldwork was started. But even though I spent more than three months in India, my days in Nagaland were restricted to only ten days. This was due to the required Restricted Area Permit, RAP. Every foreigner and every non-tribal Indian needs a special permit to enter Nagaland. This permit is mainly used to hide the war and human rights violations from the international public. Almost no foreigner at all was allowed to enter until recently. Of late, the Indian state embarks on a strategy to pacify the region by developing the economy, including the tourism business. Therefore they grant the RAP to groups of four or more foreigners if applied through an acknowledge tour operator. When time was almost running out I finally entered Nagaland with a small tourist group. That meant that I had to hide the true purpose to conduct interviews from every official: in the interrogation of the group after entering Nagaland and later by a secret service agent who met me moving in the private car of a women activist separate from the group, when registering at every new town at the police and at all the multiple checkpoints of the police and the military where the RAP together with all passports always had to be presented. It meant that I had to move with the group and had to prevent to be checked anywhere walking separate from the rest of the group.

**Obstacle No 2: An altered language as effect of war and repression**

The ceasefire was eight years old and regular peace talks were continuously pursued. All kind of infrastructure was developing e.g. new schools and colleges, business life and the health sector. The space for open engagement of groups of civil society was continuously widening. I expected to find an active debate on all questions related to the outcomes of the struggle and the ongoing peace negotiations. I thought, after overcoming obstacle No.1 the research can be done: Once I meet them, they will tell me and I will know more. The awareness that after war and all forms of counter insurgency measures the language usage cannot stay the same, but has altered did not come as a new insight. The difficulty in the interview process was still not anticipated and present.

Most of the people I interviewed were well educated, not from villages, and very willing to contribute to the research. Nevertheless, I found that often the answers were vague and expressed in an indirect language. Even when they referred to the two leaders of the underground organization NSCN-IM they gave hints who were meant without actually naming

10 Welman, Frans: The Forbidden Land: an adventurous account of three unfruitful attempts to enter the homeland of the Naga Peoples. Publish America 2003.
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their names can be read and their pictures are published in the newspapers, because they are the representatives at the regular peace talks with the Government of India. Still the people avoid using their names themselves. „National workers“ was a term I learned to translate to underground militants. Often I had to ask them to explain things more specifically. However, many times answers remained unclear or impossible to interpret for me. The consequences of more than five decades of militarization and war, filled with losses of life and homes, with rape, torture, threats and imprisonment have enduring consequences in all aspects of social life.

Dolly Kikon, a young feminist scholar conducted a research on experiences of Naga women in the armed conflict in 2003. She describes how the language had changed under the conditions of war and torture. Kikon even though herself a Naga had difficulties to understand village people who she interviewed. They had developed a manner to talk about the militant activists by using terms that an outsider would not understand easily. The women used code words when they talked about the weapons their sons in the movement carried when they came to visit them: „A pistol was referred as a ‘pig’s leg’, an AK 47 was referred to as a ‘sprinkler‘ while their son’s names were coded in terms of colours, - they were named black, red, white and so on."

In the middle of a recorded, long and engaged discussion with three interviewees, one woman mentioned that they do not want to be quoted on the said. She explained that it would be dangerous for them. „Nobody wants to vocalize that... because then you become a victim yourself, [you] know?“ The local context of what can be said and what cannot, is not obvious to an outsider. I was acting in the middle of the conflict. As a researcher one cannot be distant, neutral and pretend to be uninvolved. That is even more obvious in conflict research. This demands an ethical responsibility, because the researcher’s actions change the situation of the people who participate. In one other case, I was told near the end of the interview that I was seen as their messenger. „You might have come for your thesis as a research student but we expect you also to be one of our messengers. And spreading our news.“ This was explained on the background that the Naga issue is suppressed in the news. „They are trying to kill us silently."

Obstacle No 3: Transcultural translation

Much of the everyday reality of the Naga people as an indigenous and marginalized community between South and Southeast Asia who experienced several decades of armed conflict and militarization widely differs from what is known and familiar to me and consequently part of my language as a researcher with European background. We could talk in English, because teaching, administration and even the communication between the various Naga tribes is mainly relying on the English language as medium. It was not the limits of my English vocabulary that made my language only partially sufficient to translate the heard. A difficulty that is less obvious than the aspects of obstacles No. 1 and 2 is the understanding/translation of cultures and experiences-of-conflict.

Research as an intersubjective process has always an explorative character and needs an openness to understand something that might be beyond our experiences and usual language. However, it is not enough to have this in mind.

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The research focus on the Naga women was chosen, because in the small concerned community of local activists and peace researchers they are known for their influential and
inalienable role in the Indo-Naga peace process. They have created a space for their involvement with reference to their culturally strong mother’s authority: „Mothers have the right to speak out and tell them (the leaders) what we want to say, whether they listen or not.”

They meet the leaders in their kitchens and scold them for spreading too much blood. In the kitchen, the heart of the Naga home, in an atmosphere of care and nurture, the women would invite the UGs of their tribe and talk frankly, that their such actions they would loose the support of the Naga peoples. Post ceasefire Kitchen politics was stretched to facilitate a dialogue between top leaders.

Naga women are till today excluded from the traditional-indigenous political structures (village tribal councils, clan leadership, Naga Hoho etc.) and till recent history were not allowed to address or stand before the village crowd or act otherwise in the public sphere. Not a demand to be included changed their position, but the women’s practices to change the destructive effects of war conditions that were based in their everyday life experiences and legitimated by the mother’s role: They not only organized food and survival in the absence of males and under conditions of curfew, but went out to negotiate the release of prisoners and to demand prosecution of rape crimes of soldiers, they claimed unidentified dead bodies, and organized public Mourning Days. With campaigns e.g. to fight the spreading of AIDS and alcohol abuse and to organize health care and social support centres they gained a position of authority that was the base for the later peace campaign „Shed no more blood“ that the women started in 1994. The peace campaign worked in close cooperation with the other social organizations e.g. the Naga Student Federation, the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights and the church, but now „no intervention, from the local to the highest level, is felt to be adequate or complete without the women also being present as a part of representative decision making of the Naga peoples.”

The women’s work was highly valued and it became an often-heard refrain: „Where are the women, we need the women.” In the Naga tradition there exists the role of the „pukrelia“ or „demi“, a „neutral lady“ who could walk untouched to the enemies’ village and negotiate peace. This is an additional legitimating ground for the Naga Mothers (NMA) interventions today. It was the Mothers who facilitated the ceasefire of 1997 and who lobbied to maintain the peace process.

The research expected to find a vivid debate of future visions for the society especially in this current phase after years of ceasefire and before a new framing of order is settled with a peace accord. Surprisingly the women kept quiet on ideas for ‘the political’ as they want to build it.

What happened to the women’s voices when it came to the articulation of future visions? They seemed to be missing and be silent. Why would they choose to keep silent at this important point?

What does it mean that I could not hear more about their ideas? Was this a result of the very limited time we could spend together and of the repressive environment for the research process? Was it the decision of the women not to participate in these debates because that is where they draw the line to the classical male occupied field of politics as power struggles that they did not want to be a part of?

What to do, what to learn, what to change

Stiftung am 27.11.2002 Überlegungen für Zukunftswerkstätte „Rolle der Zivilgesellschaft“
www.eed.de/fix/files/doc/eed_fr_frauen_an_die_friedenstische_02_deu.pdf - download 16.06.2006

18 Ib.: 28.
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In the following the consequences from these experiences with obstacles during the research in a militarized society are presented and discussed. What did I do to complete my Master’s Thesis, but, more interestingly, what further discussion results from these experiences concerning academic practices? What epistemological considerations follow for a doctoral thesis that builds further on this first fieldwork and for research methods in general?

Most of the further deliberations refer to No. 3 „transcultural translation“ of the obstacles presented. Before I take some more space for these thoughts, obstacles No. 1 and No. 2 are briefly dealt with.

Consequences No 1

After entering Nagaland I had to develop a strategy to create space to meet the social activists and to have at least some time of communication with them. The group had to stay together and followed a tourist programme; we could stay at nights only in certain accredited tourist houses etc. At first I stayed back in the hotel „with sickness“ while the rest of the group visited nearby villages. That gave me two days at the capital of Nagaland, Kohima. Still there was the risk to be checked by police or soldiers in the city. I was ordered by the tourism department not to leave the hotel. I „escaped“ once to visit the women development department. After that I had a personal guard who always accompanied me – even sat aside during interviews. In those few days I could finally meet some people who were very important for my research because they agreed and could arrange to come to my hotel. These included the president of the Naga Mothers Association, an executive member of the Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights and the former president of the Naga Student Federation. Some of the later interviews also depended on the willingness and ability of the interviewed women to take the effort to come to the tourist places where I had to stay.

The „consequences“ of the mobility restrictions are closely connected to my understanding of a (non-positivist) research process. First, it was not possible to rely on existing literature for the research as a possible consequence after the denial of funding for the field trip. Because I did not want to repeat representations of the Indo-Naga conflict that concentrate on the armed protagonists, frame it as a secessionist, terrorist struggle and the counter insurgency in defence of national integrity, or describe the potentials of economic development of the region as the gate of India to the east. The agency of the Naga women and other social grassroots organizations cannot be analysed within the framework of the existing literature, but only with the help of grey literature and in direct communication. Second, for this research approach it was intended to rely on subjective knowledge, therefore the obstacles did not question the project completely. To rely on (inter-)subjective knowledge would not be acceptable by the standards of positivist „scientific“ empirical research. A researcher going by these other guidelines would probably have to confess that it were questionable (because of selection and response errors) whether that any reliable and valid findings and scientific inferences could be drawn from this data collection with all the limits of places to go, people to meet and the time constraints in addition to the high efforts and risks the interviewees had to undertake to participate in the research. However, also with a research approach that values subjective knowledge, the chances for understanding were reduced – e.g. because after leaving the capital town, the travel route allowed me to do interviews only with the two tribal women’s organizations that do not wish to be integrated in the Naga Mothers Association. The NMA intends to be the voice of all Naga women irrespective of tribal identity and is generally seen as successful in integrating the various tribes.

Consequences No 2

The altered language intends to protect people under conditions of repression. In their context it still makes sense not to vocalize certain thoughts, e.g. because they do not want to be between the lines of the rivalling factions of underground groups or to be seen as collaborator with the Indian state and who betrays the Naga cause. The research interest might interfere into these non-vocalized areas. A spontaneous meeting after I arrived in a remote town with the elders, the tribal leaders, the former student leader, the office bearers of the tribal women organization and representatives from the church was stopped after the first few questions with the remark, that this kind of questions need time of deliberation. They declared to come back to me and shortly before I left the town the local priest made a statement: They are simple people who live a hard life. They do not have the power to change the conditions. They wish to live in peace, but cannot influence what happens. They can only wait for a better future. This incident happened in an area where it was common to hear shootings at nighttimes — real or pretended clashes between the underground factions —, where students who visit their families in the villages during vacation time sometimes had to hide to prevent forceful recruitment, where a year before a young student had disappeared after a peace march and later was found - cut into pieces.

As already mentioned an ethical responsibility must respond to the altered language and a chosen silence that intends to protect people under conditions of violence and repression. There is no neutral position from where we do our research. When we accept that we are intertwined with the research „object“ in an intersubjective relationship then the demand for accountability becomes an understandable consequence.

The “Protocol & Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context“ from the University of Victoria demands accountability in a wide sense: The people involved in the activities being researched are to be considered as having an equal interest in the project. They have the absolute right to know what will become of the information they have volunteered as well as its possible use and application and they should have the right of veto or censure over their contributions before publication.21

Anna Agathangelou and Lily Ling suggest four commitments for academic practices as central aspect of their Worldism concept. These commitments are trans-subjectivity, agency, critical syncretic engagement and accountability.22 They formulate about accountability:

Worldism holds accountable (...) and asks: „What are we thinking/doing/being, at whose cost, and why?“ We are moved to interrogate the meaning and purpose of power. „Whom does it benefit? Whom does it sacrifice? Why should we mirror imperialism?“ From these queries, a more meaningful and sustainable democracy may arise.23

Consequences No 3

It took a frustrating long while before I could rethink my own picture of popular debate that I applied on the Naga society. As explained there were reasons not to organize the fieldwork in accordance with any strict guidelines for the so-called „scientific study of peace and war“. Notwithstanding, I unconsciously operationalized ‘popular debate’ in certain western categories to be checked: Where are the controversial positions on future visions for a peace agreement and the pluralist debate on forms of self-government? Where are the articles and pamphlets? Where are the posters, flyers and banners in the street? Adding to the missing of these signs I got to hear from the women activists: “Our leaders are there to decide. We trust our leaders.” Accordingly it could have been concluded that the women are not part of this debate. Even that a general public debate was not taking place at all.

24 Khesheli Z. Chishi, President Naga Mothers Association, 12 Jan. 2006, Kohima, in the interview.
The research was set to explore divergent practices of the political that cut across the inside-outside framing of the political as they are essentialized with the sovereignty concept. The questions (and the listening) did not want to project the western principle of sovereignty as precondition for a political space and therefore avoided related terms e.g. “national self-determination”, “nation state”, “independent state”, “sovereignty”, “nation”. These terms would close a dialogue that intended to understand differing ideas and practices of organizing the political. However, this conscious avoidance of western projections at one point – the concept of sovereignty – covered only a limited field of meanings and was unconsciously not continued at other concepts that were important for the research e.g. a certain idea of popular debate.

Even when the Naga women are willing to inform an outsider about their experiences – or even see me as their messenger - they might not be able to find expressions and explanations that are easy to understand for someone who was not involved and did not live under the same conditions. Only after an unsatisfactory repeated reading of the transcripts of the interviews I could finally recognize how much I myself was part of the reproduction of a Eurocentric ontology. The questioning of the Subaltern Studies and of postcolonial and feminist theory on the possibility of the marginalized to be heard under the present conditions of power relations and knowledge production became a very concrete experience. Even after the attempts to read the interviews differently it was not possible to make a clear statement about the Naga women’s contributions, positions and effects in the debate of future possibilities of the political. I had to confess that there exist variations of ways to organize a popular debate and I could recognize at least some parts of how it was done within the Naga community differing from my expectations.

Only after re-reading the interviews with a newly opened mind I could see the relevance of the detailed information the women had given about the consultation process with the NSCN-IM leaders, about the participation of every social organization and how positions are taken back to the grassroots structures in the villages. Kheseli Chishi, President of the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), explained in the interview:

They always tell us, any (...) stage of talk. They will openly share with us. (...) They will not cheat us. (...) Whatever they tell us, we also disseminated those things to the people at grassroots level, the women groups. We used to have meetings time to time. So whatever we hear from them we used to discuss with them. And whatever we discuss among ourselves we also share with them. (...) That understanding is there.  

The women leaders talked about the high value of transparency and accountability to the grassroots level, how every social group – students, men, women, elderly people, etc. – are reached through their specific tribal structures and the apex bodies. From there the women leaders gain their legitimacy and the same mandating they demand from the leaders at the negotiation table. „Both sides can decide to break the ceasefire. But for whom after all are they talking – for us. We’re all stakeholders in the peace,“ Nedionuo Angami, former President of the NMA, asserted. The popular mandate is described as a recurring theme in the Naga society and it were most importantly the women’s organizations who worked to build a “mass support of the peace process, cutting across the tribal lines as well as bridge the rural-urban divide.” Moreover, in joint efforts with other social organizations they convinced the NSCN-IM leaders to establish a consultation process for participation and consent building with all groups down from the local level.

Still I struggled with the women’s declarations, their leaders will make the decision, when I asked about specific ideas and probable controversies on future social and political


26 Khesheli Z. Chishi, President Naga Mothers Association, 12 Jan. 2006, Kohima, in the interview.


28 Id.: 50.

29 Ib.: 50.
structures. To understand the reasons it was necessary to connect the said to the circumstances: The interviews were conducted less than two weeks before the next important round of official peace talks. This time it even fell together with the expiring date of the ceasefire agreement. The Naga militant organization had announced they were not going to extend the ceasefire if there were no significant steps made by the Government of India, because they were frustrated with the stagnation of the peace process. To strengthen the position of the NSCN-IM leaders in the talks all Naga social organizations demonstrated a unity behind these representatives. Deviating from this goal factional killing still happened. The day before I entered Nagaland three militants were killed in a clash between the two main underground groups. – Understandably this was the most inappropriate time to express to an outsider any kind of variations in their positions, but a time to demonstrate trust and unity behind the leaders as their representatives in the peace talks. This context must have been so overly obvious for my interviewees that they did not even think of explaining it to me. Still I received some hints after I insisted on the question:

We don’t want to mindedly say, we want this type of solution, we don’t want this type of solution. That is something, which we wish to reserve [to the leaders]. That would be too unwise on our part to be sharing with others as of now. If you can understand that.30

These are examples for the difficulty of understanding even when we accomplish time – though limited – for direct communication. This is due to the different ways to describe reality and the language we use according to these ontologies. The framing approach for the research was the Worldism concept of Anna Agathangelou and Lily Ling. Worldism understands world politics as an exchange and a struggle between multiple ontologies and epistemologies that people live with. These exchanges and conflicts occur under asymmetric power relations. Academic practices are a part of these interactions under conditions of inequality. Agathangelou/Ling describe the discipline of International Relation as a colonial household.

Its singular, oppositional perspective („I versus you“) stakes out an establishment of „civilization“ in a space that is already crowded with local traditions of thinking, doing, and being but proclaimed, in wilful arrogance, as a „state of nature“ plagued by fearful „anarchy“ and its murderous power politics. The House seeks to stave off such „disorder“ by imposing „order“. But the House does so by appropriating the knowledge, resources, and labor of racialized, sexualized Others for its own benefit and pleasure while announcing itself the sole producer – the father – of our world.31

The power relations in the world reflected in the academic discipline and the western ontology dominate and claim universalism while other ontologies and knowledge systems are not acknowledged and are excluded. „In the House of IR, the Native Other refers to non-Western, nonwhite sources of knowledge, traditions, or worlds. These may be smuggled in as „servants“ or „wards“ of the house but otherwise are not recognized as identities in their own right.“32

Conventional methods in International Relations exclude from consideration that there are multiple understandings of patterns and rules, of worldviews and practical politics that are in constant processes of mutual influencing.33 Especially the observations and interpretations of those who are affected by the enquired subject are not seen as a reliable, because they lack objectivity.

To understand world politics as constant interplay between different stories of the world, with interpretive and material effects, is a radically different approach from academic practices. Worldism politicizes knowledge and its production. It demonstrates that we have a choice, that there is more than one story and more than one way and site for the production of knowledge.

30 Achumbemo Kikon, Ex-President Naga Student Federation, in the interview (together with Khesheli Z. Chishi, President Naga Mothers Association) 12 Jan. 2006, Kohima.
32 Id.: 27.
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Worldism does not simply talk about including Others but directly integrates non-Western epistemologies and ontologies into theory-building and political activism. (...) When the Other voices itself, neither Self nor Other, theory-building nor practical politics, can remain the same.  

But the difficulty remains to realize a research that is framed by a Worldism approach. Probably this is a field where conflict research and other social sciences need to come closer and learn more from the cultural studies. Stuart Hall describes this question of translation and the production of a shared meaning in an introductory textbook to cultural studies:

We should perhaps learn to think of meaning less in terms of 'accuracy' and 'truth' and more in terms of effective exchange – a process of translation, which facilitates cultural communication while always recognizing the persistence of difference and power between different 'speakers' within the same cultural circuit.

Additional efforts are needed for translations across different cultures and experiences with war. „Self-reflexive filmmaking“, as presented by Trond Waage at the Tromso conference, seems to be a promising tool for an open, engaged dialogue. This method might help to create a space for an understanding of cultures and experiences of conflict as a partnership in the research process that tries to overcome hierarchies of knowledge systems and other forms of privileges and power relations.

New methods – inseparable from alternative epistemology and ontology

The new method that is suggested by Agathangelou and Ling together with their Worldism concept is the use of fictional texts, in particular poetry, as scientific resources. „Telling stories through narratives or poetic form not only provides voice but it also demonstrates the variety and scope of voices, thereby curbing the hegemony of one.“ In poetry, songs, or tales people express thoughts about who they are, how they relate to others, how they are treated, deep feelings and what they envision. „[F]iction and poetry have always expressed deep human needs, goals, aspirations, and desires from ancient to present times.“ Dolly Kikon worked for her research on Naga women’s experiences in a militarized society with a similar method as advocated by Agathangelou and Ling.

A unique feature of this study is the manner in which the stories of resistance and struggle as represented through songs and poems are woven through the text of the narratives. These songs speak of loss and pain, suffering and resilience in the face of adversity and capture the trials and tribulations of women in the midst of active armed conflict. They also describe at length, the rural landscape, which becomes the physical and psychological site of Naga national consciousness because it is in this living space that life’s battles are fought and lived. Photographs are another important resource that has been used in this study – interspersed through the text they serve to complement the themes of the songs and poems.

If fiction is used as a method the purpose cannot be to reach a common or unified interpretation. Agathangelou/Ling see the usage of fiction as an identification of spaces of contestation in a process of public deliberation, a process of speaking and listing to others. The multiple worlds that people come from will be appreciated and on this ground solidarities and connections can be built. Fiction can be a tool to intrude upon familiar perceptions and to envision the new and unexpected. „It offers a site for critique as well as reconstruction.“

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37 Id.: 12.
Poetics as method is not understood as sufficient in itself but it „must derive from an epistemology that explicitly recognises the concrete legacies of race, gender, class, and culture that have shaped and structured world politics from its very beginnings.“ If the specific epistemology that instructs the western architecture of science is confronted with other existing epistemologies and ontologies, its hegemony can be disrupted. The western architecture of science preserves a specific ontology as natural and independent of time and space. Therefore, methods as e.g. poetry, which bring the multiple interpretations of “world” and the various visions of future to the foreground, could also question the status quo of power that is stabilized by the dominant universalizing knowledge system and the claim of a singular ontology. Open debate from the various positions and communication trans-cultures means a re-politicization of the framing of world politics, its conflicts and possible social transformations. For transforming the understanding of science we cannot address some distant location, but it is reproduced or changed by our choices of academic practices and our accountability at every step of a research process – often compromising easy access to resources, e.g. funding and positions.

41 Id.: 845.
Situational Methods: Researching Paramilitary Punishment in Northern Ireland

Dermot Feenan

Abstract

This paper addresses a range of methodological issues arising from research on paramilitary punishment in Northern Ireland. The issues are, mainly, about access, safety, and the legal and ethical implications; issues which resonate throughout ‘dangerous’ or ‘sensitive’ research. However, the paper argues that far from seeking to apply standardised methodological approaches for all such dangerous or sensitive research, the often volatile fluxes from violence to peace, and back, in some societies require situational methods with strategic sensitivity to time, place and culture.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses a number of methodological issues arising from research on paramilitary punishment in Northern Ireland. The issues are access, safety, and related legal and ethical issues. While these resonate broadly in what is usually termed ‘dangerous’ or ‘sensitive’ research (Lee 1993, 1995), what I hope to show here is that their implementation requires a methodological sensitivity based on time, place and culture.

2. Background

The overall aim of the research was to contribute to an understanding of paramilitary ‘policing’ by documenting the nature and extent of ‘punishment’ attacks and intimidation, identifying reasons for the prevalence of this activity, recording the perceptions of community members, assessing possible strategies for prevention or reduction, and evaluating the response of voluntary and statutory agencies to the phenomenon.

First, it may be necessary to provide a brief reminder of the historical context for paramilitary punishment in Northern Ireland. The long-standing political conflict between Ireland and Britain had, at least as far back as the nineteenth century, given rise to quasi-military combatants, such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, willing to fight for their respective political interests.

During the War of Independence in Ireland, 1919-1921, the government set-up in opposition to British rule established an alternative system of justice, comprising land arbitration courts, and, soon after, general courts. The Irish Republican Army (the I.R.A.) was called upon occasionally to enforce the orders of the courts. The War of Independence was followed by a Treaty between Britain and Ireland by which Britain agreed to withdraw from Ireland. But not all of Ireland. The North, which comprised a mainly Protestant population—who wished to remain British—was to be partitioned from the rest of Ireland. The partition in 1921, which led to the creation of Northern Ireland, merely re-constituted constitutional conflict.

That conflict erupted in 1969, starting what became euphemistically known as ‘The Troubles’. With the riots of 1969 in the North that started the most recent phase of political violence, a new framework for alternative justice developed in both Loyalist and Republican urban, working-class areas. This new framework was based on defensiveness from threats outside the geographic boundaries of ethno-national communities, which later justified claims to protect the community from internal threats.

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On the Nationalist and Republican side, this was compounded by the alienation of many Catholics from what it regarded as an illegitimate state. The existing illegitimacy of the Northern state in the eyes of Nationalists and Republicans was further damaged by sectarian policing by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (the R.U.C.) and major abuses of human rights by the security forces.

**Paramilitary punishment**

During that most recent phase of conflict paramilitaries contributed to crime management in local areas through systems of justice that paralleled to some extent but differed in key respects from the state system. This paramilitary punishment developed characteristic features of rudimentary justice systems, including: organised structure and personnel; clearly delineated ‘crimes’; crime prevention; procedures, including investigation, adjudication of guilt or innocence, sentence and punishment; tariffs; and, finally, mitigating circumstances.

Despite some differences in ideology, motivations and practices, Loyalist and Republican punishments bore remarkable similarities. The punishments can range from warnings to violent physical assaults or shootings. They also include: curfews, fines/victim restitution, acts of public humiliation, expulsions, assassination, and property damage and intimidation.

As part of my research, I compiled a database of all ‘punishment’ activity reported in the three Belfast-based daily newspapers. In the period July 1998 through June 1999, reported assaults (or ‘beatings’) often involved forced entry into the target’s residence where he or she was beaten with blunt instruments. These instruments have in the past included baseball bats, bars or hammers. The resulting physical damage ranges from bruising to severe laceration and fracturing of bones. Shootings can be through the soft tissue on the legs, but includes bone shattering in the ankles, knees and wrists. The beatings, often committed by several assailants at a time, can lead to substantial, long-term psychological injuries. Thousands of these attacks had occurred during the preceding thirty years, mostly in those urban working class districts, characterised by high density housing.

**3. Issues**

The research was conducted at a time of intense political transition. The Belfast Agreement of spring 1998 placed Republicans and Loyalists, but particularly Republicans, under intense pressure from the British and Irish governments and their domestic political rivals to end paramilitary punishment. A number of issues arose from trying to gain access to those who had been subject to punishment and those who would have been close enough to paramilitaries to speak with some authority about the practices. These issues appear to have some resonance in conducting sensitive or dangerous research on political conflict elsewhere (see, e.g. Nordstrom and Robben 1996). In summary they are: personal safety (b) establishing good faith; (c) openness and transparency, (d) politically sensitised language, and (e) legal and other related ethical issues.

**(a) Personal safety**

Researching paramilitary violence calls for heightened awareness of personal security risks. Yancey and Rainwater (1970) describe two kinds of physical danger that may arise during the research process: the ‘anonymous’ and the ‘presentational’. The former is present in any situation in which the researcher is more than ordinarily vulnerable to threat from a stranger. The latter arise when the researcher’ presence or behaviour triggers a hostile response. Both kinds of dangers apply to studying paramilitary violence. Those suspected of passing information to the ‘other’ side in arenas of violent political conflict may be subject to risks. The murder of ‘touts’ or informers is a well-known phenomenon in Northern Ireland. Academics are also at risk. For instance, in September 1991, Queen’s University Professor of Comparative Politics, Adrian Guelke, survived an assassination attempt by the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), one of the paramilitary organisations. They later claimed that he was an intelligence.
officer for the IRA and involved in importing arms from the Middle East. However, Guelke reports his incomprehension as to the reasons for the attack:

How or why I fell foul of some person in South Africa to the extent that I became a target for assassination I do not know. Perhaps my writing about South Africa’s supply of arms to Loyalist paramilitary organizations gave offence, or a brief investigation I carried out into extreme right-wing violence in South Africa may have been the cause. There were a number of possibilities. From my experience of Northern Ireland I know how utterly trivial the reasons someone becomes a target can be. In general, campaigns of violence are rarely conducted with precision, whatever their ultimate purpose (Guelke 1998: 196).

It later transpired through a journalist’s investigation that Guelke’s South African background and research on violence there had led to loyalist paramilitaries being approached. Guelke’s experience underlines the risk for researchers in undertaking fieldwork into paramilitary violence.

A cautious security protocol was observed, therefore, for the fieldwork. The cessation of military operations by the Provisional IRA and Combined Loyalist Military Command in 1994 and the decline in sectarian murders up to and during the period of research meant that there was little risk of being caught up in severe random civil unrest. But there remained small risks of what Yancey and Rainwater call ‘presentational’ risks in interviewing and in encountering sporadic civil disturbance. This entailed being aware of the community in which one was interviewing and, at least initially, doing some fieldwork in pairs until confidence in locales was established. It included planning safe entry and exit routes through paramilitary enclaves and opting, where possible, for safe(ish) locations to conduct interviews (e.g. Probation Board offices). It called for caution in the weeks before and after the Twelfth of July – the day the Orange Order marches widely in Northern Ireland — given the widespread violence that accompanied those parades. Such caution often took the form of listening to radio traffic reports before leaving for work and before return in order to plan safe routes past actual or potential barricaded routes. Even so, we did experience typical street violence upon return from an interview in a staunchly republican area. As our car left the interview site, a police landrover pulled in front of us. Immediately, and, apparently, out of nowhere, several youths began throwing stones at the police vehicle. The debris bounced off the police vehicle, scattering in front of us.

We also engaged in comparative research on informal justice in South Africa, where there were different risks of violence; notably fatal car-jacking, and robbery. On this leg of the research, we always travelled to interviews together in a car, locked our doors, never wound down the windows in built-up areas, and tried to avoid stopping at traffic lights. We planned our trips carefully, mindful of the dangers of driving into an area known for violence. We always carried a mobile phone. While threats to physical security in Northern Ireland were manageable, access to key informants in a context of long-standing political violence proved challenging.

(b) Establishing good faith

Social research in urban working class communities in Northern Ireland emphasizes the need to establish good faith. From my point of view, this was particularly important regarding paramilitary punishment. Communities are the social environments from which and through which paramilitaries emerge and sustain their support – in Northern Ireland, paramilitary ‘punishment’ clusters in urban, working class loyalist or republican communities; the traditional heartlands of paramilitaries. It would have been pointless to have sought to understand such practices by entering those communities expressing straightforward abhorrence of the practices. Moreover, many of these communities are tight-knit, forged against external sectarian or military threat. Some of the urban working class areas of the principal city, Belfast, remain separated by so-called ‘Peace Walls’. They are territorial spaces, marked by visual and other signs of ethno-national identity. This means that strangers are conspicuous and may be treated with suspicion. The stranger may be called to account for his or her presence and to show good faith. In this research, it was necessary to establish good faith and impartiality within the communities studied.
The suspicion that communities, including paramilitaries, may have about outsiders also affects the state security forces, with vigilance against paramilitary researchers masquerading as ‘lilywhites’; that is, spies with no otherwise visible connection to the paramilitary organisations. The researchers were also mindful, given the deep-rooted hostility between republican and loyalist paramilitaries, of not being seen to favour one constituency at the expense of the other. Some respondents initially had suspicion about the ulterior motives of the research, which had the potential, at worst, to block access or, at least, severely curtail data gathering. Two tactics were useful in addressing this issue.

Firstly, it was essential to secure ‘approval’ from key stakeholders. Undertaking the research required tacit acceptance by paramilitaries or, at the very least, making them aware that fieldwork of this nature was being undertaken to inform them of its purpose. As Lee (1995) notes, paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland satisfy themselves that researchers working in ‘their’ areas have no involvement with security forces. As it is widely accepted in Northern Ireland that certain political parties have a close connection with the paramilitaries (despite official denials or obfuscation about the nature of the relationship) we notified the relevant political parties of our interest and need for co-operation. It was inconceivable that they would have officially blocked our research. All these parties were on record as opposing ‘punishment’ activity and would have compromised their reputations in the peace process by risking any allegation of non-cooperation with academic research in the field. Nonetheless, it was certainly open to the political parties and their many community activists on the ground to thwart the fieldwork through unwillingness to meet or by prejudicing the progress of the research. The involvement of representatives from these parties in some of our meetings underlined that good faith and trust was established. Such ease of access also minimised the likelihood of trouble from paramilitaries, though the probability of such danger for researchers since the height of the conflict in the 1970s is now virtually minimal.

Some of our trustworthiness was established through approval of key voluntary/community groups and the one statutory organisation (the Probation Board) that command respect within the communities. Often, this was gained through a strategy of contact by letter, followed-up with a phone-call and an informal meeting to discuss the Project and to gain trust. Such use of community organisations can act as a buffer between the fieldworker and the public, giving some reassurance and security when addressing controversial questions (Brewer et al 1998). In some ethnographic research in Northern Ireland, however, fieldworkers have found that use of personal contacts, and introductions as a ‘friend of a friend’, have been more successful than more formal introductions through organisations (Burton 1978).

The second tactic in establishing good faith was to stress the independence of the research. One important aspect of this was the nature of the source of funding for the research. Those approached for interview would frequently enquire, or indeed the researchers would volunteer the information in an effort to stress independence, about the research sponsors. As the government is perceived by some interviewees to be a key protagonist in the conflict, any funding from this source would have been tantamount to siding with the enemy and the Project’s motives would have been questioned. The fact the research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and located within a university suggested an independence which might otherwise have been difficult to secure. Similarly, when I was invited by the RUC to attend informal luncheons I declined because of what our informants might see as too close a relationship with the police, leading to bias, or, worse, the risk that we were gathering intelligence on paramilitaries.

Where challenges to the impartiality of the Project did arise in my initial telephone contact with respondents, my reassurance focused on the independence of the research, its public policy orientation and the commitment to understanding and reflecting individuals’ and communities’ experiences and perspectives. This, together with an offer to meet to discuss any concerns led, without exception, to further contact with those who initially expressed wariness or resistance.
(c) Openness and transparency

Given the suspicion and possible danger, especial care needs to be exercised in researching within such communities. Understanding paramilitary ‘policing’ in Northern Ireland requires probing questions about motives, methods, support for paramilitaries’ actions within their communities, and the exploration of alternative ways of dealing with anti-social behaviour, which is likely to be treated with some suspicion. Burton (1978) reports that young people who visited him in the early stages of his ethnographic research in Belfast, appearing to him to be simply curious about the English ‘student’, did so to report his movements and opinions to the IRA. Such research is particularly likely if the researcher is perceived to be from the ‘other’ community. Interviewees may engage in the process of ‘telling’ the identity of the stranger based on the social significance attached to face and appearance, name, area of residence, school attended, and accent/language (Burton 1978). The researchers sought to confront this by being open and transparent about our identities and the aims, and by indicating the impartiality of the Project vis-à-vis the then dominant political demands. Especial concern was taken where suspicions might have been heightened, such as in requests to tape-record the interview for the purposes of data analysis.

In many interviews in nationalist/republican areas I volunteered that we were interviewing the British Government’s Northern Ireland Office, the state police (the RUC) and an anti-‘punishment’ group, Families Against Intimidation and Terror. This approach, of ‘laying one’s cards on the table’, was used similarly in loyalist areas. Respondents appeared to appreciate the openness. The approach needed to be balanced, however, against our ethical and legal obligations to maintain confidentiality. It was essential also to ensure that we did not disclose the names of informants, particularly under questioning, however innocuous their identities might appear. Several seasoned researchers in the field informed me that such disclosure would immediately be regarded in some quarters as an inability to keep identities (and potentially other sensitive information) secret. The Project’s commitment to this qualified transparency was also shaped where necessary by discretion and the need to maintain a low-profile. It did not extend to publicising actively the research, as the topic paramilitary ‘punishment’ beatings is often sensationalised in the media.

One approach which proved useful in establishing transparency in this project was an informational leaflet containing details of the Project (aims, objectives, methodology etc.) which was sent to participants in advance of an interview, which also set out that while we sought to understand paramilitary violence, we were opposed to violence. This often informed the start of discussion in face-to-face meetings and allowed the researchers the opportunity to expand on the substance of the Project, and the interviewee to follow-up with questions about the research. The facts contained in the leaflet were sufficiently broad to assure interviewees that the research was cross-community, with clear public policy objectives.

(d) Politically sensitised language

An important issue in the research was the political sensitivity of the language used by the researchers. Language in Northern Ireland is used to exclude and express collective solidarity in a way that can be opaque to an outsider. Use of politically insensitive language could have restricted access or given the impression of bias. The most likely problems arise in making reference to ‘Northern Ireland’. Northern Ireland is the name of the formal political unit created by the Government of Ireland Act (1920). Nationalists use the term the ‘Six Counties’ or the ‘North of Ireland’ and unionists prefer the term ‘Ulster’ or ‘Northern Ireland’.

The scope of politically sensitised language extends to naming places. For instance, nationalists refer to the second largest city in Northern Ireland as ‘Derry’. Unionists refer to it as ‘Londonderry’. In interviews with nationalists, and particularly republicans, we took care therefore to refer to the ‘North’ rather than ‘Northern Ireland’, and to ‘Derry’ rather than ‘Londonderry’.

Beyond the use of general political labels, this particular research project generated its own difficulties with research language. The term ‘punishment’ was regarded by some contacts as insufficient to describe the phenomenon. Others believed that it legitimatized such violence as
deserved. One organisation, which was a gatekeeper but also reviled within many republican areas, used the term ‘mutilation attack’. The researchers sought to avoid terms that might appear judgmental (and hence adversely affect fieldwork) by referring instead to ‘so-called punishment’.

I also avoided using the terms ‘terrorism/terrorists’ in relation to paramilitaries, mindful that in the republican and loyalist communities in which I interviewed political violence was regarded as legitimate by key informants. Instead, I adopted neutral terms such as ‘political violence/paramilitary activity’ and ‘combatant/paramilitaries’ respectively, terms which were increasingly being used at that time by paramilitaries, their political associates and those concerned with non-judgmental analysis of the political conflict.

Similarly, the research sought to avoid referring to our target population as ‘victims’. The term had become highly politicised, particularly since the Belfast Agreement in 1998 recognised the need to honour the experience of the ‘victims’ of the Troubles. One incident well illustrates the potentially explosive nature of the debate. In September 1999, the Minister for Victims in Northern Ireland met with families of Provisional IRA (PIRA) members shot dead in 1987 by the British Army. A pressure group, Families Acting for Innocent Relatives (FAIR), denied that they were victims, instead asserting that they caused the troubles. Sinn Fein, the leading Republican political party, rejected the claim and argued that no section had a monopoly on suffering and that the grief of all relatives was indistinguishable. However, according to the Ulster Unionist Party, this was a dispute about ‘genuine victims of terrorism’. The avoidance of the term ‘victim’ was chosen, too, to preclude the negative consequences for persons so named. The use of the term ‘victim’ can disempower those who have been the subject of such attacks and beatings by objectifying them and reducing their capacity to acknowledge their own responsibility for behaviours that may have led to the attack. As a result of this and the potential for perceived bias, we used the term ‘persons subject to “punishment”’. This sensitivity to language was important for our key gatekeeper, the Probation Board. They were concerned that use of terms such as ‘victims’ could reinforce learned helplessness among their clients and thereby interfere with the organization’s work with the young people.

**Accessing the punished**

Given the political background and accompanying risks of talking openly about violence in Northern Ireland, and notwithstanding our strategic sensitivity, it was extremely difficult in the early stages of the research to access those who had been subject to paramilitary 'punishment'.

While journalists managed interviews with some individuals in the immediate aftermath of an attack, it proved extremely difficult to gain access thereafter. Some of the problems in access involve fear of further attack, shame and disrupted patterns of living.

For some of those 'punished', they wish to come to terms with the event in private. One contact with an individual subject to a beating illustrates this difficulty. Following a referral from a support organization, we phoned a young man who had been beaten in a case of mistaken identity. The man had been interviewed by a number of reporters from regional and national broadcast and print media. When contact was made one week after the incident, the man stated that he did not want to talk about his injury. He wanted to put the 'whole lot behind him' and 'get back to normal'. The field-worker respected the choice and agreed to contact the man in a month's time to check how he then felt about talking. When contact was later attempted, the man's telephone number was no longer available. It is highly likely that the man's responses constituted a defence mechanism against confronting the pain, and possible shame, of the attack.

This challenge in interviewing those subject to 'punishment' is compounded by a wide range of other psychological factors. One counsellor we interviewed has stated that some 'punishment' may trigger experiences of childhood sexual abuse. Re-visiting an incident may prove extremely difficult. In addition, there is a stigma attached to 'punishment' that militates against disclosure. A common view prevails that even if the attack was brutal the person targeted somehow deserved the 'punishment'.

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Perhaps the most inhibiting factor for potential respondents is the fear of further attack and intimidation from paramilitaries. To be seen to be ‘informing’ carries heavy penalties from paramilitaries. A number of cases suggest that the paramilitaries will assault or intimidate those who speak out about punishment against themselves. During the research, a man was attacked by republican paramilitaries. He spoke out against the attack shortly after. A few nights later he was attacked again. Similar attacks have been committed against elected councillors who have criticised paramilitary 'punishment'. Not surprisingly, therefore, accessing the 'punished' took longer than expected. The initial plan was to conduct forty interviews by way of snowball sample.

Initially, contact was made with two not-for-profit organizations, 'Families Against Intimidation and Terror' and 'Outcry', that have supported and campaigned specifically for the 'punished'. Exploratory meetings with both organizations in autumn 1998 yielded strong support for the research and elicited promises to facilitate contact with individuals who had been punished. Both organizations then put us in contact with several individuals, two of whom granted interviews. Another, already mentioned, declined an interview. The sensitive nature of the research and the ongoing difficulty in accessing respondents required patience and the maintenance of trust and rapport. In the case of one of the organizations, the gatekeeper's focus throughout the first five months was with the terminal illness and death of a son, followed soon after by a car accident. The gatekeeper in the other organisation resigned his post approximately seven months after our fieldwork commenced. Such exigencies underline the often precarious nature of access in hard-to-reach populations with few gatekeepers. In anticipation of slow access, contact was also made with several other organizations and individuals. Requests for facilitation were made always after an initial meeting to establish scholarly intent, bona fides, respect for confidentiality and trustworthiness.

It soon became clear that the planned snowballing of interviews would not run to initial schedule. Contact was also tried through the official Victim Support agency in Belfast. Forty letters were sent to individuals who had been in contact with the organization as a result of direct or indirect experience of paramilitary 'punishment'. Only one letter yielded an interview. However, swift success in reaching the sample target was achieved over a five month period one year into the Project as a result of good relations developed with the Probation Board of Northern Ireland and via community organisations. In the former, support for the Project was secured at the senior level of the organisation and their letter of endorsement sent to area probation managers. Thereafter the researchers made contact with probation officers for referrals. Their professional interest in the topic and access to a 'captive' client base proved fruitful. While the nominal target has been reached, the preponderance of those on probation probably provides an unrepresentative sample. The latter community organisations, some of which actively support restorative justice projects as an alternative to 'punishment' beatings and shootings, brokered contact with some interviewees.

(e) Legal Issues

Given the likelihood of uncovering offences during research on paramilitary violence one of the issues addressed in planning the interview schedule was how to deal with disclosure of criminal offences or intention to carry out criminal offences. Routine inquiries by police of suspects may reveal that interviewers have obtained information about a crime which should have been disclosed. The risk of arrest and possible confiscation of materials could have substantially detrimental impact for the researchers, host institution, programme funders, and access to further contacts. Conversely, non-disclosure of information about an arrestable offence may lead to serious offences not being investigated.

Attempts to compel disclosure of research records have been reported mainly in the United States, with at least two attempts in the United Kingdom (Feenan 2002). Should researchers be obliged to disclose? An answer might form by taking into consideration some of the consequences of doing so, or not doing so.

In the Project, any such request could have compromised assurances of confidentiality, security and anonymity of information. However, where any request becomes public, compliance or repudiation of the request can create problems of trust among existing and further respondents who may have widely differing opinions about the appropriateness of disclosure.
Some of the consequences of non-disclosure are well-illustrated by the case of the American researcher Mario Brujuha, who undertook participant observation of restaurant work. Following a fire at the premises, he was served with a subpoena requiring him to hand over his field-notes (Brujuha and Hallowell 1986). His refusal to comply led some co-workers to see him as a crusader. Others, however, regarded his refusal as instrumental in holding back insurance payments in a suspected case of arson and the re-development of the restaurant.

In any research the researcher will need to manage the perceptions of others about the researcher's motives. This may become particularly problematic where the subject nature of the research is violence, which may involve criminal offences. Moreover, the researcher may be used as a dumping ground for all manner of well-founded or unsubstantiated allegations.

In some instances, the researcher may learn of intentions or plans to commit criminal offences. In the United States a number of federal statutes protect researchers' confidentiality of respondent information. In the United Kingdom, the custom of journalists not revealing their source, something researchers will sometimes invoke in discussions about confidentiality, is merely a custom. The law does not protect them from non-disclosure where otherwise required by law.

Aside from the respect for respondents in honouring confidentiality, assurances of confidentiality can help develop trust and secure responses. Showing potential informants, such as drug-dealers, a certificate of confidentiality, which may be used in the USA for certain research addressing federal drugs legislation, apparently increases levels of co-operation (Nelson and Hedrick 1983). Sagarin and Moneymaker (1979) state that a claim to protect confidentiality regarding information about intention to commit a serious crime would be tantamount to aiding and abetting the crime. As such, they see it as morally, legally and professionally dubious. Such a view is not universally shared. Van Maanen (1983) sees the responsibility as being dependent on the nature of the relationship as well as the nature of the offence. In his own fieldwork on police work, he decided not to testify about observing the beating of a suspect in police custody but was less sure whether he would withhold information had the man been killed.

Legislation in Northern Ireland requires disclosure of offences of the sort that were likely to come up in the Project’s research. In anticipation of legal difficulties, we wrote to the prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland explaining the research and seeking guidance in relation to the ambit of the relevant sections in the legislation and what the likely stance of the prosecuting authority would be. The reply was non-committal. It reiterated the relevant sections and stated that they would consider the likely application of the defence of reasonable excuse in determining whether there would be a reasonable prospect of a conviction. Perhaps more tellingly, it stated that ‘if called upon to take a public interest decision the […authorities…] are bound to take account of the general circumstances in which the information came into the possession of the persons reported’. Hearsay statements, therefore, would carry less weight than direct witness accounts. Nonetheless, I was particularly concerned that we should not expose ourselves to the risk of application of legislation that appeared to have a discriminatory effect on particular communities in Northern Ireland for the purpose of gathering intelligence information for the state.

There is no case-law in the United Kingdom directly on the interpretation of these relevant sections in relation to social science research. The most likely defence to any charge of breach of the relevant sections would be that the researcher had reasonable excuse, for instance on the grounds that the information was hearsay and common knowledge. A tension existed in conducting our interviews between, on the one hand, providing a statement eschewing interest

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2 Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (N.I.) 1967 imposes a duty on a person who knows or believes that an arrestable offence has been committed and who has information about the offence which 'is likely to secure, or to be of material assistance' in securing, the arrest of any person to give the information to the police unless they have a reasonable excuse.

3 There is a similar provision in section 18(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 regarding disclosure of information about 'an act of terrorism'. A similar, though less stringent, provision exists in England and Wales under section 5 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 in relation to an individual concealing such information for reward. Under that section of the Act the old offence of misprision of felony by which an individual was under a duty to report any felony is no longer an offence, except in relation to treason.
in specific information about offences to guard our own legal position and out of respect for the interviewee and, on other hand, not inhibiting or scaring off interviewees with what might appear to be reading them their rights. It was agreed, therefore, to play a soft-line on this by stating at the start of the interview that we have no interest in 'real' names or identifying details. Nonetheless, in two cases interviewees needed to be reminded during the interview that no such information was required.

While the chance of prosecution for non-disclosure of such information may seem slight, it is not implausible.

4. Conclusion

My research on paramilitary ‘punishment’ in Northern Ireland underlines a series of methodological difficulties, which may have implications for similar research elsewhere. Certainly, the nature and extent of political violence – including paramilitary punishment – has diminished during the recent move towards political settlement. Nonetheless, the research required a methodological sensitivity to situation, one that was attentive to the particularities of time, place and culture – that is, Northern Ireland during a time of volatile transition from political violence. Such sensitivity requires an awareness of the predictable dangers and flexibility in approach to problems which present themselves in the field. Progress in the research depended on successfully managing issues of disclosure, sensitivity of language and perceived identification with all parties. It was essential to build trust with gatekeepers to gain access. Researching those subject to paramilitary 'punishment' was difficult due to the hidden nature of the population, their fears and the precarious existence of small, voluntary ‘gatekeeper’ organisations. While the risks of physical injury were minimal, successful negotiation of the political minefield was achieved through transparency about the impartiality and funding independence of the researchers, and a strategic sensitivity towards community and political backgrounds. The general issues in this presentation may not be unique. If such research were to be repeated, say in twenty years, the changed political context is likely to give rise to a need for different methods. I hope to have shown that they need to be considered to with close attention to the time, place and culture of the research field.

References


Young people at the margins can restore peace and justice

Ida Hydle

Abstract

The aim of this presentation is to highlight the efforts of young people in creating and restoring peace, not only in international wars and gross national conflicts but also in countries otherwise at peace. Restorative justice is seen as a means in such peace building. The paper presents an alternative focus on conflicts and peace building, namely that conflicts are resources for peace and that young people have essential roles to play in conflict handling. As a social anthropologist and medical doctor I focus on participatory methodology with young people, visualising our common work. Thus qualitative research can improve by visual means. The presentation concerns both the logic of the praxis of youth in restorative justice-processes and the studies of such practices. I suggest a participatory approach: cooperation between young people and researchers from visual anthropology, political science and linguistics in data collection, analyses and presentations of results.

There are wars and wars

Several kinds of wars are focussed in the international and national public debates. War-zones such as in the Middle East, the Balkans or The Democratic Republic of Congo represent wars where the international society and its representative institutions take part, such as NATO, UN or EU in addition to various national and local representatives and groups, with or without various forms of arms. But there are other kinds of wars going on within most countries today. Wars between youth gangs or between youth gangs and police forces, e.g. in European countries, such as France, Germany and Great Britain, lead to increasing political and social concern. Such wars are, just like other kinds of wars, seen as serious and deep-rooted threats towards not only the local communities where they take place. In European countries they are also feared as signs of vulnerability of the welfare state as a whole. To a certain extent they are, thus, also interpreted as serious signs of a non-functional civil and social society for the coming generations.

Traditional ways of restoring peace involve mostly peace negotiators from the international organisations, mentioned above, or mediators from large NGO’s (such as Norwegian Peoples Aid, Transcend or religious societies, e.g. the Catholic Church). The peace negotiators or mediators often have a diplomatic status, and they are mostly well known and national politicians.

There are however other methods and attempts to come about peace, stemming from the growing acceptance and use of restorative justice (RJ).

Peace and restorative justice (RJ)

Cases of mass violence and war, defined as criminal situations, are brought to trial at different international criminal and war tribunals, i.e. criminal justice, CJ, is a means to handle the aftermaths of gross violence, of mass threats, atrocities, killings and destruction. JR is seen as an alternative or as a supplement to the perspectives of CJ. It is a theory as well as a practice of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behaviour. The accomplishment is through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders. RJ is supposed to be a dialogical and direct way of handling conflicts on the premises of the involved parties. It is shown to strengthen the parties as well as the local community. In cases of serious violence committed by juveniles it is shown to decrease re-offending, compared to CJ procedures

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RJ in the Norwegian context may serve as an example of this approach to handling criminal cases of violence: “Contemporary restorative justice has in the western part of the world mostly been initiated either as an academic sociological idea, or as a religiously inspired movement. In Norway...it was Nils Christie who introduced the idea of redefining criminal offences as conflicts². This triggered off the development and establishment of the so-called ‘konfliktråd’ or ‘conflict councils’» writes the senior advisor Kemény who has been a leading person within the Norwegian Ministry of Justice in establishing the Norwegian Mediation and Reconciliation Service, MRS (Det norske konfliktrådet)³.

The Act of Parliament regulating the MRS (as a permanent institution of criminal law) in Norway defines criminal offences as conflicts, the mediators must be laymen, the parties (litigants) must meet personally, and lawyers are not allowed at the meeting. Direct mediation is fixed by law. Empowerment of community and of the parties is central to the idea and the ethos of the councils⁴.

The bill was passed in 1991, the councils were administratively moved from the Ministry of Social Affairs⁵ to the Ministry of Justice and have developed a little different around in Norwegian counties. Having done fieldwork in different criminal justice processes as well as the mediation services in Norway I have been given the possibility during the last decade to look into the Norwegian discourses of criminal and restorative justice. One of the most conspicuous discussions is the juridical⁶ and bureaucratic organisation of the MRS. Conversations with leading persons within 1) the academic field of criminology; 2) the Ministry of Justice (as the national head of the restorative justice institution, 3) national and local public prosecutors, 4) national and local restorative justice organisers, 5) local mediators, have contributed in one interpretative direction: Norwegian restorative justice seems to be an example of post-modern hybrid⁷ construction. Here I see the hybridity in terms of time and space. Is it possible to “force” the principles of forgiveness and reconciliation into modern Criminal Legal Acts, national or international, which are constructed upon the principle of purity and individual culpability? Seen with a constructivist gaze punitive justice corresponds to an essentialist world-view (“he/they is/are criminal – society must get rid of/punish him/them”) whereby RJ corresponds to a dialogical and situational view upon e.g. language and personhood (“There is an event which is interpreted as a criminal act by victim(s) and/or witness(es) due to interpretative circumstances and situation. However, at stake is the reciprocal empowerment of the primary performers of the (reconstructed) act – the victims and the perpetrators – based upon the performers’ mutual agreement of reconciliation”). In a Bakhtinian⁸ wording CJ corresponds to a monophonic monologue (of the legal masters) whereas RJ may be seen as a polyphonic dialogue (of the various actors in the event interpreted as a criminal act). These differences may be crucial today as we seem to find ourselves in a time and place in which there is a growing critical conscience among people around the world concerning CJ (McCold 2003)⁹. This critique poses a threat to the contemporary state of the art of (western/post-colonial) CJ of most nations. Thus it is worth while looking for general clues to this state of the art when exposed to alternatives such as RJ.

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³ See http://www.konfliktradet.no/Om-konfliktradet/In-other-languages/English/(English - Konfliktrådet)
⁵ which had been responsible for testing out municipal conflict councils
⁶ by juridical I imply the notion of the word given by Bourdieu: “It (the juridical field) - he says - appears to partake both the positive logic of science and the normative logic of morality and thus to be capable of compelling universal acceptance through an inevitability which is simultaneously logical and ethical” (Bourdieu, Pierre 1987 “The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field“, The Hastings Law Journal, 38: 818).
⁷ by post-modern I apply the meaning as is exposed in Lyotard’s The postmodern condition including 1) views upon science as situational, 2) globality as a new way of defining reference, space, time and place and 3) truth as a differential between a variety of propositions (Lyotard 1979/1984). Hybrid is a term by which is meant the construction of word or sense with elements from disparate fields of life (in time or space), or according the Oxford dictionary: “a composite word formed of elements belonging to different languages”
Violence, conflict handling and culture

It is possible to separate the two kinds of justice approaches in theory. In practice it is an empirical question whether my criteria for distinguishing are appropriate. I will therefore shed light on general human modes of behaviour and the ways in which certain behaviour patterns crystallise in conflict resolution rituals, such as CJ or RJ processes.

The following analytical models have some basic assumptions:

- There exists alternatives to violence/uprising/coercion – private (such as street violence, family violence) as well as public (such as war or coercion within prisons or psychiatric hospitals)
- Conflicts and the handling of conflicts are cultural acts: conflicts are perceived and handled differently in different social groups along distinctive cultural features, such as language, laws, rules, attitudes and images of right and wrong.
- Conflict handling often takes the shape of a ritual
- Cross-cultural principles concerning conflicts may be identified and implemented

I will try to signify some theoretical differences between CJ and RJ, seen from Norwegian victims’ and perpetrators’ point of view. They are not as clear in practice and in addition partly contested:

Criminal justice

- Perpetrators are punished
- Victims and perpetrators (litigants) are treated as opponents or adversaries in a negotiating process by their juridical representatives
- Victims want perpetrators to be punished
- Victims receive restoration by the mere fact that defendants are punished
- The satisfaction of victims’ needs is not an issue in criminal proceedings
- Judges determine upon what is the best for their victims and perpetrators

Restorative justice

- Perpetrators accept the responsibility of the act(s) committed
- Perpetrators and the community agree upon the harm done to the victim(s)
- The possibility of reconciliation increases if there is a direct co-operation/confrontation between victim and perpetrator
- Perpetrator(s) must offer victim(s) repair of the harm done, in the form of remorse, restoration, restitution and eventually reconciliation
- Perpetrators are not punished but supported to repair the harm done and to seek help and work on his/her problems

The anthropologist David Riches discussed in the book “The anthropology of violence” (1986) the relation between the performers of violence, i.e. perpetrators and victims, and witnesses). He generated a dynamic and relational model “which captures the fundamental tension in this basic triangle of violence” (1986:8). In order for anthropologists to see violence as a cross-cultural phenomenon, the focus must be put “on the act of violence itself, rather than separately on the roles of performer, etc.” He claims that violence must be seen as an act in a relationship involving at least two persons, which is deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses. “Once the tension in the relationship between performer, victim and witnesses is drawn out, the vital question of the potency of violence as an act and as an image can be approached” Riches wrote (1986:9). The basic triangle of violence can be illustrated by the following figure:

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10 represented e.g. by members of the local MRS
The triangle’s lines symbolise the relationships between performers, victims and witnesses. The line between performers and victims is seen as the relationship within which the act is committed. The witnesses looks into this relationship in judging the act as “violent”, “accidental”, “deserved”, “legal”, “illegal” etc. Riches accentuates these relations as consisting of two elements: “an element of political competition and an element of competition from the fact that the act of violence never fails to be one of contested legitimacy” (1986:9). Once legitimacy is brought into the discussion, naming an act violent will always be dependent upon someone’s, the witness’, moral judgement. Legitimacy, however, is also a contested term, not least when the context is a criminal court, or when a military or police force exerts violence, causing physical pain or otherwise restricts peoples’ actions by threats of physical force. Thus, there is a need to break down this complexity of the term into “(acceptable) reason”, “according to the law”, and “grounds for” which all may have different connotations. In my interpretation, violence has a moral dimension. Naming an act violent is in itself a moral act. There is no space outside morality in which one might take refuge from the concept of violence. Or as the English literary scholars Armstrong and Tennenhouse wrote (1989): “To regard certain practices as violent is never to see them just as they are. It is always to take up a position for or against them…”.

I base my approach on this perspective on violence, whether mass or individual, and on my categorical distinction between criminal justice and RJ. According to Riches’ assumptions, the differences between RJ and CJ may be shown in the following two models:

Model 1 shows how we as witnesses (directly or indirectly) may regard an act (an interaction) between at least two people based on a moral value judgement of the act as either violent (i.e. illegitimate) or not violent (legitimate). Witnesses will not always agree to the evaluation of an act as violent or not violent, neither will the two (conflicting) parties. In criminal proceedings there is a central premise to depict the two litigants as adversaries, i.e. the disagreements and controversial explanations will be central, and eventually the extenuating factors leading to the act interpreted as violent (e.g. a land or property claim may be interpreted as the “reason” for the violent event/act). The parties’ juridical representatives, the public prosecutor and the defence counsel (e.g. in war tribunals) head the negotiations. In a trial there will often exist a whole range of opinions concerning guilt and punishment. But there will be an inherent, doxic agreement upon the phenomena of culpability and purity. The inheritance

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12 “Physical hurt” is by no means an uncomplicated term: Persons may feel themselves physically hit also by words and texts, (e.g. speech acts). Within biomedical reasoning, mental pressure may exert more bodily harm than physical hurt. The whole Carthesian discussion of body vs. mind lies in this problematic division. It seems, however, obvious that there is an absolute disruption, biological as well as existential and social when a violent act causes death or impairment.


14 as an example a policeman protested when I used this model in a lecture and told me: “The police never use violence, but force”. I guess that a soldier or an officer would have claimed the same.

15 Here I refer to Bourdieu’s notion of those aspects of culture and society which are so obvious to people that they are not even questioned: Norms which are so self evident that they cease to exist as norms.
relates to the inevitability or self-evidence of judgement of a fact, the individually committed criminal act, i.e. a person has been essentialised into a criminal criminal, having committed an act by will and intent. The victim is consequently and likewise essentialised into the individually damaged or injured victimised victim, a passive receiver of evil. And the representatives of the litigants build their representations upon a mutual inimical image.

In a RJ process, however, the conflicts or violent acts will be handled differently: The mediator will not decide or judge upon what has happened or how different witnesses have interpreted an act but bases her/his mediation upon the common understanding of reconciliation and restoration at which the parties themselves may arrive. In particular cases "guilt" or "cause" of the act or the conflict may be shared between the two reciprocally and equivalent parties, as they are not recognised as adversaries. It is the agreement, not the disagreement, between the two, which is the starting point for mediation. They agree upon the act of illegitimacy, but they may disagree upon the degree of it, which is not, however, relevant to the issue of agreement. The two having a conflict are expressing themselves, they have no representatives, they have a mediator, but no judge.

**Model 1:**

Witnesses

Perpetrators? Victims?

The disagreement of the alleged criminal act

**Model 2:**

Facilitators/Mediators

Perpetrators Victims

The agreement of the events/acts and the aftermath, i.e. mediation/conferencing

A Norwegian positioning of restorative justice – culture in the making

The scale of conflicting opinions, which I mentioned concerning guilt or punishment, is not one-dimensional and my challenge is to envisage some of the dimensions within the various conflict regimes in a theory of knowledge approach:
Conflict regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Restorative/lay</th>
<th>Legal</th>
<th>Anthropological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Cultural stock&quot;</td>
<td>lay, local,</td>
<td>Inter/national, law/justice</td>
<td>crossing of lay and scientific categorical boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reasonable,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;folk-law&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of knowledge</td>
<td>&quot;folk&quot;-theories</td>
<td>(western) legal science</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxonomies</td>
<td>dis/agreement,</td>
<td>criminal law, criminal procedural law…</td>
<td>cross-cultural comparison, ritual analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>right/fair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wrong/unfair…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomena</td>
<td>violence, pain, suffering, reasonable justice…</td>
<td>crime, law, reason, fact, subjective, objective…</td>
<td>violence, pain, suffering, ritual, drama, crime, law, reason…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point I resort to the Norwegian history of criminal court which may bring a background to understanding contemporary problems in something, which may be seen as reintroducing "the old system of handling conflicts". The context of RJ is many faceted: the construction of the nation state, the emergence of a highly professionalised society, the increasing need for public control of the population etc. And not least the extremely cost-expensive and uncontrolled increase in criminalised activities all contribute to a need for “new" solutions seen from political and bureaucratic points of view. In these perspectives I see Norwegian peace building culture in the making.

The two kinds of public spaces for handling conflicts in Norway are of two different kinds. The rituality of the two “justices” is strikingly different and I will schematically try to emphasise some of the differences at various levels. My task is to find focal phenomena and terms for analysis. The model is based upon my empirical findings so far: the local apprehension of reasonableness and the strong emphasis on agreement, i.e. mutual willingness by the conflicting parties to meet and to negotiate directly concerning the possibilities of forgiveness and restoring the harm done. At the same time I intend to formulate some of the conflicting areas of contemporary Norwegian culture.

Rituals of Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal</th>
<th>Restorative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The owners of the conflict</td>
<td>adversaries, i.e. the state on behalf of victims and perpetrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual master</td>
<td>professional judge, “central”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>legal counsels (prosecutor, defence counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>long, black gowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>“Norges lover”, legal textbooks, the Norwegian armour, the judge’s club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>“strafferetten” - Norwegian court house (tinghus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules of conduct</td>
<td>impersonal, formal, directed towards strengthening the court’s authority according to strict hierarchic rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends</td>
<td>empowerment of the state by punitive control of its members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 taking into account that this is a simplification and a shortening of complex and contested historical circumstances
17 i.e. crime is constructed according to contemporary validity of rules and laws
The criminologist George Pavlich launched the idea of hospitality as the key term for restorative ethics in his opening address to an international conference on RJ (2001): “...ethics appears as a meta-discourse on how specific instances of hospitality produce ethical subjects who imagine ways to be with others in the future. This vision of restorative ethics does not claim to be universalizable, or assume a naturally defined ethical subject (e.g. victim, offender, etc.).” The idea of hospitality refers e.g. to the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas’ hosts and guests who are constituted by given forms of the welcome (Pavlich 2001:13). As a mediator I act as a host wishing the participants at conflict welcome to sort out the conflict by my assistance. My task is to strengthen and make their agreements more specific and concrete, as a method for them to learn about each other’s feelings, frames of reference and goals for the future. When in the konfliktråd they are treated as guests. Instead of a meal, there is an intense aiming for peace and negotiation based upon agreements.

The mediator’s witness position in the model of David Riches may be further elaborated by the “dialogic imagination” of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). His theoretical and analytical approach to “dialogicality” embraces wide fields of knowledge (philosophy, literary theory, linguistics etc.) and concern ethics and aesthetics, which are unalterably linked. Every dialogue, be it between persons or between persons and texts, will always imply dissimilarity at one or more points. This difference is the key to creativity, to “creative understanding”. The difference in itself is signified or symbolised by a “witness”, a third part (according to the literary scholar Jostein Børtnes’ interpretation of Bakhtin: “each dialogue takes place as if against a background of the invisible, but present “third”’s (super addressee) responsive understanding. This “third” is a quality of the word itself, thus the dialogue contains not just the two, but three instances (Børtnes 2001:10). The third instance is indivisible from the dialogue, as are the two parts, sides (person or text) creating the dialogue. This “third” instance defines the dialogical relation: In addition to I-for-the-other and the-other-for-me comes a “third” which relates to both and which by its invisible presence yields the dialogical word its open and infinite perspectives of meaning (Børtnes 2001:11). Bakhtin’s musicologic terms polyphony and monophony (as metaphors) refer to his studies of literary texts, especially the novels of Dostojevskij. Bakhtin extends his thoughts e.g. concerning dialogism in literature, texts and especially novels, towards a general social theory, i.e. human interaction (or the philosophy of action). Truth will always depend upon an agreement within the reference of polyphonic dialogue.

By the use of Bakhtin’s ideas as well as elaborations by the pedagogue Olga Dysthe21, I will try to reformulate the above model to a model of monologically versus dialogically organised justice:

**Organisation of Justice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monological/Criminal</th>
<th>Dialogical/Restorative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>professional (legal)</td>
<td>(non-professionalised) discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government(ality)</td>
<td>conversion of insight, comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transmission of legal knowledge</td>
<td>dialogism: Knowledge is something which is created through interaction between dissimilar voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objectivism: Legal knowledge is taken for granted</td>
<td>including the interpretations and the personal experiences of the participants, the owners of the conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lawyers and legal textbooks as authorities, excluding the litigants/owners of the conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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19 In Pavlich’s wording I see “how specific instances of hospitality (in which ethics appears as a meta-discourse) produce ethical subjects who imagine ways to be with others in the future” (2001:4).
Pavlich divides the way in which RJ is conceived into two different fields: the process conception and the value conception. According to a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective the one is needed for the other, there is no value without a process. I will take the two terms guilt (representing a criminal domain) and responsibility (representing a restorative domain) as examples of two different terms belonging to the monological vs. the dialogical imaginations: I regard guilt as a “one-way-term” – there is no way out of it. The word *re-sponse* however (or the Norwegian counterpart: *an-svar*) exemplifies a word which itself implies a dialogic relation.

There is a question, comment, utterance – and an answer - a response (et svar) as an example of the third instance’s invisible presence “which always exerts itself to be heard, always searches for responsive understanding and which does not stay by the immediate understanding, but makes its way continuously forward (boundless) (Børtnes 2001:10).

**Magic, dialogism and restoration of peace**

I tend to think that herein lie some answers to why the dialogic relation between participants in RJ processes may develop into “magic”, a term frequently used by mediators/facilitators when they recall what happened during conferences. Persons who seemingly oppose each other, come through the dialogue offered by the mediator(s) or the conferencing facilitator(s) to a common understanding of the interpretation of the act; the event - on their own premises, with their own wording and their own rhythm of talk, with anger or anxiety, fury or sadness – and with the possibility of forgiveness as an act of the future (Derrida 2001).23

Thus my intention here is to describe a methodology of restoring peace which goes across street violence, family violence and gross national violence as well as mass destruction. Some of the programmes typically identified with RJ include methods in victim offender mediation (one-on-one meetings between victims and offenders with a mediator or two), conferencing (a conference includes support people for each), circles (a circle includes community members as well as support people), victim assistance, ex-offender assistance, restitution and community service. It is important to open up for multiple options in order to be sensitive to the needs of parties (victims, perpetrators and community) as well as to show cultural sensitivity. For this reason, programmes may combine approaches24.

Three principles form the foundation for RJ: Justice requires that we work to restore those who have been injured. Those most directly involved and affected by crime should have the opportunity to participate fully in the response if they wish. Government's role is to preserve a just public order, and the community’s is to build and maintain a just peace.

The role of the mediator is to stay neutral, to keep a relational - not essential - overall approach which means focussing on the *relationship between* the parties, i.e. the relations, emotions, dialogues rather than keeping the focus on the parties. At the basis of this dialogical approach I suggest to build upon the Swedish linguist Per Linell’s ontology and epistemology of *dialogism*25 which he has developed inspired by Bakhtin and Levinas.

In restorative processes one stresses the need to provide a safe place for victims and offenders to enter a dialogue about what happened in the incident and its impact on the victims and the community. There are five steps in creating such an atmosphere, according to the RJ researcher Mark Umbreit26:

- Separate pre-mediation sessions with each party involved
- Connecting with the parties while maintaining neutrality
- Creating a safe place where people can speak from the heart
- Dialogue between the parties where the facilitator stays in the background as much as possible
- Non-directive style where the facilitator is emotionally present in the conversation, able to step in if needed, but allows the parties impacted by the crime to speak to each other

22 According to Oxford English Dictionary; “An action or feeling which answers to some stimulus or influence”
26 See [http://www.restorativejustice.org/resources/leading/umbreit](http://www.restorativejustice.org/resources/leading/umbreit)
Examples of young people at peace

1. The street mediation project, “Gatemeglingsprosjektet”

In Oslo and other European cities, young persons with an immigrant origin, Asian or African cultural, and Islamic religious background, experience liminality in multiple spheres. Mainstream society mirrors itself in the lives of these young people, and draws borderlines, defining what is welcomed as Self and what is cast out as Other in the liminal terrains between European and non-European, Norwegian and Pakistani or Somali, Christian and Islamic (Dale 2006). The street mediation project in Oslo, “Gatemeglingsprosjektet”, is an attempt to restore peace by involving young people in a new communication methodology. Meetings and workshops take place in ongoing services and projects that work restoratively with conflict and violence/crime prevention among youth (Dale 2002, Bitel 2002). The project is administered by the Oslo Red Cross/Red Crescent in cooperation with the Oslo MRS. Some mosques are also actively engaged in this work. The Minhaj konfliktråd, administered by the mosque Idara Minhaj Ul-Quoran, is one such case. This Islamic community has developed their own RJ practices, adopting the models and methods of the mainstream society, and actively seeking cooperation with mainstream institutions like the Mediation Service, the Red Cross/Crescent and the Police.

The head of the project, Geir Dale, writes: “Referring to peace studies I hold this project to be most relevant seen explicitly also in an international political framework – the liminal youngsters become liminal between us and them, also within security policy, immigration policy and in the construction of our own political identities... And all of this also happens on an international scale, where the uprising events in Bradford, New York, Paris and Amsterdam are included”. This methodology is currently planned to spread to towns in the Barents region.

2. “Liminal young people at the violent margins”

This is a project at its beginning, involving juveniles at the violent margins, the parties (victims, families and community) and the criminal legal professionals in conflict resolutions. The project is based upon three hypotheses in conflict resolutions:

1. use of visual means and skills can compensate for lack of verbal/language skills
2. dialogues, in a Linellian perspective, and relationism can enhance understanding, creativity and conflict resolutions
3. liminality and conflict create social capital, i.e. human resources

The project is an interdisciplinary cooperation between a linguist and three anthropologists who will investigate the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency as a relational phenomenon, closely related to a range of different barriers that may be summarised as a kind of “speech disability”. The researchers plan to conduct three different qualitative investigations that will supplement each other:

- explore the linguistic content in RJ processes with young people who have committed serious criminal offences

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27 Dale, G. 2006 Text in Research application to the Norwegian Council of Research.
28 See [http://www.konfliktraadet.no/upload/gatemegling%20report%20part%203.doc](http://www.konfliktraadet.no/upload/gatemegling%20report%20part%203.doc)
32 My translation of an e-mail from Geir Dale to me in a project planning process 2006.
work analytically with life histories\textsuperscript{34} of imprisoned juvenile offenders
investigate the young offenders’ own approaches to information and communication
technology (ICT) as part of the rehabilitation process\textsuperscript{35}.

The idea behind the project is that children and young people referred to as “criminals”
are often deficient when it comes to speech and utterance command, i.e. they suffer from a kind
of “speech disability”. This circumstance often forms an important key to their lack of social
adjustment, to incarceration and to weak societal participation, i.e. it is an indication of a
relatively small social capital. Theoretically and methodologically the projects makes use of a
cultural analytical perspective on disability as a relational and relative phenomenon. Gender,
age and social class are central dimensions in the analyses. In particular we will examine closely
the male- and macho-culture which often characterizes the social circles of young people with
problems in relation to the law. The project is both action oriented and oriented towards basic
research. It is based upon the same ideas as the project “Youth Gaze” developed at the Visual
culture studies at the University of Tromsø\textsuperscript{36}

The RJ process is seen as a dialogical and rehabilitative tool – an action research
approach in which meetings and conferences in the MRS is seen as the action and the research
is based upon the analyses of the dialogues between parties during the restorative process and
the concluding results. The police, the prosecution, the court and the prison system will be
included in the action.

The project examines the conditions which have lead to the present day situation as well
as the possibilities of creating a sustainable self image for the future. The life stories will be
recorded during repeated conversations with the same persons over a considerable period of
time.

An investigation is planned where the researcher makes use of visual tools such as dvd
which juveniles already use or want to learn about, i.e. the young offenders’ own approaches to
visualisation as part of the rehabilitation process in a mediated communication between them
and the outer world, MRS, victims, family and community, in order to develop identity and
subjectivity linked up with mediated communities or arenas and development of young peoples
alternative forms of expression with film.

The project intends to define and investigate a complex phenomenon, “juvenile
delinquency”, by redefining “delinquency” or “criminality” as a relational phenomenon, which
fruitfully may be studied as a kind of speech disability. In criminal justice procedures lay actors,
such as witnesses and perpetrators, are to a large degree guided or steered by the juridical
language and by the legal actors. There exists however the RJ alternative, the MRS. Research
and experiences within or outside prisons have shown that fragile juveniles prone to criminal
activities have problems in expressing self-identity, feelings and understanding of “the other/s”
due to lack of use of such language terms. There is thus a need for charting and extending the
phenomenon of “crime” by investigating its different expressions in different ways. The project
will emphasise those aspects of young offenders’ lack of speech command that are pivotal in
communication with other people. Thus the framing is in harmony with the RJ terminology, i.e.
utterances (oral and written texts and body language), answers, response and responsibility. In
this way, the project does not plan to work within the framework of “criminality” in its juridical,
criminological or police professional meaning, but looks at human meetings, dialogues,
networks and contexts, immaterial as well as material. The criminal justice regime has for many

\textsuperscript{34} Gullestad, M. 1996. Everyday Life Philosophers: Modernity, Morality and Autobiography in Norway, Oslo:
Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute vol. 8, no. 1, March: 45–63.

\textsuperscript{35} Gullestad, M. 2004a. ’Tales of consent and decent: Life writing as a fight against an imposed self-image.’ I: John

\textsuperscript{36} Foss, E.M. Design nedenfra. Om politikk og motstand ved rehabilitering av talehemmede. (Design from below. On
politics and resistance in the rehabilitation of speech disability (our translation), Thesis. University of Tromsø:
Visual Culture Studies, Dept. of Social Anthropology; Foss, E.M. Independent. Film, University of Tromsø: Visual
culture studies, Dept. of Social Anthropology.

See http://uit.no/getfile.php?Pageld=1276&Fileld=653
years documented its inadequacy in rehabilitation, whereas the RJ regime has shown that successful rehabilitation is possible. This potential for relational rehabilitation is worth researching in theory and practice. The term social capital is used in order to extend the understanding of rehabilitation and conflict management.

In cases of juvenile delinquency of a low criminal degree, measured by the police, the agreement between the parties may cause the police to withdraw the legal claim. Thus the young delinquent may himself solve his problems by good conduct, i.e. self-governance. One of our overarching aims will be to see if and how our project may be said to investigate or instigate a neo-liberal aim, i.e. each individual acts as his/her own minister of justice – and if this eventually may be said to lead to liberation or to subordination, both being central ingredients in the concept of social capital.

3. Young people at peace: “Small feet, deep prints”

“Small Feet, Deep Prints” is a home-page, consisting of reports of young people building peace in East Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda). In the MAPUTO project (Marakwet, Pokot and Turkana in Kenya) the peace building efforts consist i.e. of all-inclusive peace and reconciliation committees. In the “Promotion of Reconciliation Among the Youths” (PRAY) project in Rwanda, youth from Hutu, Tutsi and Twa build peace and reconciliation groups. There is a need to document the efforts of children and youth in peace- and social reconstruction all over the world. Research shows that even quite small children, down to the age of six or seven carry out rescue and reconstruction work and efforts like adults, both to the same degree and extent.

4. Bridge over the Wadi

The young Israeli documentary film artist Tomer Heyman has a special focus on the ‘anti-heroes’ in society and the ‘darker places’. With his documentaries he tells stories of youth at risk, foreign workers, Jewish and Arab kids studying at the same school, the gay-lesbian community and single mothers. He has succeeded in “touching the hearts of many” internationally because of the empathy that is clearly shown for his outsider subjects and which is regarded to transcend culture and mentality. One particular film focuses on a peace building project from the autumn 2004, in Kara village, where the first Jewish-Arab school located within an Arab village opened. The film was shot since March 2003 and was recently shown at several European screens: “100 children, half Arab and half Jewish, study at this school. The school gives equal representation to both languages, religions, and cultures. For a year and a half we followed closely the parents, who were able to establish this school despite all the difficulties on the way. What seemed like an impossible mission, given the social and political atmosphere in Israel since the rising of the second Intifada and the October 2000 events, has soon become an optimistic reality that brings hope during hard times for both Arabs and Jews. However, the tension and disagreement did not disappear the day the school opened. On the contrary; every day poses new challenges to the teachers, parents and children. Everyone related to this school goes through a deep and meaningful process which is at the core of this movie. The school serves as a critical turning point for each and every one of the characters we follow. They find themselves having to deal with basic existential thoughts that do not pertain strictly to the Arab-Jewish conflict, but also with conflicts about male vs. female, religious vs. secular, parents vs. children, and more” (www.heymannfilms.com).

37 “The focus of the restorative justice approach – ”repairing the harm,” ”restoring” the individual and the community, ”making amends” for the offence, ”healing,” – emanates from an alternative vision of the criminal justice system as a mechanism for making whole the individuals affected by criminal activity. Thus like Becker (Becker,G.S. 1968. Crime and punishment: an economic approach. Journal of Political Economy 73, pp.169-217) proponents of restorative justice advocate extending to the arena of criminal law the fundamental orientation of the civil law” (Lawson & Katz 2004:179).

38 Peacebuilding & Conflict - Small Feet, Deep Prints: Young People Building Peace with World Vision East Africa

39 See Tove I. Dahls paper in the Proceedings

The film serves as a peace building tool, visualising the hopes and possibilities of reconstructing society by children, parents and teachers in a war situation. Thus there are various visualising methods in peace building. I will, however focus upon visualisation as more than shooting a film on a relevant issue. The question that I have raised here is shooting by whom and for what purpose. My emphasis is the visual and (or instead of) lingual and auditory expressions and interpretations as research tools as is increasingly used within applied visual anthropology and participatory video and DVS- filming. The challenge is to involve people and work together with them, to skill the vision in order to visualise the invisible: "as social scientists we have long given too much weight to verbalisations at the expense of visualisations, to language at the expense of images" says the anthropologist E. Bruner (1986)\(^\text{41}\). An interactive video process, as is carried out in a demonstration project\(^\text{42}\), includes the following steps:

1. The researcher introduces the issue and video/dvd/technology, plans and discusses an approach with the community
2. The community articulates issues, performs role-plays, dramas and every-day-life on video/dvd
3. The DVD or Video is played back with discussions between the researcher and the community (Freudenthal, S. 2000\(^\text{43}\))

**In summary**

In this paper I have discussed an alternative focus on conflicts and peace building from the point of view that even violent conflicts may be resources for peace when used within a paradigm of restorative justice. My argument goes that young peoples’ contributions to such peace building is overlooked but must be essential in building peace as they represent the future. My third point in this investigation into methodologies in peace research is that qualitative peace research can improve by the use of visual means, such as filming, and in particular in a practical and interactive way, by participatory video and dvd- filming.


Soldiers with a broken rifle. Visual representations of soldiers and anti-militarists and concepts of masculinities, violence and courage

Jens Petter Kollhoj

Abstract

Studies of men suggest new dimensions in peace work: contesting masculinity forms emphasizing violence and domination, replacing them with masculinities more open to negotiation and equality. Focusing on anti-violent men may destabilize notions of masculinity and violence as interdependent, thus contribute to developing cultures of peace.

This paper gives examples on how pro- and anti-violent attitudes, courage and masculinity have been communicated by photographs of men in contexts related to military and war in Norway early in the twentieth century. Concepts discussed include R W Connell’s "hegemonic masculinity", "peripetal and centripetal violence" from the Norwegian philosopher Knut Kolnar, and "courage". The method used is a qualitative picture analysis, emphasizing both image elements and contexts. I am influenced by hermeneutics, post structuralism and discourse analysis, and regard photographs as statements in cultural communication, as materializations in discursive practices. The paper begins with a discussion of military as an arena for constructing masculinity, and an outline of two key features of a traditional military masculinity form. The last parts of the paper look at two other photographic statements, challenging military masculinity. I argue that the various concepts discussed are helpful, but not sufficient trying to understand anti-militarist men.

Introduction

Notions of men as naturally violent have been constructed by generalizations and lack of alternative perspectives in daily life and public debate, as in research. However, the sociologist R W Connell has emphasized that there are many non-violent men, a fact of great importance both theoretically and practically. This needs explanation, and must be considered in a strategy for peace (Connell 2000). Connell has also stressed that a strategy for peace must include a strategy for change in masculinities. Studies of men suggest a new dimension in peace work: contesting masculinities which emphasize violence, confrontation and domination, replacing them with masculinities more open to negotiation, cooperation and equality (Connell 2001). The peace researcher Michael Salla claims that Tolstoy among others have contributed to breaking down men-war-stereotypes, and fought notions of pacifism and resistance to violence as "non-manly" (Salla 2001). But men opposing and actively acting against violence is still a topic getting minimal attention in research. For example has participation of men in peace movements rarely been interpreted in gendered terms (Morgan 1994). By turning the searchlight to anti-violent men my aim is to contribute to destabilizing notions of masculinity and violence as synonymous concepts. Criticism of military and war is a field where men's struggle to abolish violent behaviour becomes very apparent. The criticism has various forms, such as objection to military service with various pacifist arguments. I shall investigate the concepts of men/masculinities and violence by looking at some of these critiques in a historical perspective. Research scrutinizing men and masculinities in historical perspectives and focusing on men who actively have rejected violence and war, may reveal cultural constructions and lead to more nuanced and precise understandings of men, masculinities and violence. Hopefully, focusing on anti-violent men may also contribute to developing cultures of peace.

The method I use is qualitative, a multi-faceted picture analysis drawing on hermeneutics, post structuralism and discourse analysis, interpreting the images as statements in discourses and elements in cultural communication. I hold it as important not to see the method as an end in itself, the main point is to apply an analytical sensitivity for the images, discussing
significant questions related to the pictures in their historical contexts (cfr Larsen 1986). Trying to answer relevant questions and picking up interesting leads implies that I may highlight image form and content, intentions and receptions, details and larger contexts, interpreting pictures both as historical relics (levninger) and accounts (beretninger). As an ethnologist paying attention to materiality in cultural analysis, I follow Laclau and Mouffe in seeing discourse as material (Laclau/Mouffe 2001). I regard visual statements such as photographs as important materializations in discursive practises of violence, war/peace and masculinity. In this paper I try to show how pro- and anti-violent attitudes, courage and masculinity have been communicated by photographs of men in situations related to military and war in Norway early in the twentieth century. The paper begins with a brief look at three photographs from 1905, 1914 and 1924, followed by a discussion of military as an arena for constructing masculinity and an outline of some key features of a traditional military masculinity form. In the last parts of the paper I look at discursive practices challenging the military masculinity, materialized in two other photographic statements.

1st image: Sharpening sabres, 1905

In 1905 the union between Sweden and Norway was shaking in it's foundations, and difficult negotiations went on alongside preparations for war. The talks about the conditions for the dissolution of the union started on 1 September, accompanied by rising military tension. The talks broke down on 7 September, and when the negotiations were resumed on 13 September, Norway's Defence Minister concurrently issued orders for partial mobilisation of the troops. This image was originally made and sent as a postcard, written on 16 September, three days later. In the early 1900s it was quite common for photographers to take pictures and produce postcards in just one or very few copies ("leilighetsfotograf"), and the military was one of the popular arenas for this kind of production (Ulvstad 2005 p69). This specific card contains no elements representing questioning of the role of the military, of soldiers, masculinity, violence. Six men are forming an intimate group, posing concentrated on the quality of the weapons, thus making a statement of ability to violence in a distinguished manner. The handwritten text explains that the card could not be sent openly, it had to be concealed by an envelope. The
statement made by the combined image and text establishes a notion of a real and actual danger, and a need for preparing to meet this threat. Sending the postcard openly would simply have confirmed this, but the hiding of the image and text in an envelope, may also be interpreted as an act not concealing the threat and the legitimization of violence. On the contrary, I claim that this adds more strength to the notion of the threat. Thus, the photograph, the handwritten words and the distribution form forms a threefold of discursive statements giving life and authority to the notion of a threat, and to legitimizing violence.

2nd image: Armed and ready, 1914

Unlike the first photograph, this is created in a tradition of arranged group portraits meant for the public eye. It was taken in 1914, and according to the information in the archives these soldiers are protecting the neutrality of Norway. Almost 150 men in strict poses fill the surface of the image. Nearly all of them are holding a gun, the butt by the right foot, each of them standing in a straight military position. The uniforms are hiding individuality, creating community. A large group of men, being part of a much larger power, the strength and force of a nation-state military. Disciplined, orderly positioned bodies and weapons. A picture representing soldiers ready for action, ready to protect the interests of the nation-state. The key feature of this image is discipline and the power of the armed group, and as in the previous picture also a potential for legitimate violence.

3rd image: Fit for fight, 1924

Six men, three in uniforms. A moment of rest in what appears to be a sports activity situation. Able-bodied military men, in friendly play. Comrades. As in the previous two pictures it is notable that we do not see any elements interpreted as resembling "woman" or traditionally "feminine". But missing in this photograph are also some of the stronger symbols of military power, picture elements we noticed in the previous two images: the weapons. Apart from some
uniforms, we see none of the core attributes of soldiers, no sables nor guns, no distinctions, no medals. Combined with the elements of civilian sports clothing these absences are weakening the communication of military power, and also of a potential for violence. A man of extreme importance here is the man who occupies the central position of the group and the picture, the man with the cigarette. His name is Olav, and he was king of Norway from 1957 to 1991. In 1924, when this photograph was taken, he was crown prince and cadet at the military academy. The other men in the photograph are fellow cadets at the academy. Regarded as a statement in a discursive practice of military masculinity this photograph repeats and confirms other statements of physical strength and comradeship as military values, and of military as an explicit masculine area. And the presence of the crown prince gives this image a special prominence in communicating military masculinity as exemplary.

The military as a central arena for constructing masculinity

The sociologist David Morgan (1994) has characterized "the warrior" as a stable key symbol of masculinity. According to Morgan the core of constructions of military masculinity has been binding men to men by establishing an equal mark between "soldier" and "man", simultaneously separating the soldiers from "the feminine". These processes have included establishing heterosexuality as norm, using warnings against men whose heterosexual masculinity might be in question, and misogynist expressions have been encouraged (Jacobsson 1998, Barrett 2001, Goldstein 2001). Thus war and military are areas strongly associated with men and masculinity, and in various discourses and cultural processes connections between men, masculinity and martial values like discipline (self-control), physical strength, comradeship, steadfastness, courage and capacity for violence has been and still are established and reaffirmed (e.g. Soldatens bok 1911, Higate and Hopton 2005). The historian Roald Berg exemplifies this, finding that Norwegian officers in the 19th century perceived being uncompromising and unyielding as central military masculine values. Berg claims that these values spread to the civil society. A new form of hegemonic civil masculinity appeared from the mid 1890s, and in 1905 the fundamental values of the military defence pervaded the nation (Berg 2001).
R W Connell regards the hero as central in Western cultural imagery of the masculine, and the military as the main site for defining hegemonic masculinity. Connell's theory has been important to break up masculinity from a single category, and to direct attention to various forms of masculinities (Connell 1995). Connell defines the masculinity forms in relation to legitimization and defence of patriarchy, and regards hegemony, complicity and subordination as relations internal to the gender order. Hegemonic masculinity is "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 1995 p. 77). Marginalization is used to describe the relation between masculinity forms in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups. Subordinated men are expelled from the circle of legitimacy, and Connell claims that oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Connell emphasizes a difference between exemplary masculinities and the practice of men, and that production of exemplary masculinities is part of the struggle for hegemony in the gender order. The imagery of masculine heroism insists on the bodily superiority of men and their mastery of technology and violence, and serves a disciplinary purpose: setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those who fall short (Connell 1995, 2000). Thus, Connell has provided analytical tools and arguments for regarding military masculinity as hegemonic or possibly complicit, and in any case exemplary, displaying masculine heroism.

Two of the key features of traditional military masculinity forms

An Aristotelian concept of courage

Courage is one of the virtues discussed by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics (Aristotle 1996). It is crucial for Aristotle that it is for a noble end the brave man endures and acts. To Aristotle courage implies being confident and coping with fear when facing painful and terrible things, and death is the most terrible of all things. But the courageous man would not be concerned with any form of death, only with the noblest, which is death in battle. An excellent exemplification of an Aristotelian view on courage is found in the book Fædrelandet, hæren og soldaten (The nation, the army and the soldier) by the Norwegian officer and politician Haakon Ditlef Lowzow (1911). When Lowzow wrote this book he had been minister of defence, but he got little support for his proposals and resigned after a year and half. In the book he distinguishes between physical (natural) and moral courage, but they have in common facing death without knowing fear. When the bullets strikes in the ranks it is revealed who has courage, when the danger rises it only trigs his power and his mind, his vision is clear and his hand steady. Lowzow supports his argument with examples from Norwegian history, beginning with a Viking king (Lowzow 1911 p63-64). I argue that describing courage as an aspect specific for combat may reflect an Aristotelian notion of courage, and that restricting use of this concept to war supports a claim for military monopoly on courage.

Capacity for and legitimization of violence

Traditionally, legitimacy of martial violence has been based on a notion of men having to defend the inheritance from the fathers, and protect women, children and elderly people. An example is the book Fædrelandet i verdenskrigens lys (The fatherland in the light of the world war), published in 1916. The book promoted a strong military, and contained a tribute to the healthy man choosing to become a soldier and a "complete man" (Christensen/Christensen 1916 p65-68). By using concepts from the Norwegian philosopher Knut Kolnar (2003, 2005, 2006) I will try to open for a different understanding of men's capacity for violence, and of military legitimization of violence. Kolnar points out that the nation-state in most European cultures has aimed at developing a reservoir of violence in men, to create men in possession of considerable legitimate and normalized violent skills for war and for keeping law and order. Ability of precise and efficient violence is a quality of high prestige, but still something society can condemn at the strongest. It is crucial that violence is not used in the wrong context. According to Kolnar use of violence can place a masculine self into different social movements, and to grasp these movements he applies the terms centripetal and peripetal forms of violence.
Successful violence functions centripetally, restoring a threatened masculinity and bringing a violent man towards a social centre. Centripetal violence is related to notions like strength, vigour, heroism and courage. Violence not re-establishing a threatened masculine self will send the man out to a periphery, more and more marginalized. Peripetal violence is associated with notions of cowardice, evilness etc, thus in many cases related to unmanliness (Kolnar 2005). The context, the status of the person(s) who are exposed to the violence, determines whether the violence is conceived as disintegrating or conserving society, whether it is interpreted as evil or good. Kolnar regards media presentations as influential in this process. In the media violent masculinity can be presented as legitimate, attached to hero figures. The concept den sentripetale invitasion (the centripetal invitation) refers to the attraction images and notions of legitimized violent masculinity has on men. These images and notions circulating in the cultural field contain invitations to ways of being man, including invitations to develop skills in violence. The centripetal invitation is an invitation to authentic masculinity by violent behaviour, mastered in a natural, relaxed and guilt free manner. Kolnar stresses that violence not only is a natural part of these forms of masculinity, it is precisely the capacity for violence that causes them to appear as good, normal and preserving society. The violence becomes a materialization of values like energy and courage (Kolnar 2005 p95). The advantage of Kolnar's line of thought is not only that it opens for an understanding of martial violence as related to cultural negotiations between men on masculine identity and power; it also provides conceptual analytical tools.

Seen as statements in a discursive practise forming a military masculinity I argue that the three photographs we have looked at so far in this paper are part of a formation of statements, repeating and supporting a Norwegian military masculinity form in the first decades of the 20th Century. They are making a statement of a well organised violent potential, a socially stabilizing and preserving form of violence, in Kolnar's terms a good violence. Even though the men in the moments of the photographs do not aspire to fulfil an Aristotelian definition of courage, the uniforms still contribute to communicate a possible display of "true courage" in combat. Following Connell the soldier-men in these images can be seen as representing and defending hegemonic and complicit masculinities, and also of great importance, they represent an exemplary masculinity.

4th image: Faces of power, 1924

This photograph is also from 1924. But here the absence of uniforms, weapons, any kind of military devices and symbols results in an image not representing military or soldiers. We see a rather disorderly group, not everyone directing attention towards the photographer, many hands in pocket, a statement of some kind of seriousness combined with relaxation and easiness. The caption in various contexts tells us that we see ten men who have just got sentenced to imprisonment. Their illegal act was requesting to striking against military conscription, a campaign directing a blow at the core of the nation-state and the power systems of the Norwegian society.

The men were both at that time and later prominent front-figures in the Norwegian labour movement, and one place the picture is reproduced is in the autobiography of Aksel Zachariassen, who is seen to the far right in the image. He describes this campaign as a single action to create publicity for the socialist youth organization, and the trial was used as a propaganda stunt (Zachariassen1978). Thus, the image is intended to communicate a strong socialist and anti-militaristic statement.

Another place this photograph is reproduced is in the autobiography of Einar Gerhardsen, the man to the far left. Gerhardsen later became prime minister for The Labour Party, and was to be called "Father of the nation". Gerhardsen writes in his autobiography that the youth organization of the Labour party in the years around the First World War was based on a pacifist view of life, and that the broken rifle was a central symbol for anti-militarist socialists in these years (Gerhardsen 1974).

The summer of 1918 Gerhardsen was to serve his duty as conscript, and at this time there was a debate on the position of the labour movement in relation to the military. Gerhardsen was in a personal dilemma. He wanted to refuse, but felt it would be wrong for the labour movement in a revolution to stay away from the military service. He ended up starting at the service.

But one day, realizing that the imagined enemies were Swedes, the pacifist inside him took command. His lieutenant argued that refusing to do the service would be unwise, and they settled for a compromise: doing service in the kitchen. Gerhardsen liked this service, and also tried to organize anti-militaristic work. However, his refusal was reported by another officer, and Gerhardsen ended up spending seven days in a small prison, which he recalls without remorse (Gerhardsen 1974 p91-93).

Gerhardsen can be interpreted as representing both a revolutionary socialist masculinity, and a form of pacifist socialist masculinity.

Pacifist critiques of military masculinity

Concepts of pacifism and antimilitarism

One definition of pacifism is "a principal rejection of violence and war" (PaxLeksikon 1976). But as the philosopher Jenny Teichman has stressed, there can be different reasons for fighting wars and objecting to military service. Pacifism is not a unitary thesis, but a collection of closely linked theories, and Teichman argues for defining pacifism as anti-war-ism, a principled opposition to war, not to violence in general (Teichman 1986, 2006).

The Norwegian Labour Party was founded in 1887. From 1891 the party had disarmament and establishing international arbitration courts in it's program, and from 1906 and in to the 1930s the party promoted a disarmament policy which can be characterized as pacifist. There are also examples of persons in the labour movement who may be labelled absolute pacifists, rejecting violence in general. One of the front-figures in the youth organisation NSU, Einar Li, refused three times to do military service. In 1907 he was sentenced to one year in prison, resulting in NSU launching a campaign culminating in a protest march with 5000 participants. Li did not regard the fight against war as the working class fighting a capitalist system, but as the most important moral task of humanity (Ytterstad 1999). However, in the Norwegian labour movement in the beginning of the 20th century the term most commonly used to express attitudes opposing war appears not to be pacifism, but antimilitarism. This
antimilitarism was based on regarding the worker as the eternal loser in wars. Either as cannon fodder at the front, or the labourers and their families as victims of economical crises, hunger and poverty. War was also considered an expression of the nationalist and imperialist policy of capitalism. Antimilitarism in this perspective was a tool for better conditions for the workers, who not necessarily were against all forms of violence. On the contrary, as we shall see later.

**Pacifism and concepts of masculinity and violence**

It is difficult to see an absolute pacifist masculinity as included in a hegemonic masculinity form as Connell defines it. Securing men's dominance over women and legitimation of patriarchy do not stand out as central for a strictly pacifist masculinity form. On the contrary, following Teichman, the core feature of pacifist masculinities lies in ability and a will to oppose one of the very central means of power in the hegemonic masculinity form: the violence of war. Pacifists may aim at breaking down not only the violence, but also the military in itself, an institution Connell describes as a main site for defining hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995). The theoretical apparatus of Connell thus seem to fall short in understanding such a fundamental attack on both oppression of women and on various hierarchic structures among men. It is not well suited to describing and explaining masculinity forms that represent resistance and counter power (Kollhøj 2005).

Connell's theory took critical research on men and masculinities a substantial step forward, and has had huge influence, but it has also been criticized from various angles. In Nordic critical studies on men and masculinities, a concept of *unmanliness* has achieved a rather widespread usage. The fear of falling, loosing the grip and becoming un-manly, is described as a constant threat for both individual men and groups of men. The concept of unmanliness is claimed to open for a more concrete phenomenological and processual understanding of masculinities than the connellian paradigm (Lorentzen/Ekenstam 2006). In my view a concept of unmanliness may be useful and open up new perspectives on men and masculinities. But maybe it also can be similar to Connell's theory in not paying sufficient attention to agencies for change, and lacking conceptual apparatus for grasping motivations for challenging notions of the un-manly. From what position is someone's thinking or practice judged as un-manly? Can someone who actively challenges gender categories be analysed within a dichotomy of manly/manliness and un-manly/unmanliness? What concepts can capture men who freely enter domains perceived by others as un-manly, aiming at negotiating the content of the categories?

Other scholars has coined terms of *counter-masculinity*, *oppositional masculinity*, *de-masculinazation* and *disorientated masculinity*, showing that there are forms of masculinities or phenomena among men not covered by the framework of Connell (Ekenstam 2006). The ethnologist Marie Nordberg has argued that Connell alongside Michael Kimmel and Jeff Hearn despite a critical position towards patriarchy and gender orders reproduces the binary opposition between men and women (Nordberg 2004). Nordberg has combined critical studies of men and masculinities with queer theory and post structuralist feminism, and suggested Judith Halberstam's concepts of *female masculinity* and *male femininity* (Halberstam 1998) as fruitful ways to exceed the sex/gender dichotomy. Nordberg also stresses the need for scholars to study how both women and men perform femininity and masculinity. However, I shall not take this discussion further in this paper.

**Pacifism and Kolnar's concepts**

A strictly pacifist man feeling his masculinity threatened may change, and take to violence. Then Kolnar's model would be applicable and useful. But since ability and will to use violence are absent in most pacifist masculinity forms it becomes somewhat problematic to use the concepts from Kolnar. A solution can be to turn the concepts "inside out", thus looking at peripetal and centripetal *anti-violence*. Doing so, it becomes possible to discuss whether anti-violent actions sends an individual towards or out from a social centre. On a macro level, a pacifist man can be interpreted as moving away from the social centre, threatening one of the key supports of the nation-state. However, Kolnar is thinking social centre in plural, and on different levels. A centre can be on a social macro level (e.g. position in a masculine gender
order), or on a social micro level (e.g. a family) (Kolnar 2004 p113, 2006). I find this useful, but also complicating. Useful because it opens for thinking movements on several areas and levels. Complicating because one movement out from one centre simultaneously can be a movement towards a different centre. Even though representatives of a pacifist masculinity form by displaying anti-violent potential can be sent out to a periphery on a macro level, they may at the same time be sent with full speed and power into the centre of a family sphere, or a different micro level sphere.

4th image, different version: adding a body/face for more propaganda power

Looking at a different version of the image, from the archives, it becomes obvious that Gerhardsen has been placed into the image at a later time; his body does not fit in with the perspective. He is standing simultaneously both in front of and behind the man at the first step of the stairs. In other, printed versions Gerhardsen's arm has been retouched, and the manipulation harder to discover.

When the image was manipulated relevant socialist anti-militaristic or pacifist text or symbols, such as a banner with slogans, or symbols, could also have been added. The absence of such imagery is notable given the indicated status of the campaign and the men depicted. This implies that the work involved in adding such elements were regarded as too laborious, or that representation of the bodies/ faces of these men may have been considered sufficient powerful for the propaganda purpose and serving as exemplary socialist masculinity. And being one of the prominent leaders in the youth organization and the labour movement, the propaganda strength of this visual statement would have been much weaker if the body/face of Gerhardsen had been absent.

The fact that Gerhardsen was not in the picture in the first place (maybe he was the photographer?) opens for a reading of the situation as unprepared and the freezing of the moment into this photograph as somewhat arbitrary, distinguishing it from more carefully arranged propaganda pictures. A suitable term for describing this image might then be a manipulated propaganda snapshot. A moment in itself not visually strong. A moment in between. A moment frozen to remember the past and to mobilize for future actions. I argue that
the men in the next image show a more conscious attitude towards the importance of visual political representations, using a clear symbol to strengthen and clarify their arguments and views.

5th image: Soldiers with a broken rifle, 1914

What catches the eye in this photograph is the gun with the broken butt, it is central, in the midst of the picture. Our attention is also directed towards the gun because five of the ten men in the image is pointing at it. Eight of them are wearing uniform caps, a couple of uniform jackets lie on the ground. We see pieces of paper or posters, indicating a need for making a statement, an image not just made to document a gun broken by accident. A moment for mobilizing and provoking emotions, the strength of this image lies in the very moment of the photograph. Why are these soldiers posing like this, with a broken rifle?

The pacifist organisation War Resisters International (WRI) which was formed under the name Paco in 1921, introduced "the broken rifle" as its symbol in 1932. WRI's Norwegian section, Folkereisning mot Krig (FMK), was founded in 1937. For almost 70 years FMK has been working for peace and non-violent solutions to conflicts, and with helping pacifist men refusing military service. This has contributed to making “the broken rifle" a well known symbol for the fight against military and war, in Norway as in many other countries. In 1998 FMK published the book Den nødvendige ulydigheten (The necessary disobedience) (Persen/Johansen 1998), in which the history of Norwegian war resisters has a chapter of its own. The chapter opens with this image, and the accompanying text explains that these soldiers from the Northern parts of Norway were convicted to imprisonment for taking the photograph. In this context, and with today's eyes, a broken rifle will be closely associated with men actively opposing war and violence, and an interpretation of the men in this image as pacifists becomes obvious.
Revolutionary socialist critiques of military masculinity

The broken rifle as symbol of revolutionary socialism

There were strong resentments in the labour movement against fighting war and militarism with pure pacifism (Ytterstad 1999), and a difference between pacifist "peace friends" and revolutionary antimilitarists could be strongly emphasised. One example of socialist antimilitarism not being anti-violent is found in a speech the youth organization leader Sverre Krogh held in 1912, when he invited to shoot officers instead of workers on strike (Hansen/Olaussen/Zachariassen 1923 p175). At the time of this photograph the broken rifle had a central position as symbol of antimilitarism among revolutionary young socialists. In February/March 1914 the social democratic youth organization launched an anti-militarist campaign week, introducing a sticker with the broken rifle. The sticker was to be placed on letters and clothes. 100 000 copies were printed, they were fast sold out, caused strong reactions – and the sticker was rapidly banned by the government. Many places the police prohibited use of anti-militaristic symbols on May the 1st, particularly the broken rifle. Other places the demonstrators had to cover up the symbols (Bjørnsøn 1990, Jensen/Damslora 1984, Persen/Johansen 1998). On Rjukan, at the Constitution Day, 17 May, the police interfered with the display of anti-militarist signs and symbols, and this led to riots.

On the almost unreadable paper to the left in the photograph it is possible to deduce the text "direkte aktion" ("direct action"). This term was used as slogan from around 1900 by syndicalist revolutionary groups in the socialist labour movement. The slogan implied a reaction against the established politics of the labour movement. It addressed the usual strategy of negotiations and strikes, and emphasized instead the importance of active struggle using boycott, sabotage etc. The slogan also expressed a reaction against the belief in a parliamentarian road to socialism, which most of the established labour movement had. Direct action and revolutionary mass action were promoted as alternatives. Around the First World War syndicalist groups and journals magazines agitated intensely and consistently for refusing military service and striking against the military, and considered individual refusal as a "direct action against militarism" (Bjørnsøn 1990 p343). The paper to the left may be a front page of the newspaper "Direkte aktion". This indicates that the men have regarded the broken rifle not as a pacifist symbol, but instead a symbol of antimilitarism as part of a campaign for a syndicalist revolutionary socialism. They were not against a class-war. Thus, I argue, interpreting the broken rifle in this context as a symbol of absolute pacifism, opposition to all forms of violence, would be an analytical error.

Socialism and concepts of masculinity and violence

The core activity in a socialist masculinity form can be described as a struggle for reshaping existing power structures and economic systems, and for some men this would imply a full revolution of the society by violent means. Socialist men may thus be interpreted as challenging a particular hegemonic masculinity. But there is reason to point at a lack of focus in the labour movement at the time of this image on fighting patriarchy and oppression of women. Simultaneously there were factions of the various socialist parties and in the labour movement also having a strong focus on women's emancipation and claims for equal rights. Hence, it may be difficult to see socialist masculinity as one single form. One possible solution might be to split socialist masculinity into "sub forms", one complicit, supporting legitimization of patriarchy, and another subordinate and marginalized. However, even though Connell in his conceptualization focus on change, and challenges to existing hegemonic masculinity, I find it difficult to capture the central aspect of socialist masculinity using his theory. As I argued previously regarding pacifist men, there is need for more nuanced concepts, opening for handling more forms for masculinity and various hierarchies among men.

The concepts from Kolnar are more directly applicable here. As in pacifism, the core of revolutionary socialism is attacking central established power positions and social structures. But unlike pacifist men revolutionary socialist men represent an obvious potential for violence. Not being positive to using violence might threaten the masculine selves of these men. If they had activated their potential for violence, this would have been destructive for the existing
social order, and the men would have been sent out in a peripetal movement from the established macro social level. But at the same time the violence would have confirmed the revolutionary masculinity form of the men, creating a centripetal movement in the field of revolutionary socialism. Not using violence in order to achieve the desired changes in society would on the other hand have sent the men out in a peripetal movement, marginalizing them in a revolutionary periphery.

Crucial questions concerning Kolnar's concepts must then be if there always will be movements in different directions, and which direction is the most important in a given context.

A concept of courage applicable on anti-militarists

In a text composed some 50 years earlier than the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle, Plato had performed a different investigation into the concept of courage, in the dialogue Laches (Platon 1963). Courage is regarded as part of virtue, and the first definition launched is made by the general Laches: a man is courageous if he does not run away, but remains at his post and fights. This definition focusing on military combat is partially in line with the later view of Aristotle, but Plato lets Socrates tear this definition apart, and insists on that courage incorporates more than only heavy-armed soldiers. He includes those who are courageous in perils at sea, in disease, in poverty and in politics. He also includes those who are courageous against pain or fear, and those who contend with desires and pleasures. Compared to Aristotle, Plato/Socrates thus advocate a much more nuanced understanding of courage. Socrates concludes the dialogue stating that despite of their efforts they have not discovered what courage is, but in an epilogue to his translation Egil A Wyller tries to help our understanding, summing up the dialogue to a definition. Courage is: (1) that part of virtue's common insight in good and evil, (2) which in recognition of coming evils, (3) shows endurance, (4) for example when a soldier remains at his post and fights against the enemy (Wyller 1963).

Connell has emphasized the importance of disconnecting courage from violence in the work for cultures of peace (Connell 2000). Following not Aristotle but Plato and Socrates, it becomes possible to apply the term courageous also on the men in these two last pictures, and on the disobedient statement against the nation-state they are making. I claim that such a concept of courage will be helpful in disconnecting courage from violence, understanding anti-violent, pacifist and anti-militarist masculinities, and in re-shaping masculinities and gender working for achieving cultures of peace.

Conclusion

I have argued that the first three photographs can be understood as elements in cultural communication, as statements in discursive practices of military masculinity. I have tried to show that the images repeat, expand and support other statements, establishing and reaffirming discipline, physical strength, comradeship, courage and legitimate violent capacity as core features of a traditional military masculinity form. Following Kolnar, I argue that if the potential for violence had been set into action, it would have confirmed the soldier-men's masculinities, and placed them in social centres. The violence would have been conceived as just and good in relation to cultural and political values and attitudes in Norway at the time. Thus the violence would have confirmed a hegemonic masculinity, and the men been included in existing power relations and hierarchies.

In the next part of the paper I have looked at discursive practices materialized in two other photographic statements, and tried to show how they can be seen as challenges to the military masculinity. I have argued that the fourth and fifth image both can be read as expressing antimilitarism, and simultaneously pacifism or potential for counter-state violence. Using theory from Connell these two images may be interpreted as representing subordinate and marginalized masculinities struggling for domination, but I have argued that these concepts are not sufficient to grasp neither a pacifist nor a revolutionary socialist masculinity form. Concerning Kolnar's concepts, crucial questions must be which direction is the most important in a given context and if there always will be movements in different directions. And finally, I have indicated a concept disconnecting courage from violence, a concept of courage opening for contributing to re-shaping masculinities and helping creating cultures of peace.
References

Kristiania kreds/Jacob Dybwad.
Causes and Reasons in Peace Research

Jörg Meyer

Abstract

This paper tries to cast doubt on the value of causal analyses in peace and conflict research. It is argued here that either the term ‘cause’ is used without precise information of how to adjudicate between competing causal claims or ‘causality’ is defined in ways which lead to the production of a restrictive and problematical form of knowledge. I also take issue with positions according to which reasons should or must be construed as causes in order to be relevant. By drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s distinction between giving a reason and giving a cause, an alternative approach is proposed which aims at a reconstruction of reasons, that is, for example, of speech acts, rules and modes of representation.

1. Introduction

It seems quite normal to expect scholars of peace research to produce causal theories. On the one hand, insofar as science is equated with causal explanation, the status of peace and conflict research as a scientific discipline hinges on causal theorizing. On the other hand, it is hard to see how we can have any control of war and peace if there are no causal laws or mechanisms that science can discern. Nevertheless, this paper tries to cast doubt on the value of causal analyses by pointing to some methodological and conceptual problems of causality and by suggesting an alternative way of studying social relations which, roughly speaking, aims at a reconstruction of reasons.

In the following I will firstly present a brief survey of different uses of the terms cause and causality in peace research and International Relations. In view of its central status, one might believe that causality is an unequivocal concept. However, in many texts we find propositions like ‘X was the cause of Y’ but do not learn by what evidence these assertions can be verified or disproved. Other scholars do provide a definition of causality as well as information about how to test their inferences. Yet, such concepts of causality are either so rigorous that they lead to counterintuitive results or so weak that they make way for manipulation.

In the third section, I shall respond to a group of scholars who reject a conception that reduces causality to empirical regularities, but claim that reasons are or should be construed as causes. While these theorists make some important points against empiricism, I will argue that they miss the crucial point of Wittgenstein’s distinction between reasons and causes and distort the merits of post-positivist approaches. The paper concludes with some remarks on how approaches which inquire into the giving and taking of reasons might be employed in peace and conflict research.

2. Causes and Causality in Peace Research and International Relations

According to Peter Imbusch, in search for the “causes of conflict” of the war in Yugoslavia one often finds “stereotypical explanations” that involve a “selective perception” which leads to “misinterpretations” of the conflict: Some observers view the Balkan as a zone where historically determined differences between modernity und backwardness are still effective and ethnically-culturally fragmented peoples try to achieve nation-building along these dividing lines by armed conflict; a related explanation attributes the causes of war to differentiated cultural formations and conflicting civilisations; and others observe an outburst of centrifugal nationalisms which have formerly been suppressed or frozen by the Tito-regime and the potential threat of the Soviet Union.¹

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Imbusch distances himself from these explanations by reclaiming the “genuinely modern character” of the war and the need for emphasizing his “extremely current causes”: Present-day nationalistic conflicts, he writes, couldn’t be derived in deterministic ways from the past, and the reduction of social processes to ethnic or religious aspects obstructs the view on the political and social essence of the conflicts which have become virulent in the 1990’s. According to him, in the Yugoslavian case, ethno-nationalist struggles could be traced back to conflicts of power between the peoples and single republics of Yugoslavia which have been latent for decades, to the expanding socio-economic gap and the related struggles over the distribution of advantages between the richer and poorer regions, and to a structural crisis of modernization resulting from a low level of development.

I do not want to suggest that Imbusch’s refusal of “stereotypical explanations” is unfair or that his analysis of the conflict in former Yugoslavia is untenable. But it remains quite vague on the question of how to test the competing claims. In order to adjudicate between competing causal claims we need a criterion or set of criteria for the application of the concept of cause. An obvious candidate is the standard that we only say or should say that event X is the cause of event Y, when X was necessary for the occurrence of Y, or, to put it the other way round, when Y wouldn’t have occurred but for X. That is to say, for example, the structural crisis of modernization was necessary for the war in former Yugoslavia, in the sense that had the structural crisis not happened, the war would not have occurred. Unfortunately, this is a so-called counterfactual condition.

In the same text-book of peace and conflict studies, which includes Imbusch’s paper, Andreas Mehler makes the following statement regarding the causes of conflict in Burundi and Rwanda: “Originally not part of the causes of conflict, but part of the intensifying factors, which are, meanwhile, no longer separable from the former, has been the population density or demographic explosion, respectively, in the two minor states”. Again, the question arises whether the author claims that the conflict, in this intensity and violent form, wouldn’t have occurred but for the population density or demographic explosion, respectively.

Imbusch and Mehler do not strive for generalizations; both provide a historical analysis of a conflict. Other scholars contend that science can provide general knowledge about peace and war. Ernst-Otto Czempiel, e.g., stresses the “fact”, demonstrated by political science, that the “existence of democratic systems” is the “necessary and most important condition for the emergence of zones of peace”. According to him, a democratic organization of the political systems in the international environment alone assures security, “because by establishing a democratic system of rule” the “most import cause of violence” is eliminated.

One solution for the vague use of the term cause and the difficulties to give evidence for causal claims is the reduction of causality to observable regularities of types of events. At first impression, there are two ways: Either one searches for regularities of the form ‘whenever X then Y’ or one tries to discover regularities of the form ‘no Y without X’. Both ways are not very promising. The former is unsuitable for establishing a connection between X and a particular Y (since it does not assert that events of the type Y do not occur without X). By choosing the latter, we assume that there are types of events which wouldn’t have occurred but for one type of events (that is, e.g., all wars have one and the same cause).

As far as I know, peace research, hitherto, has proposed only one law of the former form: ‘when two states are democratic, then they do not wage war against one another’. Apparently, Czempiel offers a regularity of the latter form: ‘no emergence of zones of peace without the existence of democratic systems’. I do not want to review the “Democratic Peace” debate here, but only point out that it is very unlikely that peace research will discover regularities of either the former or the latter form, and that both forms would enact a restrictive and counter-intuitive concept of causality. Obviously, if we do indeed limit the range of

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2 Ibid., p. 225.
3 Andreas Mehler, “Der Völkermord in Ruanda”, in Imbusch and Zoll, p. 259 (my translation).
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reference of the term cause to non-falsified regularities of either the former or the latter form, then we are no longer entitled to claim, for example, that the cause why Paul lives apart from his wife is the fact that he has caught her at deceiving him with Peter.\(^6\)

In view of the (almost absolute) absence of non-falsified laws, the orientation towards less restrictive concepts of causality does not come as a surprise. Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba have proposed such a concept. While choosing an example from “quantitative research” for illustration, they do not limit the application to it. Rather, they claim that the differences between the quantitative and qualitative traditions are “methodologically and substantively unimportant”, and that “all good research can be understood – indeed, is best understood – to derive from the same underlying logic of inference”.\(^7\)

The quantitative example\(^8\) is referring to the “causal effect” of incumbency status for a Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives on the proportion of votes this candidate receives. The dependent variable is the Democratic proportion of the vote for the House. The explanatory variable is in this example dichotomous, either the Democrat is an incumbent or not. Now we consider only one Congressional District and imagine an election with a Democratic incumbent that received a certain fraction of the vote which is then a value of the dependent variable. To define the causal effect (as a “theoretical concept”), we should imagine that we go back in time to the start of the election campaign and everything remains the same, except that the Democratic Party nominates another candidate. The fraction of the vote that this Democratic non-incumbent would receive is then another value of the dependent variable. The “realized causal effect” of incumbency in this Congressional District would be the difference between the two vote fractions.

Obviously, this is a “counterfactual” statement. As King, Keohane and Verba write, this effect “is defined only in theory” since in any one real election we might observe either the fraction of the vote that a Democratic incumbent or non-incumbent received. Now, we might proceed by many hypothetical replications of the same election with a Democratic incumbent and a non-incumbent Democratic candidate. Then, we get two random dependent variables, that is, the vote fraction averaged across the replications with a Democratic incumbent and the vote fraction averaged across the replications with a non-incumbent. The “mean causal effect” is the difference between the two random variables. In short, they define causality in terms of the causal effect of an explanatory variable on a dependent variable: “the causal effect is the difference between the systematic component of observations made when the explanatory variable takes one value and the systematic component of comparable observations when the explanatory variable takes another value”.\(^9\)

Of course, all the values of the dependent variable (except one) are hypothetical. King, Keohane and Verba propose the following solution: “If we cannot rerun history at the same time and the same place with different values of our explanatory variable each time … we can attempt to make a second-best assumption: we can rerun our experiment in two different units that are ‘homogenous’”.\(^10\) In order to reintroduce empirical data, we might even proceed by gathering data from all congressional districts. Now, we would have many observable values of the dependent variable for incumbent and non-incumbent candidates. Yet, while the assumption of unit homogeneity “is generally untestable”, scientists should make the nature of their assumption explicit: “Across what range of units do we expect our assumption of a uniform incumbency effect to hold? All races for congress? Congressional but not Senate races? Races in the North only? Races in the past two decades only”?\(^11\)

As far as I understand King, Keohane and Verba, the quintessence of their method is the supposition that “non-systematic effects” become neutralized in many replications or large n-

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\(^6\) Since many married couples do not live apart despite the occurrence of adultery, while many others do live apart although the wife has never deceived her husband.


\(^8\) Ibid., pp. 76-81.

\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 81-2.

\(^10\) Ibid., p. 91.

\(^11\) Ibid., p. 93.
studies. That is to say, while a love affair of an incumbent Democrat is a “non-systematic feature” of an election campaign that could result in a different vote this effect will lose its significance across the many hypothetical replications or be balanced by a love affair of a non-incumbent candidate. King, Keohane and Verba propose a method to make “causal” inferences and evaluate “causal” statements. We might test the effect, e.g., of an “expanding socio-economic gap” or “demographic explosion” on the onset of civil war. In fact, there are many studies of peace research which make causal inferences in similar ways. Yet, the approach instructs a problematical practice of knowledge production, or, maybe more to the point, the production of a problematical form of knowledge.

What is open to falsification is not so much a sort of event regularity, but a sort of tendency. For example, the assertion: ‘the incumbency status of a Democratic candidate has a positive effect on the Democratic vote fraction’ is not falsifiable by referring to the shattering election defeat of this or that incumbent Democrat. The quantitative example is also telling insofar as the people that bring about the causal effect are separated from one another. I do not wish to suggest that voters are not influenced by public discourse. But when a U.S. voter votes, then his/her act is sheltered or covered by the institution of ‘free’ elections. This is another context than people acting at the office, on a TV panel discussion or in the course of a military operation, that is, in situations of mutual correction and accreditation, of attaching sanctions to deviance and so on. Moreover, King, Keohane and Verba restrict the validity (and the possibility of falsification) of hypotheses in temporal as well as spatial terms.

Considering these aspects of the methodological framework, we can assume that the more or less “powerful” (read: empirically confirmed or not falsified) hypotheses of social science rather ‘reflect’ a sort of contingent tendencies produced by concepts, rules, relations of power, and decisions. King, Keohane and Verba, however, do not refer to socially constituted and regulated practices, but to a world of particulars: “individual voters, particular government agencies, specific cities, tribes, groups, states …”. According to them, the “specific entities of the social world – or, more precisely, specific facts about these entities – provide the basis on which generalizations must rest”.

Their concept of causality rests on a paradigmatic distinction. On the one hand, they say that there are issues for which their rules of inference are not relevant. “Many of the most important questions concerning political life – about such concepts as agency, obligation, legitimacy, citizenship, sovereignty … – are philosophical rather than empirical”. On the other hand, they claim that their rules of inference “are relevant to all research where the goal is to learn facts about the real world”.

Suppose we make a causal inference: The explanatory variable is dichotomous, either the candidate for a chair of peace research is a scholar who does ‘scientific research’ or one who does not. The dependent variable can take two values, either he/she attains the position or not. Imagine that we find a causal effect of doing ‘scientific’ research on attaining a chair. In view of the quote above, I think I am entitled to assume that questions about the concept of scientific research belong in the category of “philosophical” ones. When people do put this or that candidate in the position of a professor of peace research, they apply certain concepts of science and (good) scientific research. In other words, the “facts about the real world” are determined with reference to our answers to “philosophical questions”. At the same time, the statement of facts: ‘doing scientific research has a positive effect on attaining a chair’ could be taken as a rule: ‘if you aspire for a chair of peace studies, then do scientific research’. Recall the is-statement of Czempiel and take it as a rule: ‘if you want zones of peace, then do establish democratic systems’. People might apply the rule in a certain way, by waging wars for peace in ‘non-democratic states’. Then, by a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, the causal effect of the

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12 I have borrowed this expression from Martin Stone, “Wittgenstein on Deconstruction”, in Alice Cray and Rupert Read (eds.), The New Wittgenstein (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 98.
13 Ibid., p. 103.
14 Ibid., p. 35.
15 Ibid., p. 6.
16 Czempiel explicitly rejects the promotion of democracy by means of war. However, scientific knowledge becomes frequently used in selective or alienating ways.
existence of democratic systems on the emergence of zones of peace becomes more significant\(^{17}\) – disseminating scientific knowledge of “facts about the real world” might not be a harmless venture.

### 3. Distinguishing Causes and Reasons

In view of the presumption that people sometimes wage wars of democratization for peace, one might think that reasons are causes. But King, Keohane and Verba affirmatively cite John Ferejohn who argues that “we want social science theories to provide causal explanations of events and to give an account of the reasons for or meanings of social actions”. That is to say that “we want to know not only what caused the agent to perform some act but also the agent’s reason for taking the action”.\(^{18}\) If we should ask for the cause and for the reason of some action, we may come to the conclusion that President P declares war on State S because State S builds weapons of mass destruction and that President P declares war on State S for the reason of establishing democracy in State S. As a consequence, if the event that State S builds weapons of mass destruction has really caused the event that President P declares war on State S, then the reason to establish democracy in State S by declaring war on State S is of no importance in the ‘material’ world. Reasons become mere justifications or rationalizations, totally irrelevant for the chain of events.

Colin Wight says that reasons have to be construed as causes. In the philosophy of social science, today, “understanding reasons as causes has come to be seen as necessary in order to preserve the difference between action and behaviour”. As he explains: “if the reason for an act is not part of the causal complex responsible for the act, then the contrast drawn between an act and a bodily movement, upon which hermeneutic accounts insist, is negated”. The “difference between a waving arm and signalling to a friend”, for example, “depends upon the possession, by an agent, of a reason to wave one’s arm in that manner, namely, the desire to signal to a friend”.\(^{19}\)

Milja Kurki also draws on conceptions of cause that have been proposed by “scientific realists”. The “realists emphasize that causes exist outside closed systems and that the world, in fact, consists of ‘open systems’, where multiple causes interact and counteract each other in complex and, importantly, unpredictable ways”. Hence, “the central focus of causal analysis is not the analysis of isolated independent variables”, and explanation no longer equates prediction. And she emphasizes that the “critical realists argue that, when we disentangle the notion of cause from the Humean regularity-determinist model of causation, we can accept that reasons are, in fact, a type of cause”.\(^{20}\)

Wight argues that reasons must be construed as causes in order to be relevant, and that the rejection of reasons as causes by “constitutive theorists” is derived from the acceptance of a positivist account of cause. Kurki develops this argument in detail: if the concept of cause is reconceptualized, it emerges that causal analysis is, “in fact, something that all IR theorists, including constitutive theorists, engage in”.\(^{21}\) Unfortunately, constitutive theorists would be wary of causal analyses. “Reflectivists tend to favour ‘constitutive’ descriptions over causal ones because they tend to associate causal analysis with the empiricist Humean view of social inquiry.”\(^{22}\) She gives numerous references for this hypothesis. For example, she quotes David Campbell in saying that the position he associates himself with is opposed to “cataloguing, calculating and specifying ‘the real causes’” and in maintaining that his theory aims to inquire

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\(^{17}\) If we construct the theory as follows: The explanatory variable is dichotomous; either all the political systems in a certain zone are democratic or they are not. The dependent value takes the value 1 for peace or 0 for war in that zone. When we observe a war waged by foreign actors in a zone in which not all political systems are democratic, then the difference between the values of the two variables becomes greater and the causal effect more significant.

\(^{18}\) King, Keohane and Verba, pp. 36-7.


\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 190.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 198.
into the “political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another”. Kurki’s interpretation reads as follows:

While appearing ‘anti-causal’, his statement evidences an implicit causal commitment: representations matter precisely because they produce certain consequences. This understanding of representations and discourses can be seen as causal, even if not in ‘when A, then B’ manner. Because Campbell, as other reflectivists, associates causation with the ‘mainstream’ Humeanism in IR, he does not recognise the implicit causal claims in his own work.  

We can take this proposition as a causal claim: ‘the cause why Campbell does not recognise the implicit causal claims in his own work is the fact that he associates causation with the “mainstream” Humeanism in IR’. Reading Wittgenstein, I find little support for the view that reasons have no consequences. Rather, in The Blue Book, he writes about the confusion between reason and cause; and that one “is led into this confusion by the ambiguous use of the word ‘why’”:

If, e.g., to the question, “why did you paint just this colour when I told you to paint a red patch?” you give the answer: “I have been shown a sample of this colour and the word ‘red’ was pronounced to me at the same time, and therefore this colour now always comes to my mind when I hear the word ‘red’”, then you have given a cause for your action and not a reason.  

Wittgenstein goes on to write that the “proposition that your action has such and such a cause, is a hypothesis”. Such a hypothesis “is well-founded if one has had a number of experiences which, roughly speaking, agree in showing that your action is the regular sequel of certain conditions which we then call causes of the action”. Recall Kurki’s proposition (quoted above): “Because Campbell, as other reflectivists, associates causation with the ‘mainstream’ Humeanism in IR, he does not recognise the implicit causal claims in his own work.” She also states a hypothesis: “Reflectivists tend to favour ‘constitutive’ descriptions over causal ones because they tend to associate causal analysis with the empiricist Humean view of social inquiry”. And the use of terms like ‘associate’ could be understood as an ascription of mental states. This may be more obvious in Wight’s description of a “reason” as “the desire to signal to a friend”. But how do we give a reason for acting in a certain way if we do not take psychological states as reasons? Here, Wittgenstein gives us the following example:

Suppose I pointed to a piece of paper and said, to someone: “this colour I call ‘red’”. Afterwards I give him the order: “now paint me a red patch”. I then ask him: “why, in carrying out my order, did you paint just this colour?” His answer could then be: “This colour (pointing to the sample which I have given him) was called red; and the patch I have painted has, as you see, the colour of the sample”. He has now given me a reason for carrying out the order in the way he did.  

The difference between an explanation with causes and the giving of reasons comes up in the following remarks. “Giving a reason for something one did or said means showing a way which leads to this action. In some cases it means telling the way which one has gone oneself; in others it means describing a way which leads there”. Admittedly, Wittgenstein argues with reference to a “Humean” concept of cause. But he points out that the giving of reasons not only includes the description of ways which one in fact has gone; it includes statements of ways which one actually went as well as ways which one could have gone, and this is hardly something what we do or should call a causal explanation.
Imagine that I ask someone: ‘what is the cause why I should have done causal research?’ That makes no sense. But suppose I ask someone: ‘what is the reason why I should have done causal research?’ His answer could then be: ‘You have said that you aspire for a chair of peace research, and I have shown you the rules for scientific research which include the instruction to make causal inferences’.

Of course, if someone says to me that he/she aspires for a PhD degree in peace research and asks: ‘why should I do scientific research?’, then my answer could be: ‘there is a causal effect of doing scientific research on attaining a PhD degree in peace research’. Or I might reintroduce actions: ‘Those who confer a PhD degree to scholars of peace research tend to favour dissertations which make causal analyses because they tend to associate peace research with making causal inferences’. If I would be entitled to confer PhD degrees, the answer could even read: ‘I tend to pick out scholars doing causal research because I tend to associate peace research with making causal inferences.’ Now, you might think that my answer is a little strange. Rather than giving reasons for my choices, I describe a habit of mine. But should it be no less strange, in many cases and circumstances, if we give causal explanations of the actions of other people?

Yet, someone said to me that he/she aspires for a PhD degree in peace research and asked me: ‘why should I make causal inferences?’ Since I am not in a position to confer a PhD degree to anyone, my alternative answer could be a reconstruction of reasons. I could reconstruct competing concepts of science as well as different criteria for the evaluation of articles and theses. I could also try to show how some rules are linked to or supported by others and constitute (if they are indeed applied) a certain context of choice. It is not up to me to give him/her the order to try to provoke a dispute about the concept of science, to follow the rules of scientific research hoping to be successful or, quite subversively, to make causal inferences in order to attain a chair of peace research and to try and change then, with a higher status, the criteria for assessing works of peace research. However, if I do give causal explanations, I leave out the capacity of people to say no, and of talking together about their relations and transforming them.

Looking for reasons

If we adopt the Wittgensteinian view that concepts are produced by our linguistic activities, a change could happen all the time: if we acted in another way. This is not to say that there are, for example, no feelings of solidarity and hate or relations of power. Yet, we do not take them as facts in order to explain ‘why one thing leads to another’. We “ought instead to look and see how meaning and truth” (and social institutions and so on) are – “by a kind of groundless self-enactment” – “socially constructed and maintained”.

Campbell writes that his approach aims to inquire into the “political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another”. Kurki, in her interpretation, does not go into the term “adopting”. At the risk of simplifying Campbell’s approach, I will quote the British Prime Minister for illustration: “This is not a clash between civilizations; it is a clash about civilization. It is the age-old battle between progress and reaction, between those who embrace the modern world and those who reject its existence”. Tony Blair goes on to write that “it is the extremists, not us, who are slaughtering the innocent and doing it deliberately”, and “that they are the only reason for the continuing presence of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan”. His conclusion reads as follows:

Some people seriously believe that if we only got out of Iraq and Afghanistan, the [terrorist] attacks would stop. ... If we recognized this struggle for what it truly is, we would at least be on the first steps of the path of winning it. ... We must not just reject their barbaric acts but also their false sense of grievance against the West, their attempt to persuade us that it is others and not they themselves who are responsible for their violence. In the era of globalization, the outcome of this clash between extremism and progress will determine our future. We can no more opt out of this struggle than we can

31 Stone, pp. 98-9.
opt out of the climate change around us. Inaction ... would be profoundly and fundamentally wrong.\textsuperscript{33}

Blair’s argumentation (as far as quoted here) starts with reproducing and rearticulating something what might be called, with Campbell, a “moral cartography”. Campbell describes it with reference to the Cold War: “The responsibility for evil was located in the other and the responsibility for combating it was a burden of the self”.\textsuperscript{34} In short, by adopting such a mode of representation the presence of “our” troops becomes a sort of necessity. But this is not to say, that this mode of representation is the cause of the presence of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is (a reconstruction of) a way which leads to the action, (of) a way which we maybe actually went and will continue to go as well as one which we could have gone and could continue to go or not.

Blair writes that the extremists “are the only reason for the continuing presence of our troops”. Of course, he does not assert that it would be (“physically”) impossible to withdraw our troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. He claims – more or less directly – that our troops battle for civilization and progress, that the acts of reaction (that is, the terrorist attacks or deliberate slaughtering of the innocent, respectively) will not stop if we withdraw our troops, and that we can not opt out of this struggle. Yet, he does not only argue for the continuing presence of our troops, but also for talking to the extremists: “I do not mean just telling them that terrorist activity is wrong. I mean telling them that their attitude toward the United States is absurd, that their concept of governance is prefeudal, that their positions on women and other faiths are reactionary.”\textsuperscript{35}

If we adopted a scientific approach, then we may test the causal effect of withdrawing foreign troops on terrorist attacks. If we adopted an approach which takes reasons as causes, then we may make a causal hypothesis: ‘Blair and other Western politicians tend to favour a continuing presence of our troops over a withdrawing of them because they tend to associate a withdrawing of our troops with inaction in the struggle for civilisation.’ Both ways could be understood as problematical. By adopting the former way, ‘we’ are in danger to make ‘our’ actions conditional on the actions of “extremists”. Simply put, if extremists do continue to perpetrate “terrorist attacks” after a withdrawal of troops, then the causal effect becomes less significant, and if they stop the attacks, then we might come to the conclusion that we have to withdraw our troops in order to prevent the “slaughtering” of “the innocent”. With reference to the latter approach, the question arises of how to change a tendency of people to associate one thing with another or the attitudes of people, respectively – presumably, not simply by saying that their attitudes are absurd.

If we do look for reasons, however, we can do a lot of things. For example, we can inquire into the use of the concept of “the innocent” and the justification of acts of violence against “combatants”: What about people getting entangled in local struggles and civil war? What about people forced into military service? We can also ask how representations of “our” acts give reasons for acts of violence. That is not to say, however, that our actions are the causes of the acts of violence of “extremists” or that the extremists are not responsible for their acts, respectively. Rather it means to reconstruct also the giving of reasons for these acts.

Obviously, we have to assume that the giving of reasons can have consequences for the actions of other people (and, hence, material effects). On the one hand, the question arises of how to reconstruct reasons not only by quoting this or that text, but also without proposing some sort of regularity. A promising way, in my view, is to look for applications of a certain concept, rule or visual image. This is not to say, however, that scholars of peace and conflict should determine a correspondence of words and deeds, since we can never know whether someone in fact has gone a certain way. Rather, it means to look for acts of mutual correction and accreditation, of attaching sanctions to deviance and so on. Admittedly, such an approach raises various problems, e.g., in terms of ‘cultural translation’ and with regard to the possible political

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 84.
\textsuperscript{35} Blair, p. 84.
consequences of publishing the reports of people who have been sanctioned. On the other hand, it aims not at informing policy makers about some causal mechanisms of war or necessary conditions for peace, but in empowering people to refuse speech acts, to initiate disputes about concepts, to open rules to dialogue or to call seemingly normal practices of militarization into question.
Safety in the Field: Experience and Recommendations

Scott Meyer*

Abstract

Risks are inherent in the field, so managing risks should be the goal of both institutions and researchers. Peace researchers especially have a need to manage risks, as the fields they enter are often areas of conflict with a heightened level of risk. Risks are not limited to peace researchers, however, and regardless of the academic field or the location of fieldwork all researchers should consider how to best manage risks. This article attempts to open a discussion on how researchers and their sending institutions can best manage risks in the field setting. Utilizing personal experience of a violent incident during field research, this article looks at the emotional experience of a violent field experience as well as lessons that can be learned from such an experience. Recommendations are made for both institutions and individual researchers at all steps of the research process with the goal of helping other researchers better prepare for a safe and productive research experience.

Introduction

Safety and ethics in the field is an important aspect of qualitative research. Safety and the ethics of research have been discussed often in terms of the safety of the research subject. Questions of safety for me however did not have to do with the safety of subjects but rather of myself. During the course of my research I was the victim of a violent encounter that made me consider whether I should continue my research as designed or change the course of study. Ultimately I made the decision to abandon my research as designed and to redesign research in a safer environment. The fact that I had the opportunity and ability to leave the unsafe environment while others endured it as a part of their daily life, created a personal dilemma for me. How could I justify leaving when others daily encounter such violence and see it as a part of their daily existence? Was I unprepared for my fieldwork and for the challenges it could create?

These reflections inspired further research and exploration of the topic of physical safety in the field for the researcher. Researchers are often told to use common sense, but in my experience, more explicit instructions and preparations are required for successful research. I am especially interested in exploring the decision to leave the field and what if any criteria there should be before one makes the decision to leave the field. Finally, I hope that my experience and research can help other researchers preparing for fieldwork to be adequately prepared for a safe and productive fieldwork experience.

Background

To explore these issues of safety in the field as they related to my research, it is necessary to recount the events that led to my decision to leave the field. In January of 2005 I had the opportunity to study reconciliation in South Africa for one month. Towards the end of this month long course, I was in Durban, South Africa accompanying three female students in my course as we explored the city. We were walking back to our group when a man tried to steal the backpack from one of the girls in my group. I reached to stop him and as soon as I touched him, three men grabbed me and held me back. I swung my elbow and hit one of the men. They immediately pulled out a large machete and held it against my stomach, took my backpack, and ran away. I ran after them, but waited for the police to enter the building where they hid. I entered the building accompanied by the police who had their guns raised, causing a great commotion and threats from the illegal tenants lining the building. Ultimately, nothing was recovered by I was quite shaken by the experience of not only being violently mugged but

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also forced to endure the violence and racism of the police force that were trying to find the men who robbed me.

Reflecting on this experience, I recognized all the signs and feelings that should have warned me to get out of the situation. Ultimately, I failed to listen to my first impressions and was mad at myself for not listening to my gut. These same feelings resurfaced in Nicaragua.

A Violent Encounter in Managua

While walking with my contact person, I asked three times if she thought we should take a cab to get from one point of the downtown to the other. She assured me that she had done it with over 10 groups and had never had troubles. I kept inquiring but in the end assumed that she knew best. Then, as we were walking two men were walking in the opposite direction towards us. Again I could feel my mind telling me that this was a bad situation, but kept walking. The men began to separate from one another and began running at my female contact, grabbing her and pulling a machete on her. At this point I was frustrated because I could have run away myself, but instead I stood still in an eerie calm telling her that it would be ok. After taking her things they came to me and reached inside my pants, ripping away my money belt. Instead of being scared or vengeful like during my South Africa experience, I just felt calm and frustrated that it had to happen again.

Leaving the Field

We talked to the police and spent a few hours trying to call my parents to explain what happened, that we were ok, and that they needed to cancel my credit card and ATM card. We returned to my bed and breakfast at about 3pm. We sat there talking for a short while before my contact person went back to where she was staying. I had time to think, and I constantly was reminded of the violent situation that happened in South Africa. I felt fed up with the situation and started asking myself why I was putting myself through this again. That evening I walked the four blocks from my bed and breakfast to where my contact was living. During that walk I was constantly looking over my shoulder and was on edge when seeing more than one male together. I made the decision that night that I could not conduct research and did not want to live for two months constantly on edge, afraid to even walk to the church four blocks away in a relatively safe neighborhood. I felt like I was giving up and was unnecessarily frightened, but I decided nonetheless to leave Managua a day later. The pastor and church members who I had met in that first week were extremely disappointed and tried to talk me out of it, assuring me that it happens and that I would be safe, but the more I thought about it, the more I felt like I had to leave the situation. Within 48 hours I was back at home, making Nicaragua seem like a strange dream.

Reflections

Just as every qualitative research project has a context that must be explored, every research project also has a safety context. It is difficult to reach some overarching rule guiding safety in the field. In my case, I could have made a better decision by waiting, even a few days, to see if I still wanted to leave the field outside of the moment. This, however is difficult when your gut feeling is telling you to escape. This is even more difficult because in retrospect looking at the experience of being mugged, it is often the failure to recognize that gut feeling that can be blamed for being in that situation. In my case, I asked on multiple occasions if we should take a cab. It was if I knew that we were in a dangerous situation. Similarly, after returning to my hotel, I had the gut feeling that I had to leave. I felt that it wasn’t safe enough to do the research that I wanted to do. If I had to be confined to a small four block area, I couldn’t adequately get an idea of the program or the success it had in meeting the people’s needs. Thus, my decision was a combination of safety issues and practicality. At least that’s how I justified to myself.
Redo

Since returning I have had plenty of time to reconsider my decisions. Through this hindsight and reading other accounts of violence in the field such as *Fieldwork under Fire* by Nordstrom and Robben and *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics* by Lee, I have created recommendations for students preparing to enter the field both before and during the fieldwork. I have also created a list of considerations if something violent happens during the fieldwork and recommendations in how to proceed. Although every research project will require different preparations and scenarios, these general recommendations can help make the fieldwork experience as positive, and hopefully peaceful, as possible.

**Recommendations Before Entering the Field**

- **Use Detailed Planning:** Begin with a well-researched plan that ideally works with local contacts and incorporates local knowledge to give focus and avoid wandering into dangerous situations.
- **Evaluate Risks:** Talk with people who have lived or work at the site of fieldwork and if possible take an exploratory visit to highlight the risk of the research and determine if it is an acceptable risk.
- **Plan for Worst:** Have a plan of escape in case of problems in the field as well as a back-up research plan to ensure safety in the worst case scenario to ensure research continues even if fieldwork does not.

**Recommendations During Fieldwork**

- **Trust Your Senses:** Follow your own judgment informed by others and never ignore dangers or grow complacent of possible risks
- **Take Necessary Precautions:** Spend extra money and take extra precautions as an outsider
- **Realize Bad Things Happen:** Dangers and unexpected situations may arise, despite the amount of preparations and precautions
- **Be Flexible in Research:** Be willing to change research to maintain safety or if something unexpected happens.

**Recommendations for Considering Leaving the Field**

- **Maintain Safety:** Ask questions about why you’re leaving but ultimately do what is necessary to maintain safety.
- **Acknowledge Privilege:** Reflect on the ability to enter and leave the field in the field and the writing process, and realize that others left to live in the violent environment.
- **Use Your Experience:** Find opportunities from problems in the field and discuss these problems in the research

**Before Entering the Field**

A research design is the beginning of the research process and should be the first step to ensure safety in the field. The research design should be well researched so the fieldworker knows the situation of their site and potential dangers. The research design should also incorporate locals as much as possible. Having local guides and informants will help steer the researcher away from dangerous situations that may not be noticed by an outsider. In South Africa, researching the area or traveling with a local would have taught me that I should have avoided the street I was on. Detailed planning can go a long way in preventing wandering into dangerous situations.

Before entering the field, it is also important to as realistically as possible evaluate risks. Almost every type of research will have some degree of risk, and it is important to
acknowledge this and ask if it is an acceptable level of danger for the researcher (Sluka, 282). Making this decision will depend on the researcher and what they are willing to do for their research. In Nicaragua, I made a detailed research design but did not consider the risks ahead of time. Considering the risks of crime in Nicaragua may have helped me to reconsider my fieldwork or to be more cautious upon arrival. Evaluating risks also will help the researcher to be more prepared to make a decision on leaving the field if necessary. Identifying an acceptable level of danger will give the researcher some threshold of risk. If this threshold is crossed, the fieldworker may thus consider leaving the field. This prevents quick decisions to leave the field based on the heat of the moment instead of some kind of objective, self-created standard. Useful ways to evaluate the risks of the field include talking to people with direct experience in the country and discussing potential dangers with advisers and colleagues. In the best-case scenario, the researcher can take an exploratory visit to the field to see for themselves if it feels like it will be a productive and safe project (Sluka, 282). This is not always possible, but any chance to learn about potential risks will help the researcher make safe decisions on what to research, where to go, and how to conduct the research.

Finally, before entering the field, create a plan of escape and a back-up research plan. The plan of escape should ideally be a way to get of dangerous situations by for instance having the number of a taxi driver or someone who can help you. It is also helpful to know how to leave the field completely if necessary by knowing airplane, train, or bus times and routes. In Nicaragua, I did not have a plan of escape, so when I felt in danger, I did not know what to do about it. Additionally, after I was mugged, I was similarly alone and without an idea of what to do. When I finally made the decision to leave the country later in the day, I was fortunate that my family in the United States was home to do all the planning for me. They were able to secure a ticket on a flight the next day. However, I should have planned ahead and had the number of the airline company as well as the departure times so I would have been able to make arrangements if my parents were not able to help me.

The back-up research plan is important for academic purposes. When I was debating whether or not to leave the field, the status of my research weighed on my mind. Although it was not enough of a reason to stay, it is very possible that as a researcher gets attached to their work, they may be unwilling to leave it, even if safety demands them to leave. Thus, researchers should create a back-up plan for research on ways they can use their preparation and perhaps some of their fieldwork in a different way than originally expected in case they decide to leave the field. I did not plan ahead in my case, but I was able to salvage some of my research after leaving the field. I had conducted interviews with participants in the Nicaragua exchange and decided to use these preparatory interviews as the research itself. I also conducted fieldwork at another location close to home in order to expand my data. I used the same research question and tried to mirror the design I had for Nicaragua. This experience was personally rewarding, but it was too short and piecemeal to be of value for my research. Had I planned before going to Nicaragua what else I could do incase Nicaragua didn’t work would have enabled me to make a few rough plans that would have made the secondary research more valuable.

**During Fieldwork**

The biggest lesson I learned from both experiences of being mugged was to trust my senses. It is important to listen to advice from locals, but ultimately you will be left to rely on your own sense of security. Both times I have been in unsafe situations I have felt it. I looked around and realized that things were not as they should be. However, it is very easy to cast off these premonitions and ignore what your mind and body is telling you. It is when I ignored these feelings that something bad happened. As Sluka explains in Fieldwork Under Fire, “while you are in the field, do not grow complacent about the dangers you face, and do not treat the situation as a game or adventure. Do not ignore potential threats when they arise: they rarely just “go away” if you ignore them” (285). Act on your senses, even if it seems overly precautious or ridiculous, because it truly is better to be safe than sorry.

Along with trusting your senses, be willing to take necessary precautions both in situations that feel dangerous and also before entering areas that could plausibly be dangerous.
This can be more difficult than it sounds because often researchers want to be a part of the culture as much as possible. We want to relate to our research subjects and live life like them. While I also try to do this when traveling and researching, I have learned that there are times when you need to be willing to act as the outsider that you actually are. In my experience this usually takes the form of spending a little bit more money. Taking a taxi instead of walking or accepting the fact that you cannot walk around without a group of people are concessions that may have to be made for safety’s sake. It is important to accept that even though we want to be a part of the culture, no matter what we do, we will almost always look and act like a foreigner. Be culturally sensitive, but acknowledge that you are also a foreigner that must take extra precautions at times.

The researcher should also acknowledge that bad things do happen, despite preparations and precautions. In hindsight there are often things we wished we could have done differently, but it is not possible to prevent or plan for every situation. As Sluka argues somewhat morbidly, “some dangers may be beyond management. Despite your best efforts at danger management, simple bad luck can sometimes result in the termination of the research or worse yet the termination of the research” (Sluka, 289). Conducting fieldwork in dangerous environments is a combination of both skill and luck. “Good luck can sometimes help overcome a lack of skill, and well-developed skills can go far to help overcome the effects of bad luck. But sometimes no amount of skill will save one from a gross portion of bad luck” (Sluka, 289). Planning before and being prepared to handle dangerous situations can help ensure safety, but ultimately, “danger is not a purely ‘technical’ problem and is never totally manageable” (Sluka, 289).

Flexibility is also an important for danger management. The researcher may realize once in the field that the planned methods and goals may not be done safely. Thus, researchers must be prepared to modify or even abandon their work (Sluka, 285). As Polsky notes, the “final rule is to have few unbreakable rules” (Sluka, 285). He notes that unanticipated and ambiguous situations will arise for which one has no clear behavioral plan at all, and the researcher should be ready to revise plans accordingly (Sluka, 285).

Leaving the Field

Making the decision to leave the field after a violent incident is difficult because the researcher has to try to interpret whether they are actually in danger or whether they have just lost their sense of security. Similarly, the fieldworker has to essentially “give up” on a project that they felt was important enough to do in the first place and that they probably thought was important for the people they were researching. The fieldworker also leaves behind informants and most likely friends who do have the luxury of leaving the field if something goes wrong. The moral dilemma of having the ability to leave a violent situation while others are left to survive is a difficult choice to make.

It is important for a researcher considering leaving the field to struggle with these issues. Ideally, adequate preparation can get the researcher to beginning thinking about the issues in a “what if” scenario because following a violent encounter it is difficult to clearly weigh options and assess the situation. Some authors such as Sanders argue that “one cannot hope to learn the ropes of being a field researcher with suffering from rope burns” (Lee, 121). Researchers cannot be expected however to withstand so-called “rope burns” simply because it is supposed to be part of the experience. Instead, safety should be maintained as much as possible and if something negative happens, the researcher themselves will have to decide if the risk is too great. No set of standards can or should be universally applied or demanded before researchers are allowed to leave the field. Instead researchers should do their best to accurately measure the level of danger decide if it is too great to continue. In doing so, both actual safety and feelings of security are important to consider. In Nicaragua, after being mugged I returned to the security of my bed and breakfast room close to the church where my informants were working. Here I was physically safe, but I still felt a compromised sense of security. When walking only four blocks from my room to the church, I felt my heart rate rise when a group of men would pass. I could have survived the rope burn and continued my fieldwork, but I knew that this loss of security would inhibit my research. I could not expect to successfully interview
people in different areas of the city and country if I was constantly looking over my shoulder and worried about what may happen. In my case, I felt that my fieldwork was compromised without the confidence to approach and talk with informants. Additionally, I realized that leaving the area around the church where I was stationed was not as safe as I had thought. I felt imprisoned in a small area and did not want to continue in this situation. I made a quick decision to leave, and if I could do it again I would spend more time in the safe confines of my bed and breakfast room to process the experience before making a decision. In the end however, I think I would have arrived at the same decision, but it would have been nice to take more time in making the decision.

If a violent event does occur, it is important to write about the experience. There will be a natural tendency to want to forget what happened and not think about it, but it is important to talk about the influence of the event on your research as well as placing the violence in a context. The incident likely changed the methodology and maybe even the topic and this change should be explained because it influences the view of the data, even if it may be about a totally different topic.

It is also possible that what the research perceives as an isolated, random act of violence can tell something of the context of the culture or people when considered with the experience of other researchers. As Pieke notes, incidents in the field:

are related because they take place in the same social and cultural setting and may even be causally connected. More important, subsequent anthropological accidents may be experienced by the same field-worker. The efforts of the ethnographer to make sense of what seem to be random accidents at first sight are similar to the creative interpretive work native actors engage in to make sense of their world. Earlier events provide (part of) the interpretation of later ones and take on new meaning in the light of later experiences (76-77).

Telling about the experience can also be important for future researchers to prepare them for the risks they face and to help them learn what to do and what not to do.

Problems that occur in the field should also be looked at positively. They may provide an opportunity for interesting research and reflection. In my case, the incident in Nicaragua provided incentive to look into the issue of safety in the field and write this paper. Even though I was not able to collect data in Nicaragua, this experience was not wasted but served to inform my writings about the donor side of the program. Pieke calls this evolving fieldwork: “Evolving fieldwork means that the “ordinary” fieldwork can prepare for a change and inform different research” (65). Changes in the research plan due to violence or a variety of other events can lead to a so-called “accidental anthropology”: “Accidental anthropology is not about emergencies but rather about understanding contingencies in a wider social and cultural context” (Pieke, 16). What happened may point to a more interesting area of research, or an aspect of research that was not considered. In this way, violent events can be used positively in research to inform and expand on concepts that may not have seemed important or present in the field.

Finally, researchers should write about what happened for moral reasons. If the decision is made to leave the field and the informants who are left to live in the conditions that were unfit for the researcher, the least the research can do is tell the world about the conditions in hopes to inspire change. In this way, researchers can act as intermediaries who can “lend their voices on behalf of those who have witnessed and lived through the macabre” (Green, 108). Not to do so according to Nancy Scheper-Hughes is a hostile act of indifference (108). Monographs, according to Scheper-Hughes, can become “sites of resistance,” “acts of solidarity,” and a way to “write against terror” (108). Thus, the researcher can use a negative experience to draw attention to the violence that informants face and to act as an agent of social change.

**Conclusion**

Fieldwork is a potentially dangerous and rewarding experience that must be undertaken with regards for the safety of the researcher. Through planning and necessary precautions, the risk of conducting fieldwork can be diminished; however, there is always a chance that something bad can happen, as I experienced in both South Africa and Nicaragua. Each
individual researcher must reflect on how they would handle and use these negative experiences. Questioning the viability of continuing fieldwork should be carefully weighed, but the safety of the researcher should be the foremost priority. Even if the researcher decides to leave the field or change the focus of their research, it is important to talk about the violent incident. It colors future writing and research and is an important aspect of methodology. The experience can also be used positively to teach others how to avoid such situations. It can even be used to contribute to research about the context of the incident and ideally as a flashlight that can shine on the darkness of violence to create positive social change. It is difficult to experience violent encounters and difficult to recall such experiences, but it is essential to research, especially in areas of conflict.

References
Under What Conditions, and to What Extent, Should States Mediate? Evaluating the Success and Failure of International Mediation Conducted by Small and Medium-sized States

Seán O'Connell

Abstract

The aim of my research project is to determine under what conditions, and to what extent, small and medium power states should engage in the international mediation of conflicts. My doctoral research project will seek to evaluate the success and failure of international mediation as conducted by small- and medium-sized states. This paper will present the research design of my doctoral research project, which will conjugate qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to provide empirical answers a number of questions: to what extent should states, such as Norway or Canada, engage in international mediation? Should nation-states engage, or not engage, in mediation? Should states refrain from engaging in mediation, because states have other agendas, particularly the national interest, and their diplomats are trained and instructed accordingly? Is the allegiance of diplomats to their respective states such a determining factor? How successful is small/medium power mediation? Are some types of conflict more amenable to certain types of mediators? Who should mediate interstate conflicts? Who should mediate intrastate conflicts? The ultimate goal of my doctoral dissertation is to be of direct policy relevance to Canadian policy-makers and decision-makers.

1. Introduction

Speaking at the Twenty-first biennial conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) in Calgary, on July 1st, 2006, Norwegian peace scholar Johan Galtung asserted that nation-states should not officially engage in the international mediation of conflicts, because states have other agendas than peacemaking, namely the national interest, and their diplomats are trained and instructed accordingly. Also, despite of the fact that one case is not a test, Galtung further maintained that Norway’s ‘failure’ to successfully mediate an end to the Sri Lankan civil war confirmed this viewpoint. Prior to hearing these words, I had been of the opinion that Canada should engage, at an official level, in the international mediation of conflicts; especially, given the role that such eminent Canadians as Lester B. Pearson and John De Chastelain have played in international mediation, peacekeeping as well as peacebuilding, and given the attention that the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) accords to human security and peacebuilding issues in its policies. Furthermore, this apparent lacuna in Canadian foreign policy is made all the more striking when one considers the formal links, regarding human security and international conflict issues that have been established since 1998, between Canada and Norway, at the foreign ministry level. However, Galtung may have a point. For, at time of writing, it would be quite difficult to qualify the Norwegian mediation of the Sri Lankan conflict as a success. This being said, Norway was successful in brokering a cease-fire, in February 2002, between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This truce was respected until the spring and summer of 2006, when open warfare re-erupted despite the 2002 cease-fire, which on paper remains in place. The root causes of the conflict, the intransigence of the belligerents, or both, may well be the cause of the renewed hostilities, but the fact remains that
the Sri Lankan civil war is an ongoing conflict and Norway remains ‘trapped in the peace process’, to use Ingrid Samset’s phrase.\(^4\) Perhaps, after all, Canada should not follow in the steps of its Nordic partner. It must also be noted however that Norway has registered greater successes, on the mediation / peace facilitation front, in Latin America and in the Middle East, and it may be that Norway’s apparent failure to mediate the Sri Lankan conflict is not due to the nature of the mediator, but instead to the intractability of the conflict and other unrelated factors and perhaps other examples of official mediation attempts by Norway, and other small and medium powers, should be systematically and empirically studied in order to determine if a country such as Canada should, or should not, engage in the international mediation of conflicts.

**Why mediation?**

According to the *Human Security Report 2005*, in the last ten years, the number of conflicts around the world has declined sharply.\(^5\) The *Report* also contends that while contemporary conflicts tend to be more brutal, they also kill less people than the larger wars of the past. This, it must be noted, is because more people than before are fleeing these conflicts. This trend towards a relatively more 'peaceful' world has also been confirmed by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) in September, 2006.\(^6\) According to the UCDP, there were, in 2005, thirty-one ongoing armed conflicts around the world, which is one less conflict than in the previous year. Although, these developments denote a relative decrease in the number of ongoing armed conflicts, and in the number of people who die as a result, the situation is also far from ideal. It remains, that there are many armed conflicts in the world today and many people are displaced and / or killed because of them. This being said, it also important to note that many contemporary conflict situations are characterized by the kind of small scale insurgency that can be observed in Sri Lanka; and these lead to micro violence, instability and associated problems such as failed states and humanitarian catastrophes.

Today’s world thus continues to be in dire need of effective conflict resolution, which “can be defined as a new formation that is (1) acceptable to all actors, (2) sustainable by the actors.”\(^7\) Mediation is one of the ways by which conflicts can be pacifically resolved. The other non-violent approaches to manage or resolve conflicts, range from negotiation, to adjudication, arbitration and non-violent military intervention. The basis of conflict resolution through mediation is that it allows conflictants to identify many of the underlying reasons for a conflict and thereby creates the potential for its transformation and a sustainable peace. There are many ways to define mediation. For the purposes of my research project, it will be defined, using Jacob Bercovitch’s broad definition, “as a process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties’ own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an outsider (whether an individual, an organization, a group, or a state) to change their perceptions or behaviour, and to do so without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law.”\(^8\) To this definition it can be added that mediation “renders assistance in the quest for a negotiated settlement when conflicting parties cannot find one by themselves.”\(^9\) It is also important to realize that, when practised by a state on the international stage, mediation can also be a foreign policy tool.\(^10\) The international mediation process can thus be measured through actors, tools, techniques, processes, impact(s), and outcome(s).


Why small- and medium-sized states?

In the international system, states do not have an equal footing. There are powerful states, there are medium powers, and there are small states. It thus follows that the relative power of states in international relations should have a bearing on their willingness as well as their ability to mediate crises or conflicts and, consequently, on the outcomes of their mediation efforts. This issue raises several important questions that will be addressed in my research project. For example: what is the direction of this bearing, which is based on relative power and ability? That is, does this observation apply to powerful states or to middle-power states? Is relative power really a determinant that leads to expectations of mediation success (or failure)? Crocker, Hampson and Aall state that “[t]hird parties come in many sizes and shapes, and they play wide range of roles in conflicts to which they are not a direct party.” Referring specifically to states, as third party interveners, Jacob Bercovitch writes that “when we talk about mediation by states, we normally distinguish between small states and large states. Each claims legitimacy and authority on the basis of different attributes. Small states such as Algeria, Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria have been involved in a disproportionate number of mediations in international relations. Their very size, and presumed lack of clout, makes them appear non-threatening and ideally positioned to carry out mediations between adversaries.” Of course, an important question to bear in mind is whether the neutrality (as in the case of Austria or Switzerland) of the mediating state plays a role in determining mediation outcomes. I have chosen to limit my research to the study of small and medium-sized state mediation for three reasons. The first one is that international mediation by powerful states has received a fair amount of attention in the literature. The second reason is that when mediation is conducted by a great power, the dynamics of the process are substantially different because of this power. This particular aspect of large state mediation (i.e. mediation with power, resources, or leverage) has also been amply examined. The third reason for concentrating on small or medium power mediation is that one of the aims of my research project is to be of relevance to Canadian foreign policy. Powerful states are endowed with resources and an independence of action, which medium and small states do not possess. I will exclude great power mediation from the comparative case study portion of my research project. Also, it must be noted that the small/medium/large state distinction is based more on the relative power of states in the international system than on the actual size of states. Although, there occasionally is an equivalence between the actual size and power of a state (for example, as in the case of the United States or the Republic of Malta), political scientists and foreign policy analysts traditionally refer to countries such as Canada, or Australia, as middle powers or as small states (despite their extremely large size). Of course, it must also be noted that it is not only

large states that can impact less powerful ones, small states can also influence big ones. Other important questions to consider are: what determines the leverage and capacity of a state. How is the power of a state measured?\textsuperscript{19}

Because the stated aim of my research project is to have policy relevance for Canadian foreign policy, my study will focus on official state-sponsored mediation (or what is sometimes called Track I diplomacy) as opposed to international mediation which is conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (or what is called Track II diplomacy). However, it must be noted that the distinctions are not always clear-cut. That is, it also bears mentioning that ‘track I’ and ‘track II’ are somewhat flexible concepts.\textsuperscript{20} For example, some authors have begun to refer to Track 1½ diplomacy, to describe situations where states and NGOs conduct their international mediation attempts in conjunction, as in the case of the Norwegian Channel which led to the Oslo Accords.\textsuperscript{21}

**Overview of the Debate**

During the Cold War, most state-sponsored mediation attempts were carried out by the great powers. As stated above mediation by the great powers has been the subject of many studies. Some of these studies focus on specific mediation attempts\textsuperscript{22} and others look at the broader subject of great power mediation. Also, as already mentioned, because the process, motives and results of international mediation as conducted by powerful states have their own particularities, it is thus quite unlikely that distilling the elements of successful mediation outcomes of great power states would produce much in terms of usable information for small and medium states that wish to engage in mediation. It must be admitted however, that such a statement is purely conjecture, as it ultimately depends on whether it is mediation bias, capability, technique, impact, outcome, or process that is being evaluated.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there were exceptions where less powerful states mediated crises or disputes. For example, Algeria\textsuperscript{23} (between Iran and Iraq as well as between the United States and Iran during the U.S. Hostage crisis), Egypt (between Iran and Iraq) and the Vatican\textsuperscript{24}, although it can also been seen as a transnational religious organization (between Argentina and Chile). Referring to the Algerian and Egyptian mediation between Iran and Iraq, Touval and Zartman maintain that mediation “by the medium-sized states appears to have been motivated by the desire to enhance their influence and prestige. […] There should be little wonder that small and medium-sized states seek to enhance their international standing by assuming the role of mediator as they have few ways in which to do so. Moreover, mediating often saves them from having to take sides when pressed to do so in a conflict.”\textsuperscript{25} This is thus a clear example of

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\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.


Under What Conditions, and to What Extent, Should States Mediate?

The period prior to the end of the Cold War, which saw the outbreak of many civil and regional conflicts around the world, also saw the entrance of additional small and medium powers into the international mediation arena. The most celebrated of these was certainly Norway’s Track 1½ involvement in the Oslo peace process. Norway has since been involved in a number of mediation / peace facilitation efforts; most notably in the Philippines, Guatemala, Haiti, Sudan, Cyprus, Kosovo, Colombia, and Sri Lanka. Other mediatory interventions were conducted by Switzerland (in the Algerian Conflict and in Colombia), by South Africa (in Angola, Zambia and Algeria), by New Zealand (in Papua New Guinea), and Canada (when Ambassador Raymond Chrétien was named UN Special Mediator in the 1996 Zaire crisis). Some of these mediation attempts have been described as successes and others as failures. However, no comprehensive survey or study has yet appeared on the effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) of small/medium power mediation. A possible research question could also be to find out if there is a pattern regarding who mediates what. For example, are great powers more prone to mediate interstate conflicts and are middle/small powers more prone to mediate intrastate conflicts?

Although studies of track II diplomacy abound, very little literature exists on official (track I) small or medium power mediation. This focus of the literature on track II diplomacy is probably due to the fact that it is often taken for granted that states are expected to engage in ‘official’ or ‘track I’ diplomacy and also perhaps because of the relative ‘newness’ of track II diplomacy. There are thus definite gaps in the literature and this survey of the existing literature on small and medium-sized state mediation has revealed that much remains to be done. The following statement by Randa M. Slim (author of one of the few – and most quoted – papers on the subject of small state mediation) is an indication of how little has been written on the subject: “I have not followed up on that research topic. It was a one-time entry for me into this particular area of research.”

Many authors, such as Bercovitch, maintain that small and medium-sized states are ideally suited to conduct international mediation because disputants are more willing to accept them as mediators, as they appear non-threatening and sympathetic to the causes of weaker states. However, these same authors also fail to explain how it is that small or medium states can guarantee that a mediated agreement will be respected.

Statements such as these are usually based on anecdotal case study literature and on the failure to recognize that international mediation is a “structural extension of bargaining and negotiation” and on the assumption that an impartial mediator will be more successful. Others contend however, that “effective mediation in international relations is [...] related more to
resources than to impartiality.”34 Most analysts of international mediation are thus divided as to whether it is (a) resources/leverage or (b) impartiality that leads to successful mediation outcomes and it follows that if resources are more important, then powerful states are the ones that should mediate, whereas if it is impartiality that matters most, then the best mediators will be small and medium powers. It must be noted that it is very difficult to differentiate and distinguish between the independent effects of different mediation techniques. For, if the three most important ingredients of mediation are: (1) impartiality, (2) voluntariness, and (3) secrecy, it could be said that pure mediation therefore does not exist in international politics.

This decades-old debate has continued until the present time and no systematic/empirical study has yet been conducted to lay it to rest. Writing in 1996, Bercovitch and Houston stated that “systematic analyses let alone empirical studies, of third party intervention in general, and mediation in particular, have been very rare. The phenomenon has for too long remained little studied and poorly understood.”35 A survey of empirical studies that have since appeared reveals that this situation has changed considerably. Systematic and empirical studies of international mediation are now regularly published, and many of these studies have been conducted by Bercovitch (as well as by Bercovitch in conjunction with other authors).36 One of Bercovitch’s stated aims has been to develop the ‘contingency’ approach to the study of international mediation. This approach posits that instead of viewing mediation as an art, and instead of viewing every mediation attempt as a specific event, it should be studied in a systematic manner in order to ascertain whether there are certain ‘contingent’ mediator strategies that can lead to more successful outcomes. Also, a notable addition, to the growing body of empirical literature on the subject, is the book Mediating International Crises, which explores international mediation using statistical analyses of the International Crisis Behaviour (ICB) project data on twentieth century crises and simulations of international crisis mediation.37

Despite the fact that systematic and empirical studies of successful mediation in international relations have begun to appear since the early 1990s, the ‘identity and characteristics of the mediator’ and, more specifically, ‘small or medium powers as mediators’ has very rarely been used as an independent variable. The most frequently used independent variables in these studies have been: the nature of the dispute, mediator behaviour, the relative power of the disputing parties, the previous relationship of the disputing parties, the duration of the conflict, and the timing of the intervention.38 Thus, although there have been multiple

studies conducted on the process and success (or failure) of international mediation attempts, and some in-depth studies – of whether (or not) medium or small powers as mediators impede (or contribute) to successful mediation outcomes – have been conducted, much remains to be done in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the implications, complexities, and desirability of medium and small power mediation.

Problématique and Central Questions

Two debates, which are of interest to my doctoral inquiry, thus emerge from this brief review of the literature. The first debate on the relative power of the mediator is argued, on both sides, by Bercovitch. The second debate on whether small states should or should not engage in mediation is also argued on both sides, by the same researcher, namely Galtung. As mentioned above, in a 1991 article, Bercovitch posits “that mediators’ resources and leverage, rather than impartiality, can exert greater influence on the adversaries’ decision making” and hence have a greater – positive – effect on the outcome. In 2002, Bercovitch maintained that the “presumed lack of clout [of small states], makes them appear non-threatening and ideally positioned to carry out mediations between adversaries”. Bercovitch thus provides arguments for two competing hypotheses.

As stated in the introduction to this paper, Galtung currently believes that small states such as Norway should not mediate because of the allegiance that diplomats owe to their respective states’ national interests. However, in a 1980 essay, referring to Norway’s role as an international peace facilitator, Galtung advanced that its small size “gives Norway a chance as an arbiter in international relations, between countries that are big, rich and Western, and those dominated by them, particularly Third World countries” and it had “vested interest in [such protracted conflicts as in Sri Lanka], and in seeing them as symmetric with Norway as impartial and disinterested in-between”. As, my doctoral research project’s goal is to answer the question: should small and or medium-sized states mediate, the goal of my doctoral research project will be to evaluate the success and failure of international mediation efforts that have been conducted by small and medium states. The research project will thus address central questions such as: to what extent should small and medium states (as opposed to great power states) such as Norway or Canada, engage (or not engage) in the international mediation of conflicts? Is the international mediation of conflicts conducted by small and or medium states more or less effective than great power mediation?

Hypotheses and Research Argument

The theory of mediation proposed by Kochan and Jick (which I have adapted to international mediation; see figure 1 below) as well as the theories of international mediation proposed by Bercovitch and others produces four testable hypotheses: H1) the more powerful the mediator, the more likely the mediation effort will result in a successful outcome; H2) impartiality will not have a significant impact upon the mediation outcome; H3) The type of mediator (i.e.: powerful versus medium or small power) will have a high incidence on the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of mediation; and H4) The official mediation efforts of small states will result in unsuccessful outcomes.


The rationale behind my hypotheses is: firstly, the mediation efforts of small and medium-sized states are usually unsuccessful because official (track I) diplomacy constrains these efforts, this in turn, is because the number one allegiance of diplomats is to their respective governments (i.e. the national interest), not to resolution of the conflict. Secondly, the representatives of medium and small powers are less likely to conduct successful mediations, on the international stage, because of their lack of power and leverage. Thus, because states have other agendas, particularly the national interest, and their diplomats are thus trained and instructed accordingly, official state-sponsored mediation attempts often founder.

**Research Design, Methodology**

The first and second parts of my research project will be preceded by an in-depth familiarization with the literature on official international mediation as conducted by small and medium powers. This will be followed by the development of an interview/questionnaire, which will inform the entire research that will follow.

I then plan to address my research question through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The first part of my dissertation will thus be a quantitative study of mediation attempts that have been carried out by small, medium, and large states. This quantitative part will serve to identify which mediation efforts have been more successful (those of powerful states or those of medium or small powers) and will serve as a basis from which I will attempt to answer my problem question. Two measures of the effectiveness of international mediation (namely, mediation success and mediation failure) will serve as the dependent variables of my research project and I will use: ‘the identity and characteristics of the mediator’ as my main independent variable.

The aim here will be to modify the 1991 quantitative study of Bercovitch, Anagnoson and Wille, which found that mediation efforts by representatives of powerful states (i.e. with leverage) are more likely to be successful than those of medium and small powers. The authors did however admit that the “emerging pattern was not completely clear, due probably to the relatively small number of cases in each category.” It is hoped that the fifteen years that have elapsed since their study, will have produced a sufficient amount of additional cases to increase the explanatory power of the model.

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The second part of my research project will be an in-depth comparative case study analysis of three previous instances of official international mediation efforts conducted by small and medium-sized states, or their representatives, (Algeria between the U.S. and Iran, Norway in Sri Lanka, and Canada’s involvement, via Ambassador Raymond Chrétien, in the attempted mediation of the 1996 Zaire Crisis). These case studies will incorporate in-depth field interviews that I plan to conduct with relevant mediators and negotiators. Also, in order to determine the extent to which the conduct of official diplomacy (of medium and small states) constrains their peacemaking efforts, I will have recourse to the tools of comparative foreign policy.

Selection of Cases

I chose the Algerian mediation of the Iranian hostage crisis as one of my case studies because some of the scant literature, which exists on the subject of small state mediation, deals with it. Expanding on this previously studied mediation effort, would thus permit me to examine, and build on, an already existing – albeit small – literature on the subject of medium and small power mediation. The ongoing Norwegian mediation of the Sri Lankan conflict is by far the most well known, publicized, and studied small state mediation effort. It is for this reason and also because of the similarities of Canada’s and Norway’s foreign policies, that I have included it in my study. I have included former Canadian Ambassador Raymond Chrétien’s attempt to mediate the 1996 conflict in eastern Zaire, because this was one of the few times where the Canadian government and DFAIT were involved in the international mediation of an international conflict through the nomination of Ambassador Chrétien as United Nations mediator and Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Implications for Theory and Policy Relevance

The goal of my proposed doctoral research, and proposed thesis, is thus to evaluate the success and failure of international mediation conducted by medium and small states. More precisely, I wish to examine the extent to which small states, as opposed to great powers, should (or should not) engage in the international mediation of armed conflicts. My study will be of relevance in determining the mechanics of successful state-sponsored mediation. This research project will also be of special policy relevance, especially with regards to Canadian foreign policy. For Canada has long played the role of a middle power in world affairs, but since the end of the Cold War this role seems to have lost its meaning. My doctoral research project will build on existing research on international mediation, small state theory and middle powership as well as contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the international mediation field. Also, this research will be aimed principally at an audience of political advisors to decision-makers as well as practitioners and analysts of international mediation.

By evaluating the success and failure of mediation attempts that have been conducted by states of similar stature to Canada on the world stage, my research project will thus try to evaluate the likelihood of success, as well as the policy implications, of a potential Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs involvement, at the official level, in the international mediation of conflicts. For example, should Canada imitate Norway, a country with which it signed the Lysøen Declaration (in 1998), an agreement which establishes a framework for consultation and concerted action on issues around human security and international conflict?  

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Security bites. An outline for capturing the choreography of street protesting

Samu Pehkonen*

Abstract

Inspired by Donna Haraway’s “dog manifesto” this paper gives leash to recognising the importance of dogs for peace research. This is done by arguing for the need to study the actual practices of patrol dogs and their handlers as ‘combined means of security machinery’ and their situational conduct as a part of the choreography of street protesting. For this purpose, the paper discusses ethnomethodologically inspired ethnographic methods that make extensive use of digital video camera (DV) to record actual working of patrol dogs. Videoing makes it possible to observe closely the turn-taking-machinery (gestures, positions, commands) that puts the categories of handlers, dogs, “those breaching the peace” and other people into existence and that makes one scene of ordering/securing visible.

Advice for readers not familiar with dog walking: Dog walking is a kind of dyad action. Handler and dog are walking together. Yet, even when leashed they never walk exactly the same route – they are not one so to say. There are smells to sniff that can lead the dog to pass a lamp post from the ‘wrong’ side; for the handler there are fellow citizens to pay attention to which can result in the handler tugging gently from the leash; the dyadity is negotiated each time handler and dog arrive at crossroads and a choice about the route is done. The better the relation between the co-walkers the more they can concentrate on their own businesses without breaking the dyad. The same goes for scientific writing. Ideally, the result of writing (this text as you see it) should be unilinear with its argumentation. This paper, however, is an example of un-concentrated dyad with both the handler (me) and the dog (my ‘puppy text’) not really sure where to go – sometimes both hopelessly going their own separate ways. The use of dog fills other layer as well. I invite the reader to be my dog as we are walking together through this paper. To help the reader see where each party is going the text is written in two columns: my argumentation is marked with Roman (I, II, III,... ) numbers while ‘rest of the stuff’ supposedly backing up my arguments is presented in Arabic (1,2,3,... ) numbers. Since for me this is a project still in its very early phase I cannot present a ready-chewed investigation of my topic. Thus the last allegory. Although people generally tend to think we (humans) are training dogs I believe it is fair to say the opposite is true as well: dogs are simultaneously training their handlers.

I

This paper is mainly about dogs and peace research through ordering called security. More specifically, it is about the work special kind of dogs, that is patrol dogs, add to a special kind of activity peace research is related to, that is street protesting. Despite the discipline’s close affinity with peace movement most of the scholarly input in street protesting has treated it only secondarily.

Conventionally peace research has aimed to measure, categorise and order what happens before and after the actual occurrence of street march, protesting or demonstration. The protesting has been seen merely as a representation of (supposedly) more meaningful social processes. Ironically, studies on street protesting have studied nearly everything but the protesting itself.

For example, street protesting is typically interpreted to indicate the level of political awareness among the citizens or the effort is put to study demonstrations

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1 I am grateful for the training tips provided by Eeva Puumala and Frank Möller concerning my puppy text. The misbehaviour of the puppy, however, remains my responsibility.
by pondering their effects on politics. According to Anders Boserup and Claus Iversen’s (1966: 328) state of affairs four decades ago “There has been much speculation and much controversy on whether the marches have had any effect at all on the policies of the various governments”. In order to get a better understanding of the effectiveness of peace marches they propose a framework for studying demonstrations as a source of change. For the purpose at hand they define demonstrations as being “usually aimed at getting some other group of persons, the target, to undertake given actions.” Although the target is not always well defined Boserup and Iversen nevertheless think it is useful to look at the demonstration as a channel of communication between the demonstrators and a target…

II

There is a need for re-specification: we need to describe “the channels of communication” through which the phenomenon of street protesting is constituted and played out. I propose seeing street protesting primarily through its choreographies, a concerted and chained set of practices and action.

2

‘Choreographies’ is not a novel idea in peace research. Anthony Lott (2003, 196) discusses street protesting:

“Looking down at the streets filled with banners, puppets, flags, and people marching, there – among the shouts and chant, jugglers and costumes – a choreographed theatre is being played out. It is an aesthetic of mass protest.”

I want to take the idea a bit longer and make it theoretically stronger. There surely is the carnivalesque character of street protesting that deserves to be noticed. My use the term choreography denotes other dimensions of street protesting. Literally meaning "dance-writing" the term demonstrates its usefulness as it captures both the prepared foreknowledge (how things should be done) and the inevitable continuous situational negotiation (improvisation) based on such knowledge. Although policemen, dogs and demonstrators are not dancing (in the traditional sense of the word) their bodies are marking and embodying certain movements and positions. In addition, the movement occupies certain spaces using a space and making a space: the streets, the squares, the lamppost, the billboard etc.

There is necessarily nothing spectacular (t)here. Emphasis on the carnivalesque of street life is well in line with the sociology of the marked: although the unmarked comprises the vast majority of social life, the marked commands a disproportionate share of analytical attention. Thus, I agree with Wayne Brekhus (1998) in that we should explicitly foreground politically unnoticed and taken-for-granted elements of social reality. Choreography is everywhere, any time. Of course, in most of the societies protesting is by definition something extraordinary. Still also the extraordinary action no less consists of ordinary practices. Or, to put it differently, extraordinarity shows the ordinarity that has been on the background all along.

3

…Boserup and Iversen proceed by analysing the background of demonstrators (“The Danish and British marchers in 1965 were mostly young people from 18 to 23 years of age. Most of them came from urban areas and had not yet completed their education”). Next they turn to the instrumental aims of the march and discuss the activity as an indicator of involvement. In this framework demonstrators are purely conveys of something that can be analysed from the perspective of functional (i.e. marchers view of society) and structural models of generating social change.
III

In line with this (non)emphasis on protesting the range of political subjects and their practices has remained narrow: no human, not to mention non-human\(^2\), actors are included in the analysis, only de-subjectivised opinions to be matched with background variables.

Alternatively, the actors relevant for the making sense of protests have been pre-givens, usually derived from some earlier piece of research and empirical observations in other situations. Thus, in street protesting the roles of policemen, protestors and sometimes bystanders or counter-protestors get played out. But there are more actors to be found; or rather more in those actors to be found. The emphasis is to be laid on (human) actors as well as (non-human) actants relevant for the situation at hand. In the case of street protesting, this leads to see patrol dog as a mediator of other actors of street protesting.

4

But seriously, can we (dogs) be political subjects? According to Kennan Ferguson (2004) we can. Historically the current society is a result of as much human-animal as human-human relations.\(^3\) Of all the animal species we are seen to bring most security to you humans. The mode of security varies from a very personal one (like tender pets or half-trained guard dogs) or almost hidden (mine detecting dogs) to a highly public (patrol dogs on duty). Of course, as it is with all means of security, we can be used to increase insecurity too. Thus there is a great ambivalence in us as well as in your attitudes towards us. That is why you should not be interested in us as such but in the work (usually together with human partner) we are put to do. And not any work, but work in certain situations.

IV

This is entirely a position paper. The summarised claim so far is that describing what seems to be obvious for us (a street protest) and searching answers for what makes it obvious (as a street protest) demands us to take seriously action in its contextuality (as a collection of “what’s there”), to pay attention to the locally invoked actors (“who is there”) as well as to see street protesting in terms of a chained set of practices (“when it is”). The paper tries to present a general argument for the inclusion of dogs and other non-human locally relevant actors in the study of social ordering (resulting in just co-existence between the actors). To do so, I try next to elaborate an arguable methodological stance with the help of dogs. This stance comes with a number of methodological challenges, mainly having to do with participant observation and use of video material.

V

Bearing in mind that it is against the regulations and norms of both municipal ordinance and scientific reasoning to let dogs run free in public space (be it a street or a scholarly publication) I need to leash my discussion with something available. My slippery grip is on ethnomethodology\(^4\), not because I wish to go for a one-sided plea for a purebred ethnomethodology but because I need something of a sort of methodology that tackles, deals and solves the problems of ordinary action – the meaningfulness of practices that otherwise get lost in our analyses. Ethnomethodology, as I see it, consists of a bulk of studies on how people produce the mutually shared social order in which they live. I approach street protesting as one of the order producing methods people may became engaged in. Peace research with its continuous challenge of status-quo power (the state monopoly of ordering social by providing security) and a search for the means of counterpower (change) should thus mingle with the occasions where the members (of the society) given up to passivity (i.e. accepting the state security order) even temporarily question the normality of this order.\(^5\)

\(^2\) The only animals mentioned are top dog and underdog, conceptual animals that are called forth to present the rank-dependent interaction between decision-makers and demonstrators (Boserup & Iversen 1966, 346-347 note 29).

\(^3\) See the special issue on People and Animals in Qualitative Sociology Review (2007).

\(^4\) Methodologically the paper is indebted to the writings of E. Laurier, D. Haraway, B. Latour and C. Sanders.

\(^5\) The conceptualisation of power-passivity-counterpower (in Norwegian makt-vanmakt-motmakt) comes from Mathiesen (1982).
There is also a more theoretically instructed reason for the inclusion of dogs. In its pursuit for ‘the social’ peace research as a social science is also dealing with issues of non-human. The presence of patrol dogs in our everyday life (and most clearly strategically placed on border stations, customs, security checks etc.) is undisputed. Yet peace researchers are and need not be ethologists (but I would add ethologists to Galtung’s (1967, 16) list of possible disciplinary bases for peace research). This is because the patrol dogs gain their sociality (only) through human interface with them.

Sociologists and philosophers (for example Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway and Michel Serres) provide some avenues towards the inclusion of non-human in the social. Based on this literature Mike Michael (2004) has put forward the notion of co(a)gent that “encompasses the simultaneously distributed and the unitary character of processual, emergent and relational hybrid entities”. He makes reference to Latour who has provided one example of such a co(a)gent. There is an endless debate about whether it is guns or people that kill other people. According to Latour the question is wrongly formulated as it is the citizen-gun that kills: “as one enters into an association with a gun, both citizen and gun become different, there is no longer subject (citizen) or object (gun) alone but the combination, the hybrid”. Michael exemplifies the same point with “hudogledog”, a mixture of person, dog and dog leash. A dog leash, very mundane and politically meaningless artefact gains its co(a)gency if we think of patrol dogs that would be wearing no leash during the crowd control situations. The work could simply not be done the way it is done now. These agents and co(a)gents are structuring the routines of/in everyday life. Yet they have not been analysed, partly because they are un-seen and hidden to the prevailing frameworks. In fact they become visible to us only when there is a failure in the order of things – when someone is bitten by a police dog, a police dogs get shot etc. Partly the invisibility of non-human actor has to do with the fact that when analysing the action of human beings there is a tendency to rush to the intentions of the actors. Sharing the human authorship with non-human, such as dogs, guns or lampposts, hinders us from falling to this pitfall. These creatures are not planning their actions same way as humans do and still their relevant position as agents can not be turned down.

VI

Deriving from the pedigree of phenomenology, ethnomethodological inquiry starts with the phenomenon. Moreover, it starts from where and when the phenomenon takes place. It continues working with the phenomenon without purposefully reducing it to non-local conceptualisations or categorisations. The following characterisation by Hayden Lorimer (2005, 84) of this theory kennel is useful to be quoted here:

Greatest unity is found in an insistence on expanding our once comfortable understanding of ‘the social’ and how it can be regarded as something researchable. This often means thinking through locally formative interventions in the world. At first, the phenomena in question may seem remarkable only by their apparent insignificance. The focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions [handler’s italics]. Attention to these kinds of expression, it is contended, offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgement and ultimate representation. In short, so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become.
How do we get to know the unnoticed ordinary action of street protesting? Street protest is a good place to start and a version of participant observation is a good way of doing it. Having in mind peace research striving for peace by peaceful means makes street protesting also somewhat intellectually familiar place to conduct such observations. By actively endorsing academics’ role in/for the civil society one is able to take a stance not just a remote observer but one engaged in active civilian overseeing (see Salasuo 2006).

6

The statistically driven and quantitatively saturated body of PR has been extensively aired by strengthening qualitative working methods. A variety of rhetoric and discourse analytic approaches, for example, has been added to the disciplinary training kit. This linguistic turn has not emptied out the criticism of those advocating more participatory and/or embodied research strategy. The current plea for fieldwork sounds interestingly like an echo of past. During the previous self-critical awakening in PR dating back to 1960 and 70s the mainstream peace researchers were warned against wallowing “in arm-chair analyses or empirical studies whose results are totally divorced from the world of the people whom we study” (Hveem 1973, 205). Now the same words on entering the field are used to encourage researchers to do more innovative and theory challenging work (Väyrynen 2003). Innovativeness comes often hand in hand with supposedly benign ignorance. From the side of the ‘innovators’ the stubbornness of tradition is sometimes oversimplified when there indeed has to be something useful in their business (why, otherwise, would there be need to discuss with them anyways?). From the side of the advocates of the business-as-usual there is an equal disability to see the new situation through other than their biased standpoint. Thus, the plea for more emphasis on fieldwork is burlesquely rejected by questions like: “What kind of fieldwork do [the innovators] have in mind? What kind of ‘real life’ experiences beyond reading do scholars need to talk sense? Does one need to study Chinese (preferably all Chinese languages), travel every corner of the vast state (preferably each year), infiltrate its government on a permanent basis (or will interviews do?) and talk to all its civil society members to really understand what the future role of China in issues of peace and war will be?”

VII

I suggest we need to come with a more instructive formulation for the necessities of fieldwork. This can be provided by the patrol dogs.

The questions formulated above are due to a gross oversimplification of what is understood as comprising field and fieldwork. Thinking about the work-in-practices of patrol dogs does not require the observer to take part in all different kinds of work-in-practices the dogs might be up to. Neither does it require witnessing all the work-in-practices these dogs enter during their work careers. The dogs do not need to be studied regularly. It will be useless to interview the dogs…

VIII

As banal as the last point may sound, it is an important one.

...Field/work excites a different set of methodological questions if approached from a non-conventional point of view. Whether one enters the field of, say, Chinese civil society or police dog training camp is not the point. Neither has the point anything to do with the length of such sojourn. Rather, the field has to do with bodily practices and these practices can not be studied by simply reading something (text or images). Doing fieldwork does not necessarily require leaving your office but it definitely requires trying

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6 The excerpt is taken from a review report to an article submission (personal archive).
to bracket any scientific presuppositions of the phenomenon under scrutiny. This will affect the research proposal and study plan, because the starting point is different. The advice might be: Forget the literature review and theories. Describe the practices-in-work in your material. As Latour (1988, 178) has famously expressed this: “In theory, theories exist. In practice, they do not.”

IX

Because dogs do not speak (a language understandable to human beings), analyst needs knowledge other than understanding talk. To give an impression of approximately two minutes of the actual working practices of Finnish K-9 units in the context of street protesting you may now connect to the YouTube web server and search for the material under the tags “Smash ASEM Helsinki”. One of the postings is especially relevant. Since I own no copyrights to this DV material I will not reproduce the video or the still images here. The video is not part of my research material but my data will be something of that kind. Now, tell me what happens on that video?

7

So you noticed the dogs? But was this only because I trigged you to search for the work the dogs were put to do? Even if we see the same dogs, we see them differently. For you they might be merely dogs, maybe frightening ones. For me they are dogs trained for specific purposes. For someone working or having worked with patrol dogs the video provides yet something more, maybe an occasion to relate ones own experiences on dogs of that type?

X/8

Here I grip and tug the leash. Analysts can engage in an endless quarrel about what they (think they) see, because they can add to the meaningfulness of the observed action. The people, once videoed, can not. On the course of their action they must see some things the same way. They must make some similar things out of the situation they are engaged in. The actors in the video must intersubjectively – that is by “paying attention to the conjoined dance of face-to-face significant otherness” (Haraway 2003, 41) – interpret the situation. Think about the dogs and how they are treated. None of bystanders, policemen or protestors goes and tries to stroke a dog. Generally, stroking is one of the things even inexperienced people do with dogs. But not always locally. Not now.

XI

Yet our shared interpretation has its limits. This is because we interpret the actions of fellow human and non-human beings through different membership knowledge. The membership knowledge I use to make sense of what happens on the video comes not from being a police or a demonstrator (feeling guilty I should) but having used some of my time playing with dogs and training them (mostly my own dogs and not for crowd control purposes). Walking dogs among fellow citizens has equipped me also to notice their attitudes and actions to dogs’ presence. Therefore, while not being able to know what policemen or protestors have in their minds when doing what they do I can nevertheless study the dog as a mediator of human parties of street protesting.

9

Participant observation is a learning process equipping the researcher to learn how the local parties interpret the situation.

7 The video is downloadable at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ON4p6L8JB0.
XII

Again, because my membership in dogland I know something of the tasks K-9 units can perform. The task they were performing at Smash ASEM is called crowd control, or more specifically they were assisting the police doing crowd control and arresting people. We might say that the dogs are shown more as deterrents than used as actual force.\(^8\) The use of dog is, therefore, always a context dependent problem – a problem that has to be solved every time K-9 units perform their tasks.

In principle, there are terms and conditions of use of dog as deterrent/force available to the officers, but the actual use of police dogs in connection with rowdy conduct and crowd control situations is a very delicate matter. In addition, it is that for both the users and targets of the force: Despite the regulations (local and universal) and hours of practise much must be left to the discretion of the K-9 handlers who will know best the limitations and capabilities of their own dogs (Sanders 2006). Despite the knowledge of their dogs functionality (or because of the abuse of this knowledge) the misuse of police dogs against protestors has resulted (and will happen to result) in the serious injuries to persons in the crowds, including bystanders.

XIII

One of the things making this walk perplex may be due to the fact what do we mean by seeing, reading and finally interpreting the video. The discussion has exclusively dealt with material captured by others. Is there a difference between witnessing and reporting? Because I have not been part of the data collection, there are various things that cannot be discussed from the participant point of view.

Some questions can be formulated, however, concerning how the preceding discussion should be taken into consideration when planning a research project on street protesting. The discussion on the naturalness of presence of various recording devices in the 21st century street life would allow, in principle, conducting the planned research with only partial openness towards the people studied. Even the kind of covert research (Calvey 2002) would, in practice, be a realistic option. Having no informed consent from either of the sides involved might be seen as an attempt to not taking the side mentally. Since I obviously cannot act as a police officer, I could pass as a protestor or bystander. On the other hand, having informed the police about by business might equip be with better chances to select best spots for filming. Equally obvious is the fact that gaining the needed membership knowledge in police(-dog) work insists invitation from the police to observe not just the work but also the training of police(-dog). These are choices with ethical effects I have to make before the material collection starts.

If reporting and witnessing (=seeing with ones own eyes) are taken to mean different things in relation to action reported/witnessed, do I want to convey that studying moving images somehow adds more to our understanding of ‘what really happened’? My appeal to using video material has nothing to do with the aim to know what really happened in terms of revealing ‘some truth’ of K-9 work. The validity of the data is not a major point for me.

Helen Lomax and Neil Casey (1998) show there are two main approaches to the questions around validity in video research. The first school of thought denies the presence of researcher or video having any influence on the phenomenon being researched, while the second sees videoing inevitably altering the study object.

\(^8\) You will also notice that biting does not occur on the invited video. Yet it could. The dog is commonly not seen as “an instrument of lethal force”, and the current law in Finland categorises the use of patrol dog as being “slighter or minor than warning shot or directed shot”. See Sisäasiainministeriön määräys 30.8.2005 and Sanders (2006, 164).
(thus usually calling forth alternative methods to validate the results, in practice triangulation). In accordance with Lomax and Casey I believe that both approaches are problematic (the first one is simply naive and the second one loses sight of the very point of using video in the first place) and that the issue of researcher/recording device/phenomenon is a contextual one.

Neither do I insist on going for ‘some inescapable meaning’ in the video to be spotted out. Rather, it is firstly the recordability and re-viewability of the video that helps me to capture and describe how, repeating Lorimer’s words, “life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions”. Dog does not sit or move simply because it has the physical capacity to do so. It sits (at least partly) of its training and the situational interpretation (of both handler and dog) and use of that achieved knowledge. By viewing the action only once it is impossible, even for the most experienced dog trainers, to explicate why and how the sitting occurred. Secondly, the practice of videoing helps organise ‘what happens’ in terms of choreography as the material is repeatable and re-presentable. To describe the choreography right, “oral command \(\rightarrow\) sit [act]” differs significantly from “body command \(\rightarrow\) sit [act]”, not to mention “sit [act] \(\rightarrow\) command/correction”. Thirdly, the type of material presents naturally occurring data in contrast to material produced in laboratory settings or for other purposes than mine (for example, a movie with a prewritten script). Note however, that this does not mean that the presence of researcher/camcorder would have not changed the phenomena. Naturalness means here simply that the phenomenon of demonstration would have happened even without the presence (researcher’s) camcorder (Potter 2002).

One of the special features of the visual material available on Smash ASEM has to do with the fact that street protesting is highly public activity. Cameras and camcorders are far away from being foreign objects in the 21st century street life. In fact, if paid more attention, their role as organisers of street choreography might turn out to be of paramount importance. In addition to occasional leisure use of camcorders (now that latest mobile phones are equipped with video facilities) demonstrators purposefully film the police in search for evidence of their misconduct. Likewise the police use same methods and film protestors in order to better spot out troublemakers, who can eventually be prosecuted in court (as was also the case in Smash ASEM). The choreography of protesting is filmed from several different locations – and for different purposes. Giving a definitive answer to whether the shooter of the clip indeed affected the action of those filmed proves to be impossible – and indeed irrelevant. Paying attention to every person operating camcorder or camera would make the situation untenable for those performing their tasks. In addition, part of the proper policing work is to fulfil the set tasks without being influenced by irrelevant disturbances (like someone filming you). Yet there is the possibility that the presence of cameras affects the way the tasks are performed (and yes, not paying attention to the camera is one way of paying attention to the camera too).

A researcher walking down the streets with his/her DV camera ready to capture the motions of things involved has a status somewhat different from the rest of the actors. As it is the case with any attempt to do participant observation, the presence of an ethnographer adds his/her action and knowledge to the phenomenon studied. First, there is a special reason behind his/her participation. Second, his/her observations of the case at hand will have an equally special motive and it will also require observing methods different from those of the other participants. Compared with other contexts (say videoing interaction

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9 This reminds us of the self-evident fact that a camcorder is both a recording device making a record for some purpose and a play back device offering to transform the filmed material to contexts and uses different from the original one. In both cases those who are filmed will stay on the film forever. See Laurier & Philo (2006).
between a salesman and a customer) using a camcorder to capture street protesting may not highlight researchers’ different status among the participants, maybe even vice versa. Still it will make his/her presence more visible as might be the case when the target of videoing collides with what is usually thought of worth/appropriate filming.

This means also that framing done during the filming makes a difference, because with the materials shown to colleagues the analysability is restricted only to what is visible on the screen. There is, for example, no way for us to say anything about the actions of those outside the screen or about the actions before entering the screen. Most of the stuff outside (and on) the screen remains a mystery for us. Most likely the presence of the bystander was not important for the person filming the scene. This would, of course, be a legitimate approach when wanting to know how the people filming the scene have interpreted it and what they have considered worth filming. I invited you to watch a particular video because the work the police dogs are doing can be spotted out, i.e. the frame chosen is close enough to the dogs. Yet, the angle in the video is wide enough to see some part of the material context in which the work takes place.

On the other hand, I guess it is exactly this bewilderment, not really knowing what is happening that makes the situation interesting. Not only for the bystanders on the street but for the out-of-the-street-researchers as well. The more you know about (or take for granted) the motives and intentions of the actors the more understandable, but also dull, this episode becomes. The question is then whether the role of scientific inquiry is simply to add a posteriori knowledge not available to the members at the situation to reveal the true facts? What happens to the situation at hand, the very object our inquiry is (claimed to be) directed toward? My claim is that taking these ‘best practices’ as one’s object of study would give an access to a host of practices-in-work that we otherwise miss in our analyses.

XIV

Finally, my aim is not to judge or call into question the methods used by police or demonstrators. The possibility of re-presenting and re-viewing the material is not used for liberating, democratising, correcting, perfecting or ironicising the use of police dogs. Rather, video material provides a useful method for capturing this minutia of changing contextuality and social life with its pauses and silences.

13

Aron Gurwitsch writes in correspondence with Alfred Schütz (August 16, 1944, cited in Natanson 1998, 3): “We thought, – I appeal to the philosopher Schutz – that man must be responsible for the world. That is what we learned from our master Husserl. […] And now we learn [from “The Stranger”] that that is not the point at all, that the point is to have recipes which allow one to deal with things. We wanted to understand the world and now we learn that the only thing that matters is a smooth and effortless operation in which certain results can be produced.”

XV

The outcome of this type of research will be a description of a kind of instructed seeing, not universal instructions for seeing or watching. The reader might now wonder whether the normative and critical characteristics of peace research are addressed at all. Ethnomethodology has constantly been directed with questions on its indifference towards ‘the political’. Part of the answer can be seen as an ethno-methodological counter critique toward some of explicitly political inquiries. If, for example, power and politics is everywhere, as Foucault has made us believe, they should also be discoverable from the video. If you can not see the micro-practices through which power is used, you should reconsider the methods by which you try to see them.
Maybe the type of politics the critics have hard times finding is simply missing. But that does not mean there is no politics. There is no politics in the sense “no, no, no … this is what you should do”. The reflexively political starts with a moral stance: should peace research restrictively prescribe receipts only for prescribed problems? Eventually much comes down to knowledge (in plural). What kind of knowledge peace researchers posit and how the knowledge can be used in our research? Relevant research on policing and police work is already available (Bittner 1967, Sacks 1972, Westermarland 2000, Ball 2005) and even the “animal capital” needed in K-9 work has been addressed (Sanders 2006) whereas the similar treatment of demonstrators’ methods in street protesting is more difficult to find (I assume many of peace researchers could provide this knowledge if they wanted to).

XVI

The task of (this) peace researcher (in this project) is to describe and explicate the collective orchestral choreography of street protesting through dogs. This requires continuous attempts to take multiple positions.

The interdisciplinary nature of peace research would make this a task worth trying because being politicians, civil servants, diplomats, civil activists, family members all provide contextual action that could be combined with the peace research attitude. This means both using our special membership knowledge (whatever it is, one of mine is dogs) and reflecting our action in relation to other existing and exercised membership knowledge in situ under scrutiny.

XVII

I have followed the insights of ethnomethodologists (such as) Eric Laurier and Barry Brown (2004) in an attempt to build up a framework that would be about an empirically guided re-examination in an attempt to ground more abstract accounts of security and street protesting.

I notice being totally tangled up with my leash, not knowing who is walking who. So I’ll just have to get back where I started. But do not worry; dogs have to be taken out at least twice a day…

To do so, the need for an inclusion of non-human agency has been stated. Paraphrasing Laurier (2003), with this project I am not “really going to resolve disputes [on security] that have dogged the social scientists for a century from [my study of crowd control by doggy means] … “but [I] may be able to respecify what appear to be big abstract problems into worldly, ordinary practical problems”. Solving these ordinary problems is a challenge for peace researchers. In its universal cry for social justice peace research should zoom in to the minutiae of street protesting in order to get the material to analyse the practices of order/security making. This requires the analyst to break the choreography of street protesting in parts, describe it, and see it again as a whole. Some of the issues discussed have broader relevance, that is, I do not mind them to be taken seriously even by researchers not interested in street demonstrations in general nor the work done by police dogs in particular. If fieldwork is seen as and trough its everydayness – by everydayness I mean the phenomena waiting around us to be analysed – my suspicion is that some of the conventional approaches to peace and conflict become meaningless whereas some new ones acquire their readiness to go beyond secondary treatment of, say, protesting, peace and security.

References


Flip-flops in the snow: the “B-people”, lines of life, interrupted intentions

Eeva Puumala

Abstract

This text sets out to explore the ethics of writing and methodologies of reporting “field” experiences and interviews. It is based on ethnographic material collected in order to study the political technology of lines as it appears on the bodies of asylum-seekers who have received a temporary residence permit in Finland. The complexity of the stories told to me has led me to explore the possibilities of “sensuous scholarship”, in which heart and head mix. Thus, in this paper I explore the possibilities of poetic representation of interviews both as a means of resistance to hegemonic narratives, stable subjectivities and as a means of scrutinizing power relations when doing research on other people.

Introduction – bedevilled by complexity

Uncertainty, indecisiveness and fragility. This is the mental framework from which I am writing. When I decided to do an ethnographic study of the political technology of lines as it appears, is produced and challenged on the bodies of asylum-seekers, I could not anticipate the future. I was interested in the idea of interrupted lives, in asylum-seeking bodies living lines in Finland. Eager to start my project, I applied and got research permits to three reception centres, in which I was going to “do” participant observation and interviews. It was in this physical setting I was to meet people who have a temporary residence permit (hereafter the B-permit). The B has been issued at them for even though the ground for asylum is not found in their accounts, their deportation is not possible due to technical reasons. This type of residence permit was introduced to the Finnish migration policy only in 2004.

In this sense, they are both free and not free, both legal and illegitimate – inside and outside at the same time. In my approach the distinctions between an economic migrant, an asylum-seeker, a refugee, and an illegal immigrant are not relevant as such. I am not about to evaluate the legitimacy of their asylum-applications, nor their reasons for coming. I am interested in the embodied, felt experiences that the status raises in them, and the ways in which they negotiate their being in the world. They themselves conceptualise their state as being a refugee or an asylum-seeker, but in administrative terms they are neither. They are the B-people – the rejected but tolerated. Theirs is a legal status, but a status that bears with it very limited rights. In their experience-world: it is a limbo.

I never intended to come up with a detached study, nor had I sacrificed too much worry to issues of validity, objectivity or strict disciplinary boundaries. Instead what I wanted to do was to remain open to the “field” and see what would emerge. In terms of “reporting” my “findings” I kept in mind Laurel Richardson’s (2002: 878) notion that “no textual staging is ever innocent”. So, I was thinking of writing narratives of the stories told to me. That was my plan. But the further I go the more uncertain and indecisive I become. I am worried of colonizing their experience, of becoming a Spivakian epistemic soldier (Spivak 1988). Or, of driving myself into the margins of scientificity. Why I am worried about the latter, I cannot explain, but I am.

The trouble stems already from framing my argument in terms of discourses on immigration. Immigration evokes emotion, passion and politics. The current European (as referring to the policies of the EU), and the Finnish asylum worlds live in the mental space of credibility, lies, inaccuracies, contradictions, flaws and untruths. This makes representing these...
narratives told even harder. Where do I want to position myself or to be positioned? How to frame the argument? How to do justice to these (embodied) experiences? The feeling and corporeality of living in line? How to write without victimizing about the “culture of self-harm”, mental disturbances and self-inflicted pain so prevalent in the situation of the “B-people”? How to tell without demonizing about the multidirectional stories that defy any simple, straightforward interpretation? I am terrified that I might not be saying the “right” things. Just as they are terrified of not saying the right things when they are first interviewed on the basis of their asylum-application. For them, the stakes are higher, however.

What I have found, got involved in, is seemingly a whole other world. To me, it seems to be a world in which, in Caroline Moorehead’s (2006: 147) words, “nothing is what it seems, and nothing stays the same”. It has taken me time to understand it, but I have felt it from early on. The stories I have heard, the things I have witnessed, the people I have touched and who have touched me, the smell of that world; these have effected me. The exhaustive thoroughgoingness of living in this world has caused me to feel alone and very fragile. It is a world which has a very dark side, and it is easy to be swallowed by that darkness. It is easy to sink in too deep. However, it is not a world without any light. It is a world with slender distinctions, and yet a world which represents lines very concretely in flesh. How can I explain it?

On the technology of lines and epistemic soldiers

As the outcome of the technology of the line asylum-seekers are often seen as “problems” to be solved or “threats” to be countered. There is a hegemonic voice telling their story, which often treats them as masses, groups – in my case the “B-people”. With their help I hope to learn about the intersections of biography, society and politics (see Riessman 2002: 697):

> What we call personal troubles are located in particular times and places, and individuals’ narratives about their troubles are works of history as much as they are about individuals, the social spaces they inhabit, and the societies they live in. (Mills, cited in Riessman 2002: 697)

I am curious to touch their lives, explore my own reactions to their stories, and try to imagine myself in a similar situation. I am trying to learn something about being a human through listening their meaning making processes and them making sense of their status. I am trying to transcend my experience to understand others’ lives (Moreira 2007: 53).

The political dimension of my aspiration is to understand the technology of lines a bit better. The power to draw lines produces subjectivities but it also discriminates between them. It helps to name and to assign subjects to certain spaces conditioned and characterised by limitations, rules and norms. (Walker 2006: 65–66). As hinted at before, I approach the status B as materializing a lived line. The temporariness of this status separates these individuals from the possibility to claim full membership in the Finnish society. And, by doing so it authorises discriminations. The technology of the line is about belongings and exclusions. Including and excluding are crucial questions in how the knowledge of migration is produced and used.

Line drawing is about authority and power. It is about managing bodies (Dillon 2004: 42). In a Foucauldian sense, lines are representational moves, which materialise in flesh (Foucault 1990: 133–160). This drawing creates corporealis. The bodies of these individuals, located at a line that is seen to separate inside from outside, are sites of political struggles (Salter 2006: 178). These struggles are fought over meaning and knowledge. They represent the technology of lines that seeks to govern, discipline and make bodies obedient. This technology works not only in drawing concrete borders, boundaries and exclusions, but also by institutionalizing thought (see Foucault 1977). Line drawing has effects on the processes of knowledge production, meaning making and interpretation. In Richardson’s words “[p]eople make sense of their lives through the stories that are available to them, and they attempt to fit their lives into the available stories” (quoted in Moreira 2007: 52). It is the aspect of availability that shifts the focus from the dichotomy true/false to the question of possibility and mentality.

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3 It is not easy to be a gatekeeper, or more poetically a hangman of hope, either.
The stories that are told to me do not fit with the stories familiar to me, on which I have relied before. I have encountered the problem where what I am experiencing, feeling and beginning to understand, does not go together with my experience world. This has made me consider my own “ethico-political responsibility” (Edkins 2005: 67) towards my interviewees both as a researcher and as a human being.

In international relations (IR), the disciplinary framework from which I am writing, the position of the researcher is still quite often left unquestioned. However, considering the position of the researching self is a question of ethics. We need to take into account our own “assumptions about how we are located as subjects in the first place, and how power is implicated in this from the start” (Edkins 2005: 64). Composing research is also about the relationship between knowledge and power. Who gets to speak? Why? And how does the speaking subject claim to know?

I want to approach the identities of my research subjects as “performative struggles over the meanings of experience” (Langellier, cited in Riessman 2002: 701). In the interviews people counter the official subjectivities and subject positions made available and imposed on them by their B-status. In questioning the line, I am interested actually in power, knowledge and selfhood intersecting and becoming inseparable (Edkins 2004: 64). Their shifting strategies of narration, the fluidity of their stories are ways of coping with the situation in which they find themselves (Riessman 2002: 701). The way of “reporting” those stories, and thus respecting the viewpoints of my interviewees and their ways of meaning making became crucial. It is not, however, possible to step outside these power relations (Edkins 2005: 68). How to position myself in this constantly changing power-knowledge-selfhood matrix? This is when my struggles truly began. Lines do not only separate, but they connect as well. Experience touches. It does not conform to conceptual categories. It implies lines lived.

**Situating the self, learning to manage migration**

*We are, in the present juncture of history, faced with mechanisms of control that are transnational in reach, that define politics through a discourse of fear and unease, that seem to permeate, circumscribe and monitor intellectual activity, that manipulate and codify the public sphere, that use emergency legislation to incarcerate those deemed a danger to safety and security, that juridically legitimize the use of torture, and that confine thousands of nameless individuals to detention and internment. (Jabri, cited in Campbell 2005: 130.)*

The “B-people” come from areas of conflict and war. Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia. While listening to their stories, memories and experiences, I have to reflect constantly on how to respectfully manage the complexity of lived experience in relation to theoretical debates and migration policies? After doing some reading – official statements, guidelines, reports, theories, and philosophy – I felt overwhelmed. Migration is a very uncertain and unstable topic. It is also a highly politicized and securitized one. Often studies situate asylum-seekers in mental frameworks familiar to state-centric political thought. What was to be my position then? The politicized nature of the issue made me think about the way of representing, writing about these lives. How was I even supposed to call “them”? Whatever I chose to do, I was between a rock and a hard place. And simultaneously shifting away from what I felt I wanted to do.

It seemed to me I was dealing with two sides of the same coin, but it was impossible for me to see both sides at the same time. I could not form a clear picture, to manage migration. How to choose my stand? And where would the corporeality of lines fit in? To make things even worse, in terms of my scientific place, I soon noticed that the narratives I was told did not have clear plotlines. They were ruptured accounts; there were immense gaps and cracks, filled with detailed information, but impossible to turn into unitary stories. In hindsight, this is nothing surprising. “Refugee life is ripe with rumour”, writes Moorehead (2006: 136). It is a life that depends on “good” stories, narratives that would entitle to an asylum, to normal life, a better one. Thus, why should it be any wonder that stories circulate? “Good” stories are exchanged “among people terrified that their own real story is not powerful enough”. How easy and natural – and I might add how humane – it is to shape the past in such a way that it provides more hope for a better future? (ibid.)
This does not mean, however, that refugee stories are all invented. This is not a question of spotting the inaccuracies, finding the “true” asylum-seekers in the horde of “asylum-shoppers” and “abusers”. Refugee life is also a different mentality. Narratives are only implied (see Richardson 1994: 8). The ruptures and turning-points in life change the meanings attached to past events. This applies to all of us. When we experience a disruptive life event – be it illness, divorce, a loved-one’s death, war or displacement – it changes our narration. These kinds of events can also alter person’s self-understanding and the ways of positioning oneself to others. What seems to be inaccurate, impossible and unbelievable from my point of view, is not that from theirs – it might be just the way they experienced. Thus, the question is not about truth, but about translation. Interviewing people about the different meanings of “being an asylum-seeker” is like asking them to translate an experience that by nature resists translation.

Claiming to know something about the lives that my research subjects live is tricky. For one thing, they are not so eager to accept my authorship. In fact, they often challenge me openly. The knowledge-power-selfhood relationship is a complex one (see Foucault 1977). Both parties are involved in the web of power, but I would be negating the working of power, if I refused to see the power relations embedded in our encounters. In principle, nothing keeps me from sticking to my original plan and writing narratives. I have tried, but I have noticed that then I easily lose the fragmented nature of their stories. Writing the interviews in prose-like format would be probably the most common practice for me to follow, and then through cutting, pasting, editing and smoothing I would be able to present my “findings”. This would, in my view, be susceptible for these “findings” have not been obvious, far from it. I would like the reader to question my choices and look for alternative interpretations.

I have been blown away by the plurality of the voices, finesses, sensualities and emotionalities present in the interviews. Capturing this complex subtlety or subtle complexity without losing the line that however runs through the stories seemed a mission impossible for me. And, if I could not make sense of these stories to myself, how was I to retell this lived experience? Make the reader feel and understand what I had begun to feel and sense the complexity I had come to appreciate? (see Richardson 1994, Hill 2005, Rosenblatt 2002, Smith 1999 and Ellis & Berger 2002.)

Vulnerability through composing poetry

Writing, then, is never innocent (Richardson 2002: 879). Representing is presenting something anew, not about mirroring reality. In representation we take part in a wide range of social and political practices, which according to Rabinow, “constitute the modern world, with its distinctive concerns with order, truth and the subject” (Rabinow 1986: 240). The way of representing in writing became thus central. What was I to make mean? Where to see the meaning? What to silence?

Opting to write poetry means that I try to place myself in-between, on a line: in-between subject and object, fact and fiction, truth and make-belief, and stepping quite close, if not over, disciplinary boundaries. Am I out of line doing this? I am hoping to show you, how in my interviews the question of representation is a question of power. In the interviews with the research subjects, representation and meaning-making has become sort of a battlefield (see Kvale 2006: 487). Many times I have posed questions that they themselves are not ready to accept. They are questioning me about my work and life philosophy, as well as challenging my accounts, my views and being. And I question them about their interpretations, disagree with them. However, we also agree with one another. We laugh together, and sometimes we cry together. Poetic representation allows me to include not only voiced experience, but also silences, pauses, tones, thoughts, and emotions. In the interviews, for either my lack of

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4 Actually, it is a bit misleading to call our encounters “interviews” at all, as most of the time I have tried to frame the interaction as informal as possible, leaving the research subject space to raise issues important to him. The academically correct term might be an open-ended interview, but maybe “conversation”, “talk” or “discussion” might be more true to the nature of these interactions. However, to stay cognizant of the power hierarchies embedded in our interactions, I choose to use the more traditional and established concept encouraging the reader, however, to keep in mind the informal and unstructured framework.
interviewing skills, the lack of willingness to voice their mind, or for some other reason unknown to me, there is always a “muffled subtext” present (Mazzei 2003). There are absences, which take form in avoidance, denial, posing counter-questions, generalizing, refusing to answer. In these silences and absences the participants are speaking, telling me things without voicing them (see Mazzei 2003: 363).

I have not been able to “do” interviews as I planned, but I have lived and felt interviews. It has not been a clean business. The participants do not open up easily, even though it is them who make the initiative for me to interview them. And, I am worried of on the one hand evoking painful memories and thoughts, and on the other being too pushy, thus evoking memories from their asylum interviews. For many of them, these asylum interviews are the first interviews ever, and they have a terrible reputation. Thus, the mere word “interview” has a lousy echo. These interviews aim at discovering the “truth”, while I aim at learning about lived, embodied experience. I have asked for their stories, feelings and thoughts, not the “truth”. After all, evaluating the truth value of what has been told is not interesting or important from my viewpoint. The things that are voiced appear for a reason. These experiences addressed tell me something about the ways in which they themselves make meaning, what they consider meaningful and what kind of things are important in their lives. Whether they are telling the “truth”, making it up, or telling me what they think I want to hear is subsidiary.

I quickly learned that the act of interviewing involves a complex choreography, which I cannot practice beforehand. We construct not only our subjectivities but also those of each other in these interviews (Briggs 2002: 915). However, we are not equal partners in our interaction. By having the authority of representing these interviews to others, I can colonize their experiences (see Spivak 1988 & Moreira 2007). I am not so sure if I, in fact, can avoid colonizing them. What I can do, instead, is to openly acknowledge my own role in this meaning making and to challenge both myself and you, the reader, to look for alternative interpretations. Composing poetry means also revealing my own fragility and vulnerability (Humphreys 2005: 851). It constitutes something which Paul Stoller has termed “sensuous scholarship”, in which head and heart mix, and one’s being is opened to the world (cited in Denton 2005: 757).

For me, poetry is a felt and embodied method. As such it is in line with my own experiences of composing research. According to Laurel Richardson (2002: 879) “the body responds to poetry. It is felt.” Poetry bridges the gap between the Cartesian division to body and mind. It is (at least) two-directional, reaching both to the concrete, sensual outer world and to the mental interior world (See Brady 2004: 631). Lived experience is about the plurality of meanings and feelings. Thus, poetry can function not only as an alternative way of writing, but also an alternative way of knowing and acting. Poetics resists frozen form, just like the world of the reception centre: it does not stay the same, nothing is as it seems.

Just when I think I might be on to something, I am tackled by the “objectivity dilemma”. In Walt Smith’s words:

> When the reality in which I am participant-observing is not objective, but is emotion-full rather than emotion-less, and when that reality is not separable from my own being, how do I discipline the effects of this emotional dimension to minimize my distortion of that reality, while still fully accounting for the significance of the passions that others value-experience? (Smith 2002: 461, italics in the original.)

You might wonder why to bother with objectivity at all. I cannot escape my subjective being, so why not just take it as a starting point? Objectivity is a powerful myth, not easy to leave unnoted in scientific writing. But I do not believe in it: just as I do not “account for all those women sawed in half, elephants disappearing on stage, rabbits popping out of hats”

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5 I have always also offered abstention from answering in my interviews, one reason of stating this openly is to differentiate the situation from police interrogations and the interviews conducted by the Directorate of Immigration.

6 Only in three cases the person has been approached by the staff of the reception centre. This was in the early stage of my research, when “the word was not yet out”. Later on, as I have presented my research in meetings, talked with people in the corridors, lobbies while doing participant observation, and as they have told to others about me, I have merely made myself available and they have come to me if they have wanted to talk. This, of course, affects on the material I have gathered, for not all are equally active. However, this has been also a measure of trust-building from my part.
Flip-flops in the snow: the "B-people", lines of life, interrupted intentions

(Brady 2004: 637). Brady’s argument is that we are convinced by objectivity for it is “a convenient fiction”. Altering the language of representation, for Brady (2004: 628), changes the analytic game itself. Above I have concentrated on the ability of poetry to capture the complexity of experience. Besides this, the reason to write poetry has been, using Richardson’s (2002: 883) categories, transforming normative discourse and actions, and relieving emotional pressure. In poetry-writing I am not only writing the other, but rewriting myself (Richardson 1992). Writing poetry has consequences not only for others, but for my self as well. A poem allows me to write my embodied presence in the narratives, it allows the appearance of multiple voices – shifting I’s, you’s they’s, and we’s – which blur the notion of single and stable subjectivity. One does not know anymore who is who and what is what. Welcome to the world of lived experience. [This is the most comfortable I have felt in a long time.]

Poetry writing is a practice of shifting my self, of expressing my own shifting subjectivity. Poetic representation is a form of resistance (to hegemonic narratives and ways of narrating) to me, just as shifting and changing stories can be understood as my research subjects practising resistance. Poetry allows and encourages change and interpretation. I do not have to remain the same, and I don’t have to ask my interviewees to remain the same either. None of us has a stable identity or one single identity. Poetry is a means to try to respect the multiple facets and directions – appearing contradictions – that are present in these lines of life which I am invited to enter. These narratives are full of broken, fragmented passages, which convey the vulnerability of both my interviewees and my lives (see also Moorehead 2006: 197–198). Theirs are ruptured lives, lives in line. But at the same time these narratives function as compositions of lifelines, hope, joy and future. Through narration that includes seeming contradictions and silences, these “failed” asylum-seekers negotiate spaces and subjectivities. This negotiation is also seen in simple acts – like wearing flip-flops in the snow. These seemingly meaningless details evoke feelings of home, familiarity. Such small things and the unspoken can be understood as echoes from the past, testimonials of the past. These absences in their narratives, them telling me that I am asking things that cannot be described in words, provide valuable aspects to their lived experiences. In the poem *Lines of life*, the meanings of being a refugee or being born and raised in war were difficult questions to answer. At first they refused to answer at all, but later on returned to the issue. As if these two things were similar to how Moorehead (2006: 156) describes poverty: “it is an absence, a nothingness not easy to put into words”. Having a B-status basically means that you are put to wait. This waiting is a constant theme that surfaces in our discussions and interviews. Waiting separates them from what was and what they hope would be. It is their line, their state of in-betweenness. In their words it is “hopeless waiting, meaningless waiting”. It gains its meaning only by the lack of it.

Poetry is also a way to explore in a non-linear way what living lines means. It requires and enables reading between the lines. Poetic representation, as mentioned above, made me feel comfortable with myself. It has been a lifeline to me. The methods we use in our science-writing imply particular kinds of transactions and engagements with the world (Atkinson & Coffey 2002: 807). Poetry does not stay the same, but it is “a process through which we come to know ourselves, or become unfamiliar to ourselves” (Richardson 1994: 10). It is a means of feeling with words. Poetry is my way of feeling what it is to live a temporary life, it is about me negotiating my disillusionments with myself and my being-in-the-world.

**Lines of life**

“We need to talk to you. We have been looking for you.” This is how we got started. The TV with an Indian film on is silenced. I leave my shoes in the company of eight flip-flops. How can they wear those at this time of the year, I wonder. Almost everybody does, though. Like a trace from what once was, home. Flip-flops in the snow. “A glass of tea?” As a guest, as in an ordinary visit to a friend’s house. In the centre, their home. Photos on the shelves, a small and lonely-looking red chair in the doorway, next to an empty carton of milk, half to be seen, in the dustbin. Thick, soft carpets cover the floor. I bury my toes in as they question my motives and intentions. These five men and me learning to be with one another; negotiating the space of what might appear. It took us four weeks, five emails, three talks and four cancellations to get here. For them the journey has been longer still.

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Oruzgān, Sar-e, Ghaznī, Kabul:
Afghanistan.
We all have it.
The B.
Unjust.
Unjust and unwise.
Finland has never been an attractive country for refugees.
When they interview they point out flaws and they make their decisions but they don’t bother ask you again or allow you to come and appear before the judge in the court to explain why those flaws exist you have reasons for them sometimes there isn’t any contradiction, but they think there is.
In the interviews we only answer the questions asked. Most of them not really important. Not relevant. Most of the time silly questions “Why you came to Finland? What if we send you back?” Questions that are in their interest. Being as a police, or being as an official. Try to show off – being efficient, doing their job well.
Under the Taliban regime, well (silence) It was, yeah… Chopping off someone’s hands Stoning someone until death Blow his brains off, with stones Mujahedin were even worse. The same, now in power slaughtered in the district of Afshar, south-west of Kabul 8,000 men, women and children. Cut off their breasts, cut off their heads, and yeah, so babies...

[Nausea. Chills. I don’t want to know. Afraid of what might come next.]

“We should work to remove the dictators, to remove the threat.” In theory it sounds really good. Really fancy, and yeah. (silence) Why are you not doing what you say? So, this is the irony. [A very harsh irony.]
Yeah, bitter.

[Can I understand what you tell me?]
I just don’t know I can’t say
I would say no
things seem or sound really
unbelievable or unimaginable I don’t want to
talk about those very gruesome things
because it’s,
yeah, really nasty.

[Are you comfortable talking about this?]
They involve your family.
Persecute and punish
the whole family. And you know
that there are, these families
close, big families, living together:
brothers, uncles, aunts.
Everyone suffers.
This is a problem for everyone
who gets into some kind of problems.
So,
we should not go into personal things.
[Remembered the note
taped on his chest:
“Better to die suddenly,
than to die
little by little.”
It all happened not too long ago.]

[This, I’m not comfortable asking.]
Many people have died
after they have survived in their own country.
Could not survive on the way to a safe place.
Died on their way.
To some safe place.
People have,
yeah, drowned.
In rivers, in oceans. People have
come with those balloon-boats, yeah?
People have crossed the sea with those boats,
Balloon-boats
Almost… many.
From Turkey to Italy or Greece.
Just imagine.
And they would pump it with their own mouth.
From Turkey to Italy on those boats.
Very few reach safely.

[On the shelf, yellow narcissuses, made of plastic;
and a statue of a naked white woman.
Toothbrush and toothpaste.
A big, white box of medicine.]

They said the district I came from,
it is safe
and you can return.
And, I wondered.
I don’t care if it’s safe or unsafe it is not safe for me I have problems there.
I have talked to you about my problems and you are telling me it is safe who the hell cares!?
Where ever they would return me, once you are there in Afghanistan, yeah. You’re dead.

They don’t even think for a second that they could be wrong. Incorrect.
Or that we could also be right.
We could also be telling the truth.

Family.
The most important thing.
Your safety. Their safety.
And that you have a, yeah,
a normal life a peaceful life a career.
All of us have one thing in common, we all strive to live a normal life.
And I guess we have a right to have a normal life. Just like any other person.

Being a refugee or having been born and raised in war, these two things can’t be explained in words. I’m trying my best, but I can’t.
So many, so many things.
This stress, mental stress.
You are away from your family.
Uncertain about your future.
Your safety.
And yeah, that people look at you with a different kind of, you know.
(silence)
This feeling of powerlessness.
That someone else has your destiny in his hands.
And he can do whatever he wants to.
He can… If he wanted, he could give you that opportunity.
Give you that life, normal life. Give you your only dream.
And if he wanted, he could destroy and finish everything.

[A sleepless night]
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Some Philosophical Considerations for Peace Studies. The Value of Pragmatism.

Alberto Valiente Thoresen

Abstract

Peace Studies are generally presented as normative sciences and are characterised differently by philosophers of knowledge and so is their legitimacy. This legitimacy starts where philosophers draw a line between positive knowledge and other sorts of knowledge, and which arguments they use for drawing this line. History of thought shows that this borderline between positive and other sorts of knowledge moves together with the debates on contemporary trends in universities/research centres, technological developments and the mainstream philosophical paradigms in academia. This paper limits itself with suggesting ontological and epistemological considerations, which have implications on the philosophy and practice of Peace Studies.

1. The current context: The path to Post-modernism

Before engaging on a discussion of philosophical considerations for doing Peace Studies, we need to explain the context of intellectual debates that have rendered the philosophical conditions in which the academic world is now, because many of them still impose challenges or represent opportunities for Peace Studies. The most convenient way of presenting these debates is in relation to the distinction between positive and other sorts of knowledge. Albeit not the only ones, there are five fundamental references that are useful to establish an understanding about contemporary discussions concerning the distinction between positive and other sorts of knowledge. These are David Hume, characterised by Farhang Zabhee (1973) as the “Modern Percusor of Empiricism”; Alfred Ayer and his Logical Positivism; Karl Popper’s and his form of Post-positivism; the Frankfurt School of critical thought and Lyotard’s Post-modernism.

1.1 Hume’s Empiricism

Basically, Hume’s empiricism states that the only significant knowledge is based on experience and by this he means that which is perceived by the senses. In other words, empirical knowledge is that one which can be verified by sensible experience. In Hume’s ontology there is an idea of "Self" for human beings. There is also a natural idea of an “external world”. Further, according to David Hume’s epistemology, all that human beings can know are ideas about the external world and themselves, but ultimately only ideas. In this sense, Hume distinguishes between knowledge that is the result of relations of ideas and the one that results from matters of fact. The latter constitute the basis of empirical knowledge. But ideas of facts are conceived in a discrete sense, not as a continuous flow. Therefore, individuals do not get formal impressions about the consequences of one fact on another (Fowler 1998: 59 and 63) and ‘causality’ is only established “through constant conjunction of the idea of the cause with that of the effect” (Fowler 1998: 58). Using this constant conjunction, we can get in touch with the external world. But this knowledge is problematic, because it is only an idea or a series of ideas and there is ultimately no evidence about the existence of the impressions about our existence. Therefore, Hume advocates a mitigated scepticism about what we experience as reality. We really cannot know if and how the external world or we ourselves really exist, since all we have is an idea of what that is. However, for Hume, in a practical sense, constant conjunction of ideas of perceived facts is the best available way we have to develop good habits to relate to that which we experience as the external world. However, as our knowledge of things, this strategy has a limited use. There are certain areas of life where it is not applicable. These are those areas of knowledge that demand a higher level of constant conjunction to establish relations of causality. In other words, the further away we come from sense perception, the more constant
conjunction that is needed to establish cause. Therefore, when it comes to transcendental knowledge, it is not possible to speak of matters of fact, since this sort of knowledge is too dissociated from immediate sense perception. When it comes to transcendental knowledge, all we have are relations of ideas. Therefore, according to Hume, metaphysics is impossible, or at least too complex for us to engage in it and obtain useful results.

As we can see, Hume’s distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact leads to divide human knowledge sharply in empirical knowledge: positive or descriptive and other sorts of knowledge: normative, metaphysical, religious, and so on. Empirical knowledge is achieved through relations of matters of fact without any previous ideas of the world (experiments) and relations of ideas with no previous assumptions about the world (mathematics). Relations of ideas that are not mathematics do not lead to descriptive knowledge, because their level of conjunction is too complex and dissociated from experience.

Hume represents a crucial point in philosophy as having attempted to synthesise the antithesis of Locke’s empiricism and Berkeley’s idealism (Ayer 2001). His synthesis however tilted towards Locke’s empiricism. But this discussion was by no means over after Hume. For example, Kant took it up and after him many others (Popper 1935: 11). Empiricism persists until our days in many ways and it influences the way Peace Studies are conceived. Concretely, empiricism has served to de-legitimise the aspects of Peace Studies that do not deal with directly observable phenomena, like the hermeneutic or critical aspects of Peace Studies. In the 20th Century a strong version of empiricism is the one put forward by Alfred Ayer.

1.2 Alfred Ayer’s Logical Positivism

Alfred Ayer seeks to deny the possibilities of transcendental knowledge on the basis of logic and not on the basis of the limits of our experience as Kant did. According to Ayer, Kant’s solution encouraged the search for a transcendental world; his would not (Ayer 1971: 46-47). This led to what Zubiri called the “logification of intelligence” (Pintor Ramos in Zubiri, 1994). As Wittgenstein said, the limits of what we can know must be set (Wittgenstein 1922: Preface), and Ayer does this with his logical doctrine.

Ayer establishes the limits of knowledge within that which can be verified. For him, verifiability is determined by significance and this can be factual, literal or emotional. Factual significance refers to observations that can lead to accept a proposition as true; literal significance refers to tautologies, or obvious statements, i.e. \(2 + 2 = 4 \land 4 = 2 + 2 \rightarrow 2 + 2 = 2 + 2\); and finally emotional significance is based on feelings or considerations of the future. Emotional significance is not the basis for verifiability (Ayer 1971: 48).

Verifiability can be strong or weak. Strong verifiability is given by true experience whereas weak verifiability is what we consider probable. In practice there can only be weak verifiability, because all propositions are just probable hypotheses. No sentence can be convincingly refuted anymore than it can be verified. Further, our propositions can be of two sorts a) A priori: They are prior to experience or b) A posteriori: They are after having experienced something (Ayer 1971: 48-56). According to Ayer, the only valid a priori statements are the tautologies, because they postulate the obvious. A priori statements that are not tautologies are non-sense and metaphysics is composed of such statements. An example of this for Ayer is the metaphysics that confuse existence with attributes that things have. But according to Ayer, we cannot proceed by conceiving notions of things that do not exist and then wonder about their existence, because things either exist or not, either they can be experienced or they cannot. For Ayer, the existence of something (i.e. the transcendental world) should not be questioned through association of a priori synthetic propositions, but through experience and tautologies (i.e. analytical a priori propositions). In this sense, for Ayer, it is unfortunate that not all words have a corresponding existing entity, because this encourages thinkers to proceed by conceiving a notion and then discussion if it possesses the quality of existence, a mistake that results in a lot of non-sensical a priori words or empty words that are uttered or written and have caused problems in philosophy.

For Ayer, philosophy should not be confused with metaphysics. The former is based on true observations, experience and tautologies, whereas the latter on transcendental knowledge.
which is not possible to verify, feelings and emotions. Moreover, another mistake should be avoided, which implies confusing metaphysics with poetry. These things are not the same, since poets use non-sensical and false propositions on purpose with the express intention of creating some sort of emotional response in the reader. But the metaphysic does not do the same, because the metaphysician claims to be making true, factual or literal statements (Ayer 1971: 56-61)

Ayer’s Logical Positivism was an attempt to get rid of metaphysics with a logical doctrine. This logical doctrine divided statements in a) meaningful ones: based on experience and tautologies, and b) non-sensical ones: all a priori knowledge that is not maths. As we have suggested before, this way of seeing things imposes challenges for Peace Studies, which incorporates sorts of knowledge about what is i.e. experience and tautologies, but also about what ought to and could be i.e. a priori knowledge (a desire for peace) that is not analytical. Therefore, there are aspects of Peace Studies that are not limited to experience or tautologies and Ayer would consider these aspects non-sensical.

1.3 Karl Popper’s Post-Positivism

Karl Popper is considered to be the most important philosopher of science in the 20th Century. He was born in Vienna in 1902. He knew well but distanced himself from the Wiener Kreis (Vienna Circle) and Logical Positivism. His major achievement was to suggest an innovative and conclusive solution to the problem of demarcation of knowledge, which differed from the empiricist ones that had been suggested before (Thornton 2006).

Some empiricist solutions discussed above are Hume’s and Ayer’s. For Hume, knowledge can be matters of fact or relations of ideas. The first are the only useful ones to develop good habits since they can be related to original impressions. However, induction from matters of fact is not conclusively possible, since all we know are conjunctions of ideas, and this originates his mitigated scepticism about reality. For Ayer, there can be meaningful and non-sensical statements. Meaningful statements are the result of experience or analytical a priori propositions like the ones in mathematics. Synthetic a priori statements like metaphysics are nonsense.

Regarding these two versions of empiricism, Popper accepts Hume’s critique of induction1, because he agrees with Hume on that it is never possible to conclusively induce truth about the world, since the world might change and our conclusions about something might become outdated. In other words, verification is not conclusively possible. But Popper also thought that observations (and therefore verification) are always influenced by theory, even by synthetic a priori statements. Since these concepts are only ideal aspirations that cannot be fully exercised in practice, it is unpractical to use induction and verification as the principles by which science is separated from non-science. On the other hand, falsification of theories is conclusively possible. Popper argued for an imbalance between verificationism and falsificationism, because propositions cannot be conclusively verified, but they can be conclusively falsified. So for Popper, the distinction between science and non-science is more clearly given by the possibility to falsify theories. Therefore, the demarcation problem becomes a practical matter. It is easier to distinguish science from other sorts of knowledge and to make it grow in empiric content, if all scientific theory indicates falsifiers and corroborators. Knowledge that does not indicate falsifiers and corroborators is simply not science, though this does not mean that it is meaningless knowledge. As we have suggested, Popper thought that theories, even non-scientific ones, influence the way we observe phenomena and falsify/corroborate theories. Scientific knowledge increases by “deductively testing hypothetical theories” (Popper 1935: 9) to see if they are falsified or corroborated. In this sense, science becomes an evolutionary struggle, since the theories that survive are the ones that have more empirical content, because they have been falsified on fewer occasions, and therefore have more predictive power. An example of this is how in physics the theories of relativity overcame Newtonian physics (Popper 1935: 3-26)

1 “Since I reject inductive logic I must also reject all these attempts to solve the problem of demarcation” (Popper 1935: 12).
This means that experience does not only determine theory, but it only delimits it. It shows which theories are false and which are corroborated. But theories also influence experience. All knowledge is to some degree transitory and hypothetical. However it is possible and necessary to distinguish science from non-science. But non-science is not meaningless or non-sensical. Logical Positivists tried to get rid of metaphysics through a logical doctrine. In other words, they tried to get rid of metaphysics by calling it names (Popper 1935: 13-16)

Metaphysics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and other non-falsifiable theories might not be science now. But they could be if technology and society advance in a way that makes them subject to falsification. The distinction between science and non-science is moveable by social change (Thornton 2006). Imagination, intuition, deduction, and other faculties mistakenly regarded as “un-empirical” can and are necessary for the advancement of science. Current examples are a) String Theory in theoretical physics, b) its relations to metaphysics and C) the need for qualitative methods to formulate testable hypotheses that are falsified/corroborated quantitatively. Peace Studies can thus be composed of science and theories that are non-scientific, but yet meaningful and important. This means that it is perfectly legitimate for Peace Studies to contain elements of both science and non-science. For example, we can formulate hypotheses about why the Salvadoran civil war successfully ended through negotiation, and we can aid the hypotheses formulation process by interpreting the political, occasionally non-falsifiable, writings on Salvadoran history by the philosopher Ignacio Ellacuría. All this constitutes Peace Studies and legitimate academic work, and moreover, according to Popper, it is legitimate scientific work.

But which methods are the most appropriate to corroborate and falsify? Can some of these methods contribute to reproduce social structures while others are better to show how to bring about social change needed to build peace? Which role do values play in all this? Where does this leave Peace Studies? These discussions were brought up by what has been labelled the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory.

1.4 The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory

This section draws mostly from Patrick Baert’s (2005) summary of Critical Theory. This intellectual tradition is connected to progressive politics. Therefore, its supporters believed that all social science could not be “value-free”. For critical theorists, researchers have to question ideologies and everything that leads to the reproduction of structures in the benefit of power-holders. This group of researchers from Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt in the inter-war period was greatly influenced by the writings of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud and Friederich Nietszche. Roughly the group was composed by Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Carl Grünberg, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Neumann and Walter Benjamin (Baert 2005: Ibid.). Baert also suggests that a characteristic trait of critical theorists is that they did not limit themselves with describing phenomena, but their work was a radical form of critique. Some could argue that this distanced this kind of academics from science, but they showed that critique could also be done within the confines of science, depending on how it is done or how science is defined. Critical theorists were therefore also prolific in their writings on epistemology. Following Baert’s synopsis of critical theorists, their epistemological critique can be summed up as a critique to: instrumental rationality, monistic materialism, naturalism, totalitarian positivism and uncritical phenomenalism (Baert 2005: 107-08).

According to Baert, instrumental rationality is defined in opposition to substantial rationality. The former refers to rationality that focuses on explaining the means to achieve certain ends that are taken for granted. Substantial rationality, on the other hand, has to also explain or question the ends, because these are not taken for granted. Critical theorists thought the introduction of modernity was marked by a change from the prevalence of substantial rationality to instrumental rationality. The predominant instrumental rationality in modernity gives for granted the ends of capitalist and liberal interests. In such a reality, people become the building blocks of a structure where their freedom and agency are not valued. In the sciences, a characteristic of the predominance of instrumental rationality is the supremacy of totalitarian positivism, where the only meaningful knowledge is the one that describes the experienced phenomena that are accessible to sense-perception (Baert 2005: 108-109). In this sense, Comte
and Durkheim for example, thought that the purpose of social science should be the identify “law-like regularities” in the social realm, in order to provide social planners with greater control over the fate of other human beings in function of predefined social ends (Baert 2005: 112). Following a historical materialist view, critical theorists thought that social science had to go beyond phenomena, to uncover hidden mechanisms that were not immediately accessible to sense-perception (Baert 2005: 110). The object was not to contribute to the smooth working of the system, but overturning it, in favour of emancipation and more just relations.

Monistic materialism and naturalism were two common views supported even by other Marxists of the time. The former refers to the belief in that the base of all phenomena is material. The latter, that the methods of natural sciences apply to the social realm. According to Baert, critical theorists thought that these two beliefs led easily to determinism and reductionism in the social sciences. These two consequences misrepresent human realities, which are not limited to law-like explanations – nor are they reducible to materialistic or atomistic views. To oppose determinism and reductionism, the Frankfurt School advocated interdisciplinarity and viewed with scepticism research that was too specialised in a field and sacrificed overview. For them, social research had to be holistic and critical, and only in that way would it prevent falling into reductionism and determinism (Baert 2005: 108). They also advocated a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Baert 2005: 113).

Critical theorists have had a major and lasting influence in social research in the 20th century. Peace Studies have drawn a lot from the postulations of the early Frankfurt School. For example, the rationality of Peace Studies should be a substantial one, because in order to justify Peace Studies, it is necessary to point out why academic work cannot take for granted the ends for which it is pursued, especially if these ends contribute to the reproduction of direct violence and violent structures. Ends influence the values that are present at every stage of academic work, an acknowledgement put forward by the Frankfurt School. When the end is peace, it is necessary that non-violent values serve as the basis for critique of those social realities that further violence. Moreover, the complexity of the conflicts that Peace Studies deal with makes it necessary to avoid reductionism and therefore inter/multi/transdisciplinary has also been a choice for peace researchers. Additionally, inflexibility furthers violence in the face of conflict (Galtung 1996: 96) and it could result from law-like scientific prescriptions. Therefore it has also been important for Peace Studies to question determinisms and advocate for an ontology that recognises openness, possibilities to change and that goes beyond the surface of phenomena to uncover structures (Heikki Patomäki 2001 and Johan Galtung 1985).

However straightforward this might have seemed to neo-marxists from the inter-war period to up until the sixties, the academic environment that followed would pose serious challenges to academic work and its relations to grand narratives as the pursuit of peace.

1.5 The Post-modern Condition

Hegel’s idealism and Nietszche’s nihilism had already problematised the legitimacy of scientific endeavours, by for example questioning the subject-object relationship (Aylesworth 2005). In these authors, we find some of the origins of Western nihilism. However, the nakedness of the emperor of science was finally exposed when it was proven that its own language game was “turned back upon itself”. On the one hand, science claimed to be the access to truth, but on the other hand this claim was not scientifically proven. Science was also to contribute to emancipate humanity, but this statement in itself cannot be falsified and is therefore not scientific (Lyotard 1979: 39). When the narrative of such an appealing speculative and emancipatory project was exposed in such a way, it was not surprising that other grand narratives followed, and Peace Studies was included. The death of grand narratives had arrived and they were “reduced to utopia or hope” (Lyotard 1979:13). In his “Report on Knowledge” for the University of Montreal, Lyotard labelled this condition as “post-modern”.

Popper himself had hinted that the demarcation line between science and non-science was moveable by social change. He meant that other knowledge could become legitimate science if the social conditions changed such that the un-scientific theories could become falsifiable hypotheses or conjectures. Lyotard thought this line had moved in post-industrial societies, but in the other direction: Science legitimises itself as other sorts of knowledge.
In modernity, reason used to be the source of absolute enlightenment and emancipation of humanity. But then came relativity, quantum physics, psychoanalysis, Heisenberg’s principle, Poincare’s maths, Nietzsche’s nihilism, Daniel Bell’s information society, neo-liberalism, technological development and this challenged reason and science as sources of enlightenment and emancipation. In addition the academic environment was significantly altered by the accelerated development of information technologies. This resulted in “hegemony of computers” (Lyotard 1979:4), because knowledge that is not digitalised or presented in computer language cannot compete. This knowledge is a resource in the fight for power in the world. In this context, there is a market of knowledge with suppliers and users of knowledge. The knowledge institutions are producers (researchers, lecturers, etc.) and the users are the students, businesses, public, where knowledge and information are produced to be sold. In this sense, knowledge is a means to gain more power, but it has stopped having a value in itself. So the question of what sort of knowledge is legitimate has becomes mostly a question of power (Lyotard 1979: 5).

Borrowing from Wittgenstein’s terminology (1922), Lyotard says that language games are always played to decide who wins what in this struggle for power. These language games have particular rules, which are defined in relation to contesting projects. For example, functionalist sociology would have as a purpose to promote social unity, progress, modernity and performativity in the relationship between input and output (Lyotard 1979: 11), whereas Marxist sociology would promote class struggle, dialectics with the purpose of achieving emancipation (Lyotard 1979: 12). According to Lyotard, when it is decided on beforehand that society is a machine that has to produce, it is clear that functionalist sociology is preferable and it should decide the rules for generation of knowledge. When the goal is emancipation of those that are oppressed, the language rules have to be dominated by the other historic dialectic discourse. Lyotard hints that functionalist approaches are more amicable to positivism while the Marxist ones fit better with critical theories (Lyotard 1979:14). However, he finds this dichotomy unacceptable in the present phase of capitalism where narratives are dead, or at least, they do not have the appealing power they once had and information technologies and access to information are more important (Lyotard 1979: 14).

This means that the contemporary problem for Peace Studies is not to justify one method or rationality over the other according to chosen ends, like the critical theorists did, by opposing certain epistemological issues associated to functionalism and positivism. The problem for Peace Studies is to find legitimacy of its ends and as a discipline. Peace Studies also need to be constantly able to justify their narrative. This implies providing answers to what the goals of Peace Studies are and what the rules of the generation of knowledge should be, when the final end is peace. Moreover, it is more important to constantly legitimise peace and why it is important for society.

Peace Studies, as any other sort of knowledge are legitimated in as much as they manage to define the rules of their language game and attempt to generate consensus for those rules. But it is important to note that consensus is not an objective, as classical grand narratives intend. It is only a prerequisite for a constant search for truth and meaning. In this sense, Peace Studies are a constant debate and endeavour on the issue of peace. Certain considerations are required for that purpose, in order to avoid falling in some of the contradictions that have led Western philosophy to the stalemate that has killed grand narratives.

2. Peace Studies: An Applied Science in a Post-modern World?

According to Webster’s Dictionary, to apply means to use in a particular situation or to put something on to a surface (WordNet 2007). If Peace Studies is to be applied, it will be applied to the surface of reality, which is where Peace Studies ultimately came from. But what is reality and how do we generate/apply knowledge from/to it?

We start again with David Hume, but this time with a critical view, because Hume’s conceptions of reality set the stage for further important epistemological discussions in the English-speaking world. For example, Alfred Ayer was clearly influenced by Hume’s ontology and epistemology. Popper is well known for his “three world ontology”: Physical world,
psychological world and intellecutive world (Oakley, 2002: 463). And we can see that Hume’s notion of ideas of external world and the self relate to such a view.

We need to see why Hume’s ontology and consequent epistemology does not give us reasons to do and apply Peace Studies, and suggest something different in the process.

2.1 Sensible versus Sentient Intelligence

According to Hume’s analysis of understanding, senses “convey to us nothing but a single perception and never give us the last intimation of anything beyond” (Hume 1740: Book I, Part IV, Section II). Intelligence transforms the content of perception to impressions, then to ideas and then engages in constant conjunction through experience. We know about reality through senses and intelligence, therefore Fowler calls it a “sensible intelligence” (Fowler 1998[2]: 68). This is the basis of his epistemology as we have seen. However, Zubiri (1980, 1982) and Fowler (1998) have pointed out the shortcomings of such analysis.

First of all, these authors point out that Hume did not think that we perceived form through our senses. For Hume, causality, and thereby formalism is the consequence of constant conjunction of ideas. Secondly, Hume’s ontology also distinguished between a world out there and our inner selves. So Hume used concepts to classify human nature in a dualistic way and provided his explanation of how understanding and generation of knowledge came about from this starting point. In this process, he also classified understanding in relations of ideas and matters of fact. In this sense, his method was also logified, in that he took fluent realities and divided them through concepts. His conclusions were that we could only develop good habits from our experience, from the consequent matters of fact, from mathematics and that we should be sceptical about what we know about the external world. But Zubiri and Fowler arrive to different conclusions by modifying Hume’s logified and dualistic premises. For Fowler (1998, 2005), reality is not just content presented to our senses. We perceive content already with a form. Therefore reality is content and form, an idea that was also suggested by ancient philosophers when they suggested that things were both form and matter. Since we already perceive a continuous form with our senses, instead of Hume’s series of impressions, we do not need to engage in constant conjunction of discrete ideas to establish causality or the form of things. Moreover, the external world and we are linked in a way that makes it hard to establish a clear cut dualism between ourselves and the external world, since we need of this external world to realise ourselves as individuals, continue living and it constantly influences our intellection. We can also influence and modify this external world and actually do so in different ways when we perceive from it, like Heisenberg’s principle of uncertainty showed. Therefore, what we know about reality is just a re-actualisation in our brains of the formality that we already perceive with our senses. In this sense, our particular trait as humans is that our brains can postulate formality; that means we can postulate the form of realities, like relativity theory, irrational numbers, comic book characters, geometry and so on. Our knowledge of the world is just a postulation that can to a greater or lesser degree correspond to the content and form of the reality we perceive and of which we are a part. Human postulation is based on sensing, but we can also sense the postulation as something real. This is why Zubiri (1980) calls human intelligence a “sentient intellection” (Fowler 1998[2]: 68), and this opposes Hume’s sensible intellection (Fowler 1998 [1]: 58).

In Fowler’s and Zubiri’s understanding, reality is open and not a closed system (Samour 2000). This means that formality tends to imply regularities, but not always in a permanent way. Unlike Hume who thought that “it is impossible to admit of any medium between chance and absolute necessity” (Hume 1740: Book I, Section XIV), Fowler suggests that instead of talking of causality we should talk about functionality (1998[1]: 64), where determinism is just a possibility decided by chance, something that is not new in contemporary philosophy of science. This avoids the determinism that results from accepting Hume’s arguments. Following Hume’s premises and conclusion leads us to reject studies that are not limited to matters of fact and mathematics to develop good habits. Peace Studies is one of those studies, since its practice also includes considerations of the inner worlds of humans (e.g. values) and postulations about possible and transcendental futures and how to get there. This serves to illustrate why it is
suitable to move from the Humean premises. For this it is convenient to retake some of the preceding sections and suggest an alternative approach.

2.2 A Different way of understanding science

As it has been suggested, reality is not just a set of things outside the brain. Reality can also be postulated by our brains. Thereby, scientific theories are sentient postulations that are real and empirical in themselves. Falsification consists in testing how much a postulated theory consists with other realities. Verification is a related concept, but it can imply realising theory through persuasion or imposition. To verify is to experience testing-together postulation and other realities (Fowler 2005: 48). Scientists postulate realities, through words or mathematical objects, and so on. Then they explore that sentient reality to see how well it corresponds to other realities (Fowler 2005: 49). This view of science does not differ so much from Popper’s falsificationism, except for the fact that in this view of things, all theories are empirical and all are normative. They can correspond or not to realities in and by themselves to a higher or lesser degree. Moreover, according to Zubiri, theory and verification can be much more than descriptive corroboration, since open realities can be modified. This has some implications for Social Sciences and Peace Studies, in the sense that political and social entities as well as scientific theories are all categorised as postulated realities, which even though are not experienced at a particular time, can also be realised.

2.3 A different way of understanding peace studies

As such, scientific theories of society can be subject to falsification or corroboration when compared with past experience. But they can also be verified through coercion or persuasion in future experience, and play a part in the process of becoming political or social entities with greater effects on the lives of other human beings. In modern non-violent democratic societies, this verification of theoretical postulations about society occurs through persuasion, using what Habermas labels “communicative action” (Baert 2005: 117). In this way, Peace Studies has an object of study: postulated realities about peaceful society. Positive Peace Studies have to corroborate or falsify the previous experience of these postulations in different contexts. But on top of this positivistic work, there must be critical-hermeneutic analysis of these postulations as a part of the practice of Peace Studies. In other words, Peace Studies cannot be limited to corroborating or falsifying hypothesis on social performance in non-violence. Peace Studies also has to engage in hermeneutics concerned with understanding social symbols and suggesting non-violent manifestations of meaning. The purpose should be to try to use all this, to actively communicate in a critical intellectual fashion how to influence power holders to prevent the reproduction of violence and violent structures. Therefore, Peace Studies have to be concerned with this progressive agenda, that manages to affect culture in the direction of non-violence, and here lies the value of a pragmatic approach to legitimise Peace Studies. Empiricism and postmodernism contradict these assertions. This has been echoed by Heikki Patomäki who in 2001 wrote,

The end of the Cold War, the downhill slide of social democracy, the dominance of pure Western (neo)liberalism, as well as the rhetorical association of peace research with the sort of left wing which had ties with Soviet foreign policy - all of these factors made critical peace research appear suspect. Peace research has also suffered from the questioning- of the whole modern belief in science and progress. Besides orthodox economics, the most ardent, uncritical supporters of positivist social science and related ideals of enlightenment can be found in many peace research institutes. Often it seems as if peace research is seeking to slow down change and metatheoretical reflections, holding on to positions from the 1960s... Since Galtung, few have developed the critical ideals and methodology of peace research. Apart from Wzver, Hayward Alker is almost the sole exception, although his academic career, too, is closely linked with the side of International Relations. Alker's visionary texts nevertheless offer possibilities for progress in many important directions... It is the task of peace research to show how existing historical trends and tendencies can be overturned. Peace research has to act consistently to prevent a transformation from politics to violence and to promote, instead, a transformation towards peaceful, democratic world politics (Patomäki 2001: 734)
3. Conclusion

Peace Studies are not more normative than other sciences, but they are more explicit about their type of rationality and ends. This makes these sorts of studies more straightforward in connection to the intended realisation of their narrative, which is peace. Other studies also have a narrative and values that influence them. The naïve view would claim that the practitioners of the other sciences are unconscious about the rationality of their science, ends and narrative. The cynical would claim that scientists and academics choose to hide their true objectives, rationale and narrative under the cloth of alleged objectivity. But in any way, Peace Studies’ openness and explicitness proves uncomfortable. The legitimation of Peace Studies therefore is only viable when the case for this explicitness is made. A non-dualistic, non-logified, holistic, critical and pragmatic view of postulated knowledge’s role in an open social reality provides the basis for this case. Peace students and researchers are part of a modern society and "a Western Global Order". We interact in communicative action and our research is a high form of praxis. Like in any other science, there should be no dichotomy between doing research or doing something to make a difference. All research that is communicated properly is already making a difference, with one rationality or the other, this or that objective, in the name of our or the others’ narrative.

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Zubiri, Xavier,
The Christian Peacemaker Team Asks Itself: "Why Are We Here?"
Negotiating New Territory in Iraq's Occupation War Zone
Lorna Tychoptup

Abstract

While there is a high level of interest in peace studies: researching peace, peacework itself, and ways of bringing peace to conflicted regions, little attention has been given to research methodologies in peace research. Even less has been written on the methodological, empirical, safety and ethical challenges of carrying out research in areas of tension, conflict or in post conflict societies. By closely examining the work of one “grassroots” NGO, the Christian Peacemaking Team, and their peacework in Iraq – pre-war, during the actual bombing, and the violent “no man’s land” of mass confusion it became post war – I show how everyday activities and challenges faced by organizations working in war zones leave them little or no resource to record their work or the methodology behind it. The “in-the-moment” realities of peace work in war zones: unfamiliarity with the culture and language; the daily uncertainty of life; requests from the community to witness specific gatherings and events where violence is expected, or to provide individual accompaniment; lack of security; bombing; death threats; actual kidnappings; random acts of violence/theft to name a just a few, leave no time for the gathering of statistics or its analysis.

Intention

There is a tremendous amount of talk in the Post Cold War, Post 9/11 world about the growing number of national and international Nongovernmental Organizations [NGOs], and their intentions, purposes and potential related biases. Calling it “a global 'association' revolution,” Lester M. Salamon, Director of the Institute for Policy Studies at The Johns Hopkins University, says, “everyone’s doing it.”1 By “it,” Salamon is speaking of the work of the “massive array of self-governing private organizations, not dedicated to distributing profits to shareholders and directors” but instead “pursuing public purposes outside the normal apparatus of the state.”2 Numbering in the thousands, these NGOs place themselves directly into the international decision making arena and address every issue imaginable including but not limited to economic, legal, and/or social development; nuclear proliferation; the use of land mines, torture, etc; humanitarian aid; women’s rights; agricultural issues such as genetically modified foods, water rights, etc.; global warming; peacemaking; and peacework.

Along with this explosion of non-state actors come many questions: Who oversees these groups and/or monitors the work and/or the funding of these groups? How to they go about their work? Who determines the standards, if any, that they must follow? How do the groups themselves decide what direction their work should take? What sort of methodology do they follow?

Specifically, in relation to peace studies and the work of NGOs who participate in peacework, as highlighted in a call for papers by the 2007 Methodologies in Peace Research Conference initiated by the Centre for Peace Studies of the University of Tromsø, Norway, while there is “a high level of interest and activity in peace research, little attention has been explicitly devoted to research methodologies in peace research. There are few easily accessible or available academic works, journal articles or textbooks which deal specifically with the methodological, empirical, safety and ethical challenges of carrying out research in areas of tension and stress or into post conflict and divided societies.”3

It is my intention and within this context, to provide a comprehensive view of the

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2 Ibid.
3 http://uit.no/cps/3774/11
Christian Peacemaker Team [CPT], an NGO that does peacework both nationally and internationally. By focusing specifically on their work in Iraq in relation to accompaniment and international witnessing of human rights abuses – specifically having to do with detainees, and to a lesser degree, conditions at the infamous Abu Graib prison – I hope to answer the question, “Why is there little or no material available with regard to peacework done in areas of tension and stress or in post conflict and divided societies?”

Definitions of International “Witnessing”

In researching this paper I discovered that while there are a few different modes or definitions of “witnessing,” there are even fewer source materials about the methodologies and/or actual research in relation to witnessing. The few groups I was able to track down who claim to do “witnessing” work vary in mode, scope and intention. Only with regard to one, Peace Brigade International, was I able to find any citable methodology in relation to their work.

In the religious sense, “bearing witness” involves spreading or “sharing” a particular faith or belief system and is often associated with evangelism or proselytism. I don’t want to stray too far into this territory other than to use this particular definition to make an important differentiating point in reference to the work of CPT. Often, in my discussions with people the intention of CPT is questioned and I am continually asked, “Are they missionaries out to spread their faith?” This perception is not unusual given that many faith-based INGOs have as their intention, the spreading of their particular faith. In a speech entitled, Missionaries and Indigenous Evangelists: The Right to Bear Witness in International Law, given by Steven McFarland, the Executive Director of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, he argues, spuriously in my opinion, that “bearing witness” (interchangeable with “proselytism” which is defined as “to convert from one belief or faith to another”), is a right of faith-based religions under International human rights law. McFarland makes his argument by lumping the ideal of religious freedom together with the ability to share one’s faith, and contends that these two are under attack today.

It cannot be made clear enough that, that although CPT is a faith-based INGO of the Christian persuasion, this religious definition of “bearing witness” does not and never has applied to the work of CPT. Their intention born out of their faith, expresses a personal “mandate to proclaim the Gospel of repentance, salvation and reconciliation includes a strengthened Biblical peace witness... faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls to more active peacemaking; [and] a renewed commitment to the Gospel of Peace calls us to new forms of public witness which may include non-violent direct action.” Indeed, if CPT were perceived to be a “proselytizing” force in a Muslim-majority country such as Iraq, it could prove deadly given that Islam, while encouraging its own followers to proselytize to infidels or non-believers, forbids outsiders from proselytizing to Muslims. Apostasy - the renunciation of one's religious faith - is a sin punishable by death in many parts of the Islamic world. For one to proselytize a different belief system other than Islam to Muslims is seen by Muslims as an offense perpetrated by the Western world, and Muslim extremists have reportedly killed Christians who have tried to “share their faith.”

Another definition says bearing witness requires “that we experience the life of another and then take compassionate action. The action we take, our moment of authenticity, requires courage, and we may have to ‘bear’ the results of our courage and action.” This type of
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witnessing is of a moral nature and has been applied regarding wrongdoings, and cataclysmic events and atrocities such as the Holocaust,9 9/11,10 and war torn areas such as Bosnia,11 and the environmental work of such INGOs as Greenpeace.12 It includes at least two different types of witnessing: 1) intentional or deliberate; and 2) unintentional or accidental that I will define here:

The intentional or deliberate... “moral witness looks for the quiet but certain knowledge of what the powerful deny and would rather not have witnessed. In the original Quaker ideal, knowledge and truth telling were values in themselves. The idea of distributing video cameras to human rights observers is more utilitarian: recording evidence to achieve accountability. A row of silent witnesses – VCRs in hand or not – watching wrongdoing, often putting themselves at risk, is a powerful image. They are active bystanders – powerless to intervene, but a reminder to perpetrators that not everyone approves or colludes, and that their future denials will be countered by another testimony...the ideal of deliberate witness as a moral act in itself was a more ambitious that the organized presence of others would shame the perpetrators.”13

In some of these cases, this sort of bearing witness can and has led to courtroom appearances and testimony in order to bring attention to an issue, event or series of events that one deems objectionable, illegal or abhorrent, and/or have actually led to convictions of the perpetrators.

In other cases of moral witnessing, the witnessing is unintentional or accidental – a by-product of just happening to be somewhere when something negative happens. In these cases, it is completely up to the person to choose to step forward or not. They may or may not have a stake in the negative event. They may know and/or on some level agree with those who are perpetrating the event. The perpetrator(s) could even be a friend(s) or family member(s). The stakes are raised in these cases because the witness may have seen, and perhaps even recorded by way of video, camera or tape recorder, some horrible event that simply the knowledge of, and/or possession of evidence of, could prove to be hazardous if not lethal to them. And yet, driven by some internal or even perhaps, external force, they feel compelled to come forward.

For example, on May 13, 2005, government forces killed hundreds of unarmed protesters as they fled a demonstration in Andijan, in eastern Uzbekistan.14 The attack by Uzbek forces was followed by an “unprecedented” and “ferocious” crackdown on Uzbek civil society where “authorities aggressively pursued human rights defenders, independent journalists and political activists who attempted to convey the truth about the events of May 13...individuals [were] arrested on spurious charges, detained, beaten, threatened, put under surveillance or under de facto house arrest...set upon by mobs and humiliated through Soviet-style public denunciations. At least eleven activists [were] imprisoned, and at least fifteen [were] forced to flee the country in exile.”15

Despite the crackdown and ensuing fear it instilled, a female witness stepped forward at the first trials of the activists and spoke her truth as to the unwarranted violence by Uzbek soldiers. The state-controlled media labeled her a “liar,” depicted her as being one of the activists, accused her of perjury and of being of such low economic and intelligence level that she had been easily brainwashed by the activists who saw her as an easy target.16 Although her testimony did not affect the outcome of the trial, the extraordinary courage this type of witnessing requires cannot be denied.

Other types of witnessing come in the form of “accompaniment.” This also requires a certain level of courage and fortitude, in that it involves the intentional presence of witnesses from outside the conflict in hot spots and war zones.

Such is the case with Witness for Peace [WFP], a peacework NGO founded in 1983 at the

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9 http://www.holocausttestimonies.com/
10 http://americanhistory.si.edu/september11/
11 http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/witness.html
12 http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-99-867/life_society/greenpeace/
14 http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/11/01/uzbeki11950.htm
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
height of the Contra War in Nicaragua. The WFP mission statement says it is “a politically independent, nationwide grassroots organization of people committed to non-violence and led by faith and conscience” with the aim to “support peace, justice and sustainable economies in the Americas by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices which contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean.”17 At the time of its founding, WFP established a constant presence in Nicaragua, enlisted the aid of US volunteers to “accompany the Nicaraguan people in war zones and to document the ‘human face’ of the Reagan Administration’s military policy,”18 and encouraged these US-based activists to spread the word once they got home via a grassroots public presentation system and by “large-scale media outreach.”19 Today, WFP does witness work in Nicaragua, Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia.

Another type of accompaniment occurs when peaceworkers accompany individuals or groups of individuals to an event or a place of employment, government office or agency where the accompanied person might want to file a complaint, obtain information about missing relatives, etc. They might walk or drive with them along a stretch of embattled or hazardous road or path.

Peace Brigade International [PBI], founded 1981 by Ghandians and Quakers and who did their first work in Nicaragua in 1983, engages in such activities. They provide non-violent international peacekeeping in areas of violent conflict and repression, offering unarmed protective accompaniment to individuals, organizations, and communities threatened with political violence and human rights violations.”20

For the last twenty-five years, “Peace Brigade International has pioneered a model of international non-violent accompaniment to protect the human rights of those threatened by political violence. Relying on small teams of international observers deployed where political violence is rampant (Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Columbia, El Salvador, Haiti, and elsewhere), PBI attempts to deter violence and open up safer political space for local activists under threat from both the state and para-state organizations. PBI’s international observers are trained in non-violence and equipped with cameras, notebooks, cell phones, and an international advocacy network. But those same observers generally come from rich, influential western states and are of European ancestry. The deterrence value of PBI’s accompaniment relies to various degrees on privileged constructions of ethnicity and internationality.”21

While PBI’s work as defined most closely matches that of CPT there are some major differences between the two NGO’s. For one, PBI is non-sectarian, while CPT is faith-based. Another difference lies in the way each organization goes about its methodology, and recording of such. It is here I will leave off to give an in depth look into the work of CPT.

Points of Clarification Re: Christian Peacemaker Team

The following is based on research, my direct observations of CPT’s work in Iraq, and on several long discussions and at least one recorded interview with CPT member Maxine Nash, who spent 3 years total but not contiguous, in Iraq during the time period from early 2003 to late 2006.

The vast majority of INGOs enter foreign countries with a pre-set plan and set of objectives that once on the ground, they attempt to implement and follow to the best of their ability. One exception can be found in the work of the Christian Peacemaker Team [CPT], a faith-based INGO that, with the exception of a period of four weeks occurring on two separate occasions, maintained a permanent presence throughout the pre- and post-invasion occupation war zone of the Iraq theater from Oct. 2002 to March 2007.22 For the most part, CPT did not

17 http://www.witnessforpeace.org/about/history.html
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 http://www.peacebrigades.org/usa.html
22 Tychoostup, L., Interview with Maxine Nash, member of CPT and one-time member of the Iraq Peace Team, 3.4.07
have a plan of action, other than to follow their broad intention statement emphasizing an:

“Organized, non-violent alternative to war and other forms of lethal inter-group conflict, CPT also provides organizational support to persons committed to faith-based non-violent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy. CPT seeks to enlist the response of the whole church in conscientious objection to war, and in the development of non-violent institutions, skills and training for intervention in conflict situations. CPT projects connect intimately with the spiritual lives of constituent congregations. Gifts of prayer, money and time from these churches under gird CPT’s peacemaking ministries.23

The all-purpose nature of their intention statement, humanitarian in nature, allows CPT members to work under a somewhat open arena of interpretation that enables them to adapt to the situation at hand in terms of addressing needs. This was especially true in the Petri dish of wonderment and confusion that the Iraq Occupation War Zone was and continues to be.

A few important clarifying notes as per interviews with CPT member Maxine Nash:

1) CPT’s work, specific to Iraq, did not involve “peacemaking,” in that they never acted as mediators, negotiators, human shields, human rights monitors, interveners or participants in activities of conflict resolution as per the accepted definition of peacemaking as working toward reconciliation of adversaries. However, it can be said they were doing “peacework.”

2) CPT members were able to obtain a certain level of trust from different communities within Iraq to the point where they were able to conduct in depth on-the-ground research into the issues surrounding the detaining of Iraqi civilians by Coalition Provisional Authority and later incarnations of coalition-based military forces in Iraq; and conditions and accusations of abuse at the Abu Graib prison facility.

3) Their body of work in relation to these issues was not only the most comprehensive, but also possibly the most detailed and certainly the most publicly attainable in Iraq and internationally - both before and after the frenzied media release of the Abu Graib photos that depicted the “numerous instances of “sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses at Abu Ghraib…perpetrated by soldiers of the 372nd Military Police Company, and also by members of the American intelligence community” that occurred between October and December 2003.24

4) CPT shared their information with both Human Rights Watch Iraq [HRWI], and the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], and in some cases was able to direct these NGOs to investigate specific issues of concern.

5) A particularly interesting aspect of CPT’s work is that it was formulated “in the moment” and was based on observation and subsequent ongoing discussion that continually questioned whether members should remain in Iraq, and if so, questioned where and how their energies should be directed to enable their work do the most good for Iraqis.

6) CPT was, at times, the only INGO with a presence on the ground in Iraq, thus making their work of acting as “peace witness” all the more important. They were literally the best foreign source of information on the ground in Iraq at the time as per Iraqi life and reality.

As CPT member Maxine Nash noted, “We went bumbling into this as newbies – people came to us and asked us to help them find loved ones.”

Background: Conditions Upon Entering the Fray

The intention of the Christian Peacemaker Team [CPT] upon its arrival in Baghdad in October of 2002 was to create a permanent presence on the ground in Iraq. At that time, “war drums were beating pretty loudly. CPT felt war was inevitable and that they needed to make a very visible stand against it. They wanted to bring awareness to the repercussions of war.”25 Team members believed their presence in Iraq would allow them greater accessibility to the Iraqi people and their culture, the conditions of which were shrouded in mystery due to the 12

24 Ibid.
25 Tychostup, L., Interview with Maxine Nash, member of CPT and one-time member of the Iraq Peace Team, 3.4.07
years of devastating US-instigated economic sanctions imposed in April 1991 under UN Resolution 687.

In addition to setting up conditions aimed at forcing Saddam to cease the manufacture of new weapons of mass destruction [WMDs] and to allow inspections of whatever WMDs there might already be in Iraq, Res. 687 barred any and all materials or goods from entering Iraq that, in essence, could be deemed an ingredient or containing an ingredient that could be used in the creation of WMDs. At the same time, US law prohibited all US citizens, except those working as journalists on assignment or others “otherwise authorized” by the US State Department, from traveling to Iraq. Penalties authorized under the Office of Foreign Assets Control [OFAC], a division of the US Treasury Dept. for traveling to Iraq under the sanctions included “corporate and personal fines of up to $10 million and 30 years in jail, civil penalties of up to $1 million per incident, as well as the forfeiture of funds or other property involved in the violation.” By choosing to work in Iraq, CPT members exposed themselves to these repercussions.

The ensuing paranoia exhibited by the Saddam regime at its isolation from, and intense scrutiny of a world superpower community intent on eliminating Iraq’s capability to produce WMDs, in addition to Saddam’s fear of a coup from within, saw him install a smothering death grip on the Iraqi population. By way of a lengthy “plan of action” that laid out minutely detailed instructions for spying on, and maintaining absolute control over every aspect of Iraqi life, all Iraqi civilian, military and intelligence communities were scrutinized by hundreds, perhaps thousands of unseen eyes, some of whom were, in some cases, friends, family members and/or member of the same tribe.

This “plan of action” was also applied to foreigners who were able to gain entry into Iraq, as was the imposition of a code of various restrictions and silence as condition of entry for any foreigners who desired to establish or maintain any sort of short or long-term connective tissue with Iraqis - be it of a personal nature (as in the case of expatriates visiting their families), business or humanitarian in nature.

Among others things, the code prevented foreign visitors from 1) having free access to Iraqis – all movement had to be approved, overseen and accompanied by government “minders” who watched every move and listened closely to every conversation (in many instances, the Iraqis that Saddam allowed INGOs access to were either working in some way for the regime

27 http://hsgac.senate.gov/_files/STMTWernerOFAC0.pdf Viewed 3.6.07
28 http://amedsys.com/NIPR.php Viewed 3.6.07
29 http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saddam/readings/action.html Viewed 3.7.07
30 Personal experience, Feb. 2003
and purposely put in the path of the INGOs\(^{31}\) -- and 2) saying anything that was not “Saddam-friendly”\(^{32}\) or that would “embarrass the regime.”\(^{33}\) This made entry to Iraq, especially long-term or repeated visitations desired by foreigners, particularly difficult to obtain. Given the mission of CPT, which was stated as attempting to give a face to the Iraqi people so that the world could see just who would be dying once the bombs began to rain down, these restrictions did not prove to be a barrier to accomplishing their mission, nor were they detrimental to CPT’s work in any way. Claims as to their being “puppets of the Saddam regime” were for the most part non-existent, and when such accusations did arise they were generally ignored due to the undisputable reality and stated intention under which CPT worked.\(^{34}\)

This could not be said of other NGOs, especially those who were in Iraq under a stated humanitarian, anti-war and/or peace mission intention. In these cases, the desire to stay in Iraq and provide a presence in order to address and gather information regarding issues pertaining to and supportive of their stated missions, overrode any qualms or reservations they might have had about being perceived to be working with and/or supporting the Saddam regime.

For example, the loudest message put forth by the regime in pre-war Iraq was the ill effect of the sanctions on Iraqis, especially the children, 500,000 of whom, it was claimed by UNICEF\(^{35}\), had died as a direct result of the sanctions. Others, including peace activists, humanitarian INGOs, US Gulf War vets and Iraqi doctors pointed to the rise in cancer-related deaths, among servicemen, and especially among children in southern Iraq, as being caused by the US use of depleted uranium during the First Gulf War. Due to the sanctions, “most of the children die, the doctors said, because there are insufficient drugs available for their treatment.”\(^{36}\) The US-instigated UN-imposed sanctions proved to be a source of constant ammunition against the US and its allies by individuals and organizations, especially those who followed a left wing and/or anti-war ideology. An ideology that fit nicely into the manipulative actions of Saddam’s regime intent on deflecting attention from its WMDs program, not to mention, its rampant and ongoing humanitarian abuses. Saddam’s agenda was in part fed to the world via the dissemination of information by INGOs allowed to work in Iraq, under the condition that they adhere to a policy that demanded they stick to a singular message: “the deprivations suffered by ordinary Iraqis under the sanctions regime.”\(^{37}\)

After Saddam was removed, some claimed such allegations were propaganda inspired by the Saddam regime.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Tychostup, L., Interview with Maxine Nash, member of CPT and one-time member of the Iraq Peace Team, 3.4.07

\(^{33}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.


\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.

For example, addressing the condition of the drinking water of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Dr. Azzam Alwash, project director of Nature Iraq,\(^{39}\) an Iraqi environmental NGO that has worked to re-flood the marshes in southern Iraq that Saddam had drained as part of his campaign of retribution against the Shiite in the south for their rising up against him during the First Gulf War, said: ‘Before the drying [of the marshes] the water used to go into the marshes [that] acted as the biggest bio-filter there is. Water comes in filled with silt and clay...and pollutants, because the Tigris and Euphrates have been the sewage canals of Iraq. The farther downstream you are, literally the more s.h.t you have...I have a theory that the cancer cluster in the south of Iraq has nothing to do with depleted uranium. I think the major cause, [is] the fact that they are drinking the industrial pollution of all of the country down in the south...don’t forget the radiation that was dumped...the nuclear processing plants that Saddam had before the war...The [Saddam] regime was so paranoid, it wouldn’t let anybody in to do anything to help. And besides, who is going to be hurt? The Shiite in the south? Let them die. Who the hell cares? Good propaganda...When we are doing research as to what is the cause of the cancer cluster, do not forget the industrial pollution. Because in fact, if you solved the depleted uranium and you still have problems, we haven’t gotten rid of

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I point out this possibility of difference in behavior of NGOs before and after the invasion of Iraq as one clarification of how CPT’s work before and after the invasion, was unlike any other NGO operating in Iraq. Their mission was one that steered clear of, and was not tainted by the contentious nature of accusations of being a puppet of, or of supporting the Saddam regime, or for that matter, of politically opposing or supporting any specific regime.

Another supporting statement in regard to this has to do with the type of visa through which CPTers gained entry into Iraq. The months before the war began was a heady time that saw not just CPT, but other members of the international peace community (and yet others more intent upon serving as “martyrs” while fighting the invading Americans\(^{39}\)) gather forces in order to send a clear and unified anti-war message to the world. In some cases, similarly to CPT, individuals and groups came together and set off for Iraq where there was a strict visa process. For those who entered as journalists, the process took two weeks. Peace activists were issued visas in a much shorter time (it has been said theirs were actually tourist visas). Those who came in as “Human Shields” were issued a visa the same day it was applied for.\(^{40}\) Once Human Shields entered Iraq, they were fed and housed as guests of the Saddam regime. Although monitored at all times by a government-assigned “minder,” Human Shields were pretty much free to do as they wanted. However, they were told upon entry, that once the bombing started, they would be assigned to occupy an Iraqi infrastructure facility, such as a water treatment facility or electric plant.\(^{41}\)

This was not the case with CPTers who, although they did participate in “direct actions” in the weeks before the bombing began. These included purposeful group activities directed at garnering media attention to specific concerns and/or issues such as maintaining a presence at a water treatment facility, and/or hanging banners on bridges, hospitals, etc. that read, “To Bomb this Site is a War Crime: Geneva Convention 54”\(^{42}\). CPT did not do so as part of any campaign led by any other entity. They were, and remain to this day, very adamant about steering clear of association with the Human Shields; the US or Saddam regimes, media outlets, political factions, etc. including accepting any and all offerings of help from the all of the above. Should they have accepted any support from the Saddam regime, such as the free room, board, transportation, and use of interpreters such as the Human Shields enjoyed, they would have been lumped in, rightfully so, with the Human Shields and others who were viewed as “taking sides” with the Saddam regime. Equally, CPT made it very clear that, if in the event they should be captured, kidnapped, or hurt in the bombing by any sides involved in the fighting, they did not want any force used in order to be “rescued”, nor would they accept help from any militaristic factions affiliated with the fighting.\(^{43}\) This issue came to bear when the team had 4 male members of their team kidnapped in Baghdad on November 26, 2005. One hostage was found dead on March 9, 2006 and a multi-national force rescued the rest on March 23. Throughout the ordeal, CPT reiterated that no force should be used to rescue their members.\(^{44}\)

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the real problem. We need to work on both ends.” [From an interview of Dr. Alwash by Lorna Tychostup, Jan. 2005, Amman, Jordan.]

It should be noted that Dr. Alwash made these comments in January 2005, and therefore was not subject to the aforementioned restrictions of the by-then-deposed Saddam regime.

Enders, David, “Spring Break.” The Michigan Daily, 4.4.03

“...Lebanese men passed in and out as they signed up to go to Iraq as human shields, to fight against the American army or to serve as martyrs (their word, not mine). For persons traveling from other Arab countries, the visa approval is a same-day process, sans statement.”


Robertson, Phillip, “How I invaded Iraq, Alone.” Salon.com

“Safah leaned in close and explained that I could go that very day if I agreed to be a human shield.”


Personal experience, Feb. 2003

Tychostup, L., Interview with Maxine Nash, member of CPT and one-time member of the Iraq Peace Team, 3.4.07

Ibid.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article695790.ece

Note: As reported by the BBC, the hunt for the 4 kidnapped men involved: “250 men from the Task Force Black US/British/Australian counter-kidnap unit; 100 men from Task Force Maroon, the Paras and Royal Marines backing special forces; 15 men in helicopter crews; and tens of thousands of pounds spent on helicopter and transport aircraft flights.”

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was reported that CPT refused to meet with the military rescue team – refusing even to give them the cell number of one of the hostages.  

**Actual Work**

The work of CPT in Iraq is an interesting and exceptional case study. Members, committed to a 3-year stint, entered Iraq on a rotating basis. The average number of team members on the ground averaged 4, but was supplemented at times by “reservists” (members who already served their 3 years, or newcomers to CPT unwilling to make the 3-year commitment). Before and during the bombing, the team stayed at Al Fanar Hotel in Baghdad, on Abunuas Avenue, directly across the street from the Palestine Hotel. Their intention during the bombing was “to provide a voice on the ground.” Although journalists were doing this, they focused more on the battles and how the war was proceeding. CPT’s focus, by contrast, was on what the bombing meant for civilians.  

After the bombing stopped, with the help of Iraqi friends, CPT found an apartment in the mixed Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada. Centrally located on a private side street populated by families and shops, this apartment remained their home until late 2006 during which time they were protected, watched and worried over to a large degree by their Sunni, Shiite and Christian neighbors.  

Iraq was a no man’s land in the time period after the bombing stopped. As the summer of 2003 began, mass confusion reigned. The streets were not safe, there were no police, no army, shops closed at 3pm, and CPT was cautioned not be out after dark. The team tried to figure out if they had a role. At first, and with the help of Iraqis coming to them with information, they reported unexploded ordinance to the coalition forces due to concerns that children might get hurt by, and/or insurgents would make off with the bombs. The team also took an opinion poll among Iraqis asking them what they thought about the conditions. There were a number of anonymous bombings during that summer including the headquarters of the UN and ICRC, which left people wondering just what was going on.  

Coalition forces began to get nervous, started conducting raids, and rounding up people left and right. At the time, the Baghdad Airport was one place used as a detention center for people rounded up during the raids. During a visit to the airport, the team’s translator spoke with Iraqis gathered at the entrance gate and relayed back to the team that they were looking for detained relatives. After the bombing of their headquarters, the ICRC, who would normally have been the agency that Iraqis turned to, took a very quiet role in Iraq and therefore was not as accessible to Iraqis as they had been previously. “They had no storefront. If you were an Iraqi and looking for a loved one who had been detained, there was no where to go.”  

Understanding the value and privilege attached to their US passports, and the access allowed them, CPT began attempting to get information about detained family members. According to the Geneva Conventions, family members must be notified as to the whereabouts of their detained relatives. CPT went to the coalition forces and quickly realized there was no processing or tracking system in place for the growing numbers of Iraqis taken in raids and being detained, nor was there a central place one could go to get any information regarding detainees. In addition, there were language barriers and not enough translators, so in cases when detainees were processed, their names were not entered correctly.  

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45 [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article696629.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article696629.ece)  
46 Tychostup, L., Interview with Maxine Nash, member of CPT and one-time member of the Iraq Peace Team, 3.4.07  
47 Ibid. Note: The results of the poll stated that although they supported the troops being there, they didn’t want them to stay forever.  
48 Tychostup, L., Interview with Maxine Nash, member of CPT and one-time member of the Iraq Peace Team, 3.4.07  
49 “In the case of missing or dead persons, the main guiding principle for the parties to a conflict and for international humanitarian organizations is the right of families to know the fates of their relatives.” (Geneva Conventions, Protocol I, Art. 32) [http://www.genevaconventions.org/](http://www.genevaconventions.org/)  
50 Author’s note: In the summer of 2004, lost in the Green Zone I asked a passing man for directions. As he showed me the way our “small talk” revealed he was Edward Schmults, a former deputy attorney general in the Reagan administration. When Schmults informed me he was in charge of the prison system, I stopped dead in my tracks and said, “Do you know how many people there are detained in this country?” He said, “Tell me about it! I just finished the first month of my 6-month contract. We are working on a list getting all the names into a database. They can’t be
Despite the fact that the military – due to their lack of a coordinated detainee tracking system – could not find detainee locations themselves, CPT was successful in helping approximately twenty-five percent of Iraqis who came to them find their loved ones. At some point, the team did find someone within the military system who was giving them – “under the table” – whatever databases they did have. This person agreed with team members that the detainee problem was working to accelerate the violence.

Analysis

In my opinion, it was the early pre-war, pre-occupation of CPT; their clearly stated and well followed foundational intentions of 1) having no affiliation with military, political, or other such groups, and 2) unbiased observation; and their long-term commitment to stay and live among Iraqis without the extreme security protections that most other “foreigners” lived within; that allowed CPT access and inclusion to many aspects of ordinary Iraqi life – at least as “ordinary” came to be continually defined in the ground in Iraq. This refusal to take sides or be used by “others,” whoever they might be, eventually saw CPTers choose to become “accompaniment persons.” That, in addition to respecting the belief system of those they encountered, and their own refusal to participate in proselytizing their own belief system to Iraqis, in turn, led to their being invited to act as witness, accompaniment persons, instructors in conflict resolution and spokespersons to some degree of the various people, cases and issues in the occupation war zone of the Iraq theater. Indeed, the respect CPT showed for the belief systems of the Muslims led both groups to establish a common ground upon which to stand peacefully and without judgment.

A by-product of their choosing to maintain this non-threatening, non-proselytizing presence was that they gained the trust of Iraqis on an unprecedented level. By way of invitation, and for the purposes of witnessing at times when violence was expected to erupt, they were able to travel to various “hot spots” such as the first Ashura commemoration at the mosque in Kadimiya, Najaf during the siege of 2004, and Karbala. It was in Karbala where a group of Iraqis asked CPT to train them in the ways of conflict resolution and to help them set up what was first called the “Muslim Peacekeeper Team” (later changed to the “Iraqi Peacekeeper Team” at the suggestion of the Iraqis). It is important to note that CPT kept a constant presence on the ground despite varying levels of violence that saw just about every other INGO leave Iraq.

In my opinion, the type of “witnessing” that CPT conducted has extraordinary benefits in terms of peacework. Their decision to live among the Iraqi people in an ordinary apartment, on an ordinary street, in an ordinary neighborhood in Iraq allowed members many practical advantages. Some of the results include: 1) CPTers were accepted by the Iraqi people in their community which, over a period of time, came to see CPT in a non-threatening way as a group who were actually there to aid the Iraqi people; 2) The establishment of trust to the point where as word of CPT’s committed presence began to spread, Iraqis felt they had a Western ally who could act as intermediary between Iraqis and the coalition government, and felt free to go to them and ask for help; 3) The model set by CPTers in terms of fairness, openness, and commitment to peace inspired Iraqis to want to create their own “peacemaking team” to the point where they approached CPT and requested instruction on how to go about peace work – which CPTers were happy to give; and 4) CPT generally created an atmosphere of hope wherever they went, but particularly in their immediate community: Iraqis saw that CPTers were ready, willing and able to stay in Iraq for the sake of Iraqis. While this made some Iraqis uncomfortable – due to CPTers living in the neighborhood, some Iraqis were afraid of being targeted by insurgents, etc. – others were greatly comforted by their presence.

That being said, one drawback to this type of witnessing becomes extremely obvious: it left CPTers open to attack, acts of violence perpetrated not just specifically to them but also those perpetrated randomly to the Iraqi population, and kidnapping. Indeed, 4 members of CPT

released until their name is in this database. There are thousands of Iraqis who should be home with their families. I’ve got 3 people assigned to help and every one says this should be done yesterday!”
were kidnapped with 3 returned but one killed at the hands of their kidnappers. More recently, additional yet unreported kidnappings of CPTers have forced them to leave Iraq.

Unfortunately, due to inadequate funding, lack of people-power, CPT was unable to take the time to record their methodology. I would say this is the case for many “grassroots” peacework NGOs such as CPT.

In the case of their closest mirror NGO, Peace Brigade International, this was not the situation. Fortunately for PBI, they had a volunteer come on board in their early days who was able to record, document and conduct research regarding their work.

In 1992, Dr. Patrick G. Coy joined PBI’s team as a participant observer. A former national chairperson of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, research fellow of the Albert Einstein Institution, and the executive director of the Lentz Peace Research Laboratory, Dr. Coy is currently the Director of the Center for Applied Conflict Management and Associate Professor of the Center for Applied Conflict Management and Political Science Department at Kent State University. His first on the ground accompaniment work with PBI began after he attended PBI’s training program and was sent to Sri Lanka in 1993, and then again in 1994 where he “functioned as a full member of the team.”

If not for the ongoing interest and membership of Dr. Cox, the little we do know about non-violent accompaniment and witnessing would be even more negligible than it is today.

It is my suggestion that NGOs of this sort, take the time to recruit students, professors and other academics and professionals such as journalists, who can engage in a more coordinated level of observation and methodology in terms of doing research. These people should be specifically trained and given direction to not only observe, but to record the NGO’s activities.

Video, recorders and/or cameras should be utilized to record and document closely the various methods used when dealing with situations having to do with accompaniment and witnessing in conflict situations. Only in this way can the methods used by accompaniment and witnessing NGOs be evaluated and improvements made.

Engaged research! With visual tools

Trond Waage*

Abstract

This article is arguing for the importance of searching for new and creative ways of conducting anthropological fieldwork. I will argue for a strategy where we teach our informants, or better, our collaborators in the field to film key social situations in their life with the aim of producing a documentary film. It is a kind of involved performative mode of working where ethnographic data is gathered through the anthropologist’s instructions of what kind of situations that should be studied and where the anthropologist together with her collaborators do the interpretations. This enables a process of establishing thick descriptions of the collaborators' self-perceptions of the challenges the actors studied see before them. Such a process enables the researcher to get ethnographic descriptions, but equally important is that a synergy of such self-reflection processes might release positive dynamics among the collaborators themselves.

Fieldwork must not be seen as simply informative but as a performative mode of knowing (Fabian 1990)

Introduction

Since Jean Rouch made his film Jaguar (1967), visual anthropologists as David MacDougall, Li Worth and others have made films together with their informants. These filmmakers have made some extraordinary contributions to the history of anthropological filmmaking. At Visual Culture Studies at University of Tromsø, Norway have we over the years tried to develop this method further through workshops within the frames of the university collaboration we have in Cameroon and through courses for Youth at Risk in Norway. The examples in this article will be taken from these two projects.

The films we are talking about here are made in intensive workshops led by the researchers over a period of some weeks. Through this process the “informants” themselves are doing the ethnographic work following the instruction of the anthropologist. When supervising the students/collaborators we are following the instructions for what it takes to describe a social situation (Goffman 1959, Spradly 1981, Barth 1981). The collaborators in this article are first, Youths in Northern-Norway which have been recruited by the Outgoing Social Service, because they spend their days hanging out in the city centre and secondly, students at University of Ngaoundéré, where VCS for 15 years have been collaborating with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science and where I for 10 years have worked among youths.

The immediate reason for such an audio-visual taught research strategy are to be found in two, interlinked problems for anthropologists in their effort toward producing ethnographic knowledge; first, the challenging and time consuming activity of achieving experience near knowledge and second, the challenge of studying situations that have “conflict potential”.

Problem 1

The ideal of experience near knowledge

Experience near knowledge and thick descriptions, are established concepts within anthropology, but have not been precisely defined (Kuper 1999). What is generally agreed upon is that thick descriptions have potential for cross-cultural communication. The “thickness”
Engaged research! With visual tools

referees to the richness in the descriptions in the contextualized actions/events, which assures that cross-cultural comparison is possible. A thick description will I define as a description of an (or series of) action/event with its actors and arenas, described in its contexts in such a way that the action itself is understood cross-culturally.

It has been claimed that a problem within social science has been a theoretical focus, which has taken the focus away from ethnography (Marucs and Clifford (1986), Assad (1986), Ingold (xxxx), Knauft (1996)). Our fields potential for cross-cultural dialogue are by then diminishing. We are instead only communicating to people as our self, people with a PhD in anthropology. Knauft argues for an anthropology-based ethnography where the efforts are put into making descriptions before we analyse.

Paul Stoller, a radical empirist, is also arguing for taking ethnography seriously; in his book (1989) *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* he has written an interesting protest against what he calls “tasteless theory-loaded research”. Instead of research steered by theory he asks for sensory knowledge. We must do engaged field work and narrate with our senses, not our theoretical loaded mind. This takes a certain fieldwork strategy. His article from Niger is a pure descriptive text; where you can feel the heat and taste the bad sauce, and equally you can sense the anger the woman that consciously made bad sauce to here guests, are experiencing. Making bad sauce was a response to how she was threatened in the household. The text is narrated through a series of activities and through them the complex relations in a household. It is fascinating reading, which unfold the difficulties for an in-married wife that was not wanted by her family in law. Stoller writes this paper, with conviction, but one detail: he has spent 20 years continuously coming back to Niger.

I believe that sensory knowledge is something to work towards to achieve cross-cultural communication, but when you do not have years to do fieldwork, the challenge is: How to get sensory/experience near/tasty knowledge within weeks more than years? And what if the field is connected through situations with conflict potential, how do you then get this kind of knowledge? Neither Stoller nor Geertz give us concrete advices. There are very few “how-to-do” manuals in the field of participating observation. Spradly (1980), and Spradly and McCurdy (1972) are among the exceptions, they present some clear ideas on how to approach the production of ethnographic knowledge through identify social situations that can be studied and through one/several situations, expand the fieldwork. It is not a very “tasty” approach – but it opens up for a research strategy where everyday life can be operationalised in concrete situations with actors, activities in concrete situations.

Rudie (1994) has a fruitful contribution where she compares how we as anthropologists and how our informants are learning in situations. The anthropologist and the informant are facing much the same challenges. We are all humans constantly facing new challenges, new situations, which we interpret and act towards with our experience. Our way of learning, as anthropologist and as human is the same; we are comparing new situations with the knowledge we have.

Rudie writes from a classic fieldwork standpoint, where she in the field tries to find relevant roles to participate and observe from. In social situations are both collaborator and anthropologists approaching and doing interpretations based on former experiences. Both the anthropologist and the collaborator will understand the situation with their lived background and as participants in the same situation we are the catalyst for each other’s interpretations. The collaborator and the anthropologist’s response could in this way be compared and through that process contribute to contextualizing the event and then to understanding.

Through participation in different situations and then compare their reactions with our, will we get a dialogue on how situations might be understood. With this reflexive strategy, significance and meaning is negotiated in collaboration between “informant” and “anthropologist". Rudie's operationalisation of how we as humans and as anthropologists learn opens up for a more freely debate on what kind of activities we as researchers can study. May the situations be research-initiated? May the anthropologist ask the informant to do the fieldwork, to gather the information on how activities are conducted in certain arenas?
Problem 2
Communication barriers: Situations/fields with Conflict Potential

In social contexts where the actors are unable to agree upon how to interpret and react on social situations over time there is a general chance for conflicts developing (Goffman (1959), Barth (1981), and “a culture of peace”). Examples of such contexts are many. What I will deal with here is a series of problems that I have chosen to separate for analytical reasons. The first is the rapid urbanisation in cities around the globe with huge number of newly arrived immigrants combined with new knowledge regimes transforming power relations and changing the labour marked.\(^5\) Another type of contexts is the process of coping with life phase transformations. In societies undertaking rapid transformations might there be a possibilities that there are no well-established ways of marking life phase changes, the rites-des-passages are dysfunctional (see Geertz 1973 “Ritual and social change”, for a classical example). In earlier work (1994, 1996, 2003, 2006) I have shown how youths, in Norway and in Cameroon, through theirs varied activities are trying to achieve social roles and identities that are linked to being an adult, without succeeding. These are processes where communication barriers between different social fields are constructed.

Summing up so far, getting experience near knowledge and to get access to situations with conflict potential are challenging for the anthropologist. This kind of situation represents a challenge for both the informants and the anthropologist. The anthropologist searching for experience near knowledge in situations that the informants themselves feel is tense or characterised by conflict are not evidently situations where the anthropologist will have access. For the actors themselves the challenges are obvious; they lack the communicative skills or tools to develop further relations. In both cases there is a real threat that the communication might stop up; the anthropologist does not get his data on the ongoing process and the actors themselves might pull back.

In short, the problem studied points to contexts where 1) the researcher has a problem when it comes to getting experience near knowledge about conflict tense areas/arenas, and 2) people living lives with ”conflict potential” need mechanisms (institutions, rituals) to meet these challenges.

From violent gang members to proud filmmakers

Through a project called Ungdomsblikk (Youth gaze: film project among youths at risk) where we have tried to meet these kinds of challenges through enabling the participant to make self-reflexive films.

Experiences doing research among teenagers is that it is a very time consuming process to be able to establish trustful relations where you are able to get hold on information which is of the quality Stoller (above) asks for.

Introducing reflexive film-courses where the Outgoing Social Service in different cities in Norway are recruiting participants, have been a positive experience. The youths in question are slipping away from the institutions supposed to take care of them. They have been eager to participate in these projects, often to the surprise for parents, teachers and others. The courses are seminar based, with both theoretical and practical training.

What we do in these courses is to introduce a series of methods to approach a theme for the short film they are going to make. The theme is supposed to be something close to own experience, good or bad, funny or sad, something that has made an impression. We are mapping topographic information (Hastrup 2005), through making drawings, maps, photographing and different visual strategies. These are used to define the topic of the film. Our most important tool is a pure anthropological one; we are setting them to work on the theme for the film through identifying social situations that for some reason are important for them. Like Barth (1981) or Stoller (1989) we want to sense the experience in the situation. Depending on the

\(^5\) Se the Copperbelt studies from the Manchester School and other Urban Anthropology studies from Africa. Post colonial theory.
topic they are sent to videoing from situations in their everyday life. The footage is then taken back to the class to be discussed, in the group and with the teachers, which contribute with interpretations of what they see and read into the material. These comments found the arguments for how to continue with the work. What are the next to film? And why?

In one of these courses we had two 13 years old girls who where a part of a milieu of violent girl gangs. The local newspaper had written front-pages on them; the police was involved; teachers refused to have them in class and the parents were overwhelmed and resigned. For the school and the municipality it was a critical situation; the girls gave up the school. The two girls recruited came from opposite gangs in the conflict.

When discussing the theme for their film project with them the fighting was not discussed as an option. Neither of them could find their way into the film. They agreed that friendship was important. They had problems with their parents, boyfriend relations were on and off, they had given up spare time activities, school was of little interest. In such a situation we might say that life is vulnerable and that is why friends are of such an importance. There was so many idiots, so much violence, so much jalousie, so many things that happened and so many that just turned their back to them. For us the immediate challenge was how to go from this insight to a concrete film strategy?

We did as we would have done with students in anthropology who know the theme but cannot decide upon a research project. We asked them to find situations where they could find relations where their interest could be studied. Where could the importance of friendship be observed? Their response to this question gave us examples from a series of arenas. So we sent them to film in their classroom and in the schoolyard. They came back with some 20 minutes footage showing their classmates and other pupils in the breaks at school.

The footage was screened and we all contributed in the discussion with what we had observed and understood. Any anthropologist is trained to reflect and comment upon these kinds of setting: how to make sense out of observations of people interacting? What we do looking through footage is to interpret what we see, to come with tentative suggestions on how the situation with its actors could be categorized based on our observation of how the different actors behaved, how they sat on their chairs, how they were dressed, grouped in the room, etc.

After hearing our comments the girls were surprised and they asked me: How old are you? I responded. How can you be able to understand us! They went on giving additional information on what divided the different categories, using concepts as “loosers”, “biches” and “angels” (they used these English terms, talking Norwegian). Now they went into analysing one actor after the other, categorizing the appearance, referring to memory (about what happened last weekend, last month) etc.

The comments we gave them placed the different actors in the classroom in different social categories. This is a first step in Barths (1981) situation analysis. Our first attempts to categorise were not necessarily right, but the method functioned. They saw through the material again, made analysis of the different actors’ behaviour, who where together with whom, commenting upon how one of the girls behaved last Saturday, referring to situations outside the images. It was striking how these images appealed to memory, was useful for comparison and opened up for comments on ways of behaving, using the room etc. The method functioned as a way to systematise information and give context to social patterns.

What happened through this session was that we gave them a method to organize and approach their own experience in a direct and systematized way, a method that helped them to make order in their chaotic life experience. Through filming and discussing this and other situations they came to an agreement on how these descriptions should be understood, which again made the conflict between the two of them irrelevant.

Through this workshop we, the anthropologists, could give our informants two kinds of knowledge. First the art of filmmaking, with coping with a camera, using editing software and doing film analysis, and secondly they learned something about analysing social situations. From them we made audio-visual descriptions which where made “thick” through their engaged and sensitive comments to our attempts to do analysis. We got the information needed to analyse those challenges that had led to the communicative barriers and the following violence that had characterized their everyday life the last months.
Example 2
From prejudice to laughter

Visual Cultural Studies at University in Tromsø has been engaged in a collaborative project with University of Ngaoundéré in North Cameroon. For twenty years we have been working consciously toward building up a visual anthropology department at this peripheral University in the South. Ngaoundéré is situated in an extremely diversified region when it comes to religious and ethnic groups. Ngaoundéré has undertaken a process of extreme rapid urbanisation (as many West- and Central-African cities (see UN habitat, Kaplan 1994)). Ngaoundéré has grown from 40 000 to 400 000 in less then 50 years (1954 to 2000). The University of Ngaoundéré has become an important arena for discussing and solving what could be situations with conflict potential.

Also in Ngaoundéré we have been giving workshops, but now to groups of students, representing this variety of backgrounds and life-experiences. The students were, in contradiction to the Norwegian youths, trained in anthropological theory and methodology and this course counted in their social science master's. These students, representing the diversity in the city, were given concrete exercises – all of whom should enable them to study a phenomenon decided by their teachers from Cameroon and Norway. After different considerations, it was decided that they where to make films about petite-commerce, a field of involvement from all kinds of populations represented in the city.

Cameroon has since the early 1990ties experienced a rapid urbanisation and a growing economic crisis (Aerts et al. 2000). At the same time there have been tendencies to ethnic polarization in the North (Burnham 1996). These polarisations are to some extent reproduced on the university campus (Munkejord 2002, Waage 2003). There might be a danger that collective representations based on prejudices can lead to conflicts (post-colonial theory).

In Ngaoundéré all the inhabitants in the city are participating in trade some way or another. Trade, through its competition, can be seen as one of the activities in the city that is contributing to polarization and competition between people with different ethnic identity (see Cohen 1969 for a classical example). Muslim traders from the North of the country are competing with Christian traders from the South; immigrants from Chad, RCA, Nigeria are competing with local traders; Fulani people are now leaving the cattle herds and involving in what was a Hausa monopoly one generation ago etc.

The workshop process at University of Ngaoundéré was to a large extent similar to the one described (above). What we emphasised here was to get out the different participants' (students) prejudices and preconceived ideas beforehand and to discuss these in the following process to clarify the different students' understanding of the phenomena studied in the different phases of the project.

Films about a man running a small shop in a downtown quarter, a student couple making doughnuts, and a woman at the marked selling vegetables were the outcome of this particular workshop. The process led the students through varied discussions on the similarities between a Christian woman, a Muslim man and an unmarried Christian couple when it came to practising their business. Through the process preconceived ideas met with new information. What was common for all traders was the way they had built up a business around some key relations where their home area and ethnical identity where important. These relations where characterized by confidence and trust whereas other relations where not.

What we achieved through the workshop was that we could point at the different students' prejudices at the different steps, and their biases were clarified through continuous discussions and by comparing what we saw in one project with what was presented in another. Then questions on similarities and differences came up. So did the challenge of cross-cultural representation. Comparison of the audio-visual descriptions of everyday activities enabled us to

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6 There are 280 ethnic groups and 280 languages among Cameroon's 20 millions inhabitants.
7 Int.'l evaluation report of the Ngaoundéré-Anthropos project 1999. University of Accra, Ghana and SIK, Stavanger.
8 See http://uit.no.
9 Sociology, anthropology and history students were present.
identify similarities and differences in the challenges that small-scale traders are facing. To a large extent these challenges were similar. How these activities were understood by the differently positioned actors/filmmakers gave us information on how stereotypes are constructed and deconstructed.

Sensory experience in engaged storytelling

The potential of using living images and sound in ethnographic knowledge establishing has long been known (Beatson; Mead; Rouch; Hockins; Ruby 1985; Holtendahl 1995; MacDougall 1998). What I wanted to do here was to take the debate further.

Using audio-visual tools in collaboration with informants is a question about reciprocity. Reciprocity has for long been an important object within the field of Social Anthropology. Instead of asking what role reciprocity plays in the field studied, we as anthropologists could start by asking what we can give our informants. Are there any useful gifts we can contribute with, beside money? In what way can we make ourselves attractive for our informants? Goffmann (1959) is claiming that what every person in any situation does is to try to make himself attractive to the people he meets, to achieve what he wants. If it is so, it is a paradox that anthropological gifts have not been on the research agenda. Our experience from such different contexts as Cameroon, Mali and Northern-Norway is that you are taken seriously when you give or propose something to your informants. When making film you have to be taken seriously – you have to collaborate to be able to film.

The debate on self-reflexivity that came up in the 1980ties was motivated by the crisis of representation, where anthropological texts were critiqued. The debate was on how we as researchers are contextualising data. The main points made were that subjectivity is strengthening research when utilised consciously. Instead of searching for an imagined objectivity, reflexive subjectivity adds to the thickness of the data in a process where both the anthropologist's and the collaborators' reflections are used to share experience. I claim that this kind of reflection has the potential to, first, give ethnographic data for a detailed description of the social life we are studying, and, secondly, contribute to processes that have a potential for positive social change, based on the same reflections.

The knowledge we here are talking about are strategies for the informants, so they themselves can explore important issues in their lives. Making a documentary film is in its methodology an explorative procedure. It is this process we are both teaching and learning.

What we achieved in the example of the two girls was that they agreed upon common interpretations of descriptions of situations were the key actors in the conflict participated. This was achieved through discussing what selected situations meant. Through that process prejudices came up; they clarified their points and eventually agreed. In this process they tested out each other’s cultural codes. For these girls the conflict was solved through the process.

For us as anthropologists, this approach and their engaged comments to us while trying to analyse the footage were what we needed to describe and analyse dynamics among teenagers in that specific context. We learned about the complexity of cultural codes they had to master on the different social fields where they were active; these where social fields they had recently started to use. It was the junior high school, the city centre, a game centre and a public youth centre. What characterised all these contexts was that rules of relevance were under negotiation. Friendship relations from school were not relevant at the youth centre in town because of new settings with new relation repertoires. Meaning and identity were not agreed upon. This was the analytical background of the conflict which had developed among the girls. Their own audiovisual descriptions of some situations, and subsequent analyses of these situations, contributed to a new approach to address the problem. Through engaged descriptions the conflict was solved.

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10 I have recently been given a Photography and Ethnography course in Bamako, Mali for students. All of the students thought that introducing the camera in the field would be difficult, because in Mali are people sceptical when it comes to be taken photographs of. When the informants where explained and later given copies of the photographs taken, the responses where overwhelming positive and engaged.
In Cameroon the communicative barriers were of another kind; they were not violent, but characterized by ethnic and regional stereotypes. What we learned when we discussed concrete descriptions of business activities was what kind of processes that were involved in the construction of stereotypes and how easy such biased understandings can be corrected through transforming ideas to concrete social situations.

After testing out this method for years in many settings (Northern-Norway, Cameroon and Mali), we are convinced of its potential to contribute to fruitful data and solutions to many kinds of conflicts. We do believe that the method can be utilised in other and more directly turbulent contexts.

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You Say Security, We Say Safety: Speaking and Talking "Security" in Kyrgyzstan

Claire Wilkinson

Abstract

The Copenhagen School's notion of securitization is widely recognised as an important theoretical innovation in the conceptualisation of security, not least for its potential for including a range of actors and spatial scales beyond the state. However, its empirical utility remains more open to question due to a lack of reflexivity regarding local socio-cultural contexts, narrow focus on speech and inherently retrospective nature. Drawing on fieldwork conducted by the author in Kyrgyzstan between September 2005 and June 2006, this paper will examine the implications of these limitations for conducting empirical research on "security" logistically and methodologically. Centrally, the question of how “security” can be researched in the field will be discussed. Consideration will be given to the researcher's role in talking “security” and how “security” can effectively be located and explicated through the creation of ethnomethodological “thick description”. Issues of contingency, multiple voices and power loci, and inter-cultural translation will be addressed. The paper will conclude with a consideration of how local knowledge can be used to inform our research and help find ways to bridge the divide between the field and theory.

Introduction: Meanwhile in Kyrgyzstan...

...here [in Kyrgyzstan] everything’s done on paper, but in actual fact there is no security/safety.1

Kyrgyzstan, the smallest of the five former-Soviet Central Asian republics, has been the subject of heightened international attention ever since the events of early 2005, which culminated on March 24 with the overthrow of then-president Askar Akaev’s government in the so-called “Tulip Revolution”.2 Since then the socio-economic and political situation in this mountainous ex-Soviet republic have remained unstable. Social unrest has remained high: according to official data, 2006 saw 726 unsanctioned protests, demonstrations and marches, whilst estimates put the number of similar events in 2005 at around 2000.3 Certainly, going on statistics, the situation looks quite severe, even allowing for the number of protests in 2006 being a vast improvement on the 2005 figure. This impression is only strengthened by the fact that both mass media and analytical coverage of post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan has tended to focus on the prevalence of phenomena associated with instability: public demonstrations, assassinations, the “criminalisation” of the country, the inability of the government to carry out reforms or respond to the demands of the public. After the initially positive reaction in the West, seen in the characterisation of the “Tulip Revolution” as a continuation of the “colour revolutions” that had occurred in Georgia and Ukraine, enthusiasm rapidly waned as the “revolution” remained unfinished. This change of mood was clearly evident in the title of the International Crisis Group’s December 2005 report, Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State4, and, later in 2006,

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1 Interview with representatives of youth educational NGO Peremena, Bishkek, 24/11/2005
Kyrgyzstan’s high ranking in The Fund for Peace’s Failed States Index 2006, which was based on data collected between May and December 2005.\(^5\)

In light of these circumstances, security is inevitably a topic that is often mentioned, be it in terms of state viability or territorial integrity, high corruption levels or, at the human end of the scale, the continuing high levels of poverty\(^6\) and poor health indicators.\(^7\) But with “security” being mentioned so frequently and in so many contexts: how to study this arguably “contest concept” in a reasonably meaningful way? What does it actually mean to research “security”? Is there a danger that we may in fact contribute to perceptions of insecurity by focusing on security?

These questions are especially pertinent for research that attempts to bridge the divide between the theoretical and the empirical, as in the case of the fieldwork discussed in this paper. Following a brief outline of the theoretical framework that was initially intended to provide a guide for fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan, the rest of this paper will consider how the field researcher can begin to locate “security”. What sources can be used and what must be considered when choosing sources and informants? Can the fieldworker, post-fieldwork, responsibly claim to simply be reporting what “security” was found, as the Copenhagen School suggests?\(^8\) Discussion will be grounded in the author’s experiences of conducting fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan between September 2005 and June 2006 (September 2005 – January 2006 in the capital, Bishkek, March – June 2006 in the republic’s second city in the south, Osh).\(^9\)

The penultimate section will focus on the role of interviews, highlighting how ambiguities of meaning and context can be used reflexively to inform both the fieldwork process and the theoretical framework. This notion of reflexive and abductive fieldwork will then be extended with a consideration of how an interpretivist approach to constructing “security” could enhance the empirical potential of securitization, despite the epistemological implications. It will be argued that “security” cannot be seen as an objective phenomenon that can simply be located and reported; rather, the researcher must situate herself and her research within local contexts, showing how her data has been constructed and her role in this process.

The paper concludes by suggesting that local knowledge may provide a way to bridge the empirical, methodological and theoretical divides: it is only by focusing on processes and their specificities that it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of “security” beyond the direct application of theoretical approaches.

“Outside” the Field: In the Virtual Reality of Theory

The problem with reality is that it interferes with my theory.\(^10\)

The Copenhagen School’s concepts of securitisation and societal security were chosen to provide the theoretical framework for an investigation into interrelationships between various community groups and their perceptions of threats and sources of threats to their community identities. The original pre-fieldwork rationale for this choice was that in principle the Copenhagen School’s framework provides the means to consider referent objects (that which is threatened and whose preservation is presented as being worthy of extraneous measures beyond the realm of “normal” politics) other than the state, such as the economy, the environment or the nation. It is, therefore, theoretically possible to look beyond the state and broaden the security agenda to conceptualise threats to non-state-centric referent objects on a variety of levels, from

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\(^6\) The State Statistics Committee’s most recent figure for the percentage of the population living below the poverty line is 44% (2002). See [http://www.stat.kg/Rus/Home/MonBedn.html](http://www.stat.kg/Rus/Home/MonBedn.html) (accessed 15/03/2007).

\(^7\) The most recent (2004) WHO core health indicators for Kyrgyzstan are available at [http://www3.who.int/whosis/core/core_select_process.cfm?country=kgz&indicators=selected&language=en](http://www3.who.int/whosis/core/core_select_process.cfm?country=kgz&indicators=selected&language=en) (accessed 20/03/2007).


\(^9\) Fieldwork was funded by the Economic & Social Research Council as part of award number PTA-030-2003-00646.

\(^10\) Comment from a political scientist during lunch-time conversation, Copenhagen, April 2005.
Speaking and Talking "Security" in Kyrgyzstan

the domestic to the global. This is obviously quite a seductive prospect for the significant number of scholars dissatisfied with the narrow focus of “traditional” (i.e. Realist or neo-Realist) International Relations (IR) and Security Studies on the state; whilst proclamations of the state’s demise have undoubtedly been premature, few could dispute that its status as the fundamental unit of the world order is still unchallenged in the post-Cold War era of glocalisation.

As a way of broadening the focus of security studies to include non-state units, the Copenhagen School developed the concept of sectoral security in their 1998 work Security: A New Framework for Analysis,11 building on Barry Buzan’s work in the second edition of People, States and Fear.12 A system of five security sectors is presented, each with its own referent object: two sectors – the military and political – keep the state as their referent object, while a third – the economic sector – is also likely to be state-centric. The other two sectors, the environmental and societal, move away from the state, having as their referent objects the environment and societal identities respectively. The purpose of the sectors is to break down the widened security into more manageable sections in order to facilitate analysis, with each sector “looking at the whole but […] seeing only one dimension”13

The societal sector is arguably the clearest example of the challenge to the state’s dominance in IR, with a particular community identity forming the referent object rather than the state in some form. The Copenhagen School posits that “in the present world system, the most important referent objects in the societal sector are tribes, clans, nations (and nation-like ethnic units, which others call minorities), civilizations, religions and race.”14 The Copenhagen School recognize that such identities are likely to intersect with “the explicitly political organizations concerned with government”, but argue that they are distinct in that “society is about identity, the self-conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community.”15 It is worth clarifying here that the terms society and societal are not used to refer to the population of a state per se, but rather to refer to “communities with which one identifies”.16

Securitization, whereby security is conceptualized as a “speech-act”,17 is then used to locate “security” in each sector. The concept hinges on the idea that speaking “security” is an act in itself, it is more than just an utterance. The “security” part of the act is taken to signify the presence of an existential threat to a referent object, or, more simply, a threat to its continued survival. This (real or perceived) existential threat is then used rhetorically to argue for the implementation of measures not sanctioned within “normal” politics. In the words of the Copenhagen School, securitization “is the move that that takes an issue beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special sort of politics or as above politics.”18 Only if this move is accepted – i.e. the proposed measures are approved of by the audience – then a securitization has occurred. If the invocation of “security” is not accepted, then it is only possible to talk of a “securitizing move”, in which case an issue does not, in the end, count as “security”.

On a purely theoretical level these conceptualizations are not unproblematic, as the considerable and growing body of literature critiquing different aspects of the Copenhagen School testifies to.19 However, attempting an empirical investigation of “security” utilizing the

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14 Ibid: 123.
16 Ibid: 120.
18 Ibid: 23.
framework provided by the Copenhagen School has arguably proved even more problematic: theoretical concerns about the privileging of the public voice over other forms of expression\(^\text{20}\), the reification of identities\(^\text{21}\), the inherently retrospective and outcome-orientated nature of securitization\(^\text{22}\) and the role of the analyst\(^\text{23}\) are made more immediate. Whilst the theory requires that events have already taken place and the outcome known, fieldwork requires attention to be paid as much to process, recalling Kirkgaard’s axiom that life must understood backwards but lived forwards. In the field, strategies to cope with this Kirkgaardian paradox, both generally and specifically in relation to the theoretical approach of the research must be found/improvised, as will be discussed.

In the case of my research, even once “out” of the field, it is still necessary to find ways to negotiate and mediate between the theoretical and empirical, this time linguistically. Virtually all fieldwork was conducted in Russian, but the research is being written up in English and uses concepts defined and explained in English. Specifically, and centrally, the word “security” presents a problem: whilst English draws a distinction between “security” and “safety”, Russian has only one word, bezopasnost, literally meaning “without danger” and defined as “not threatened with danger, protected from danger”.\(^\text{24}\) It often appeared to me that people talked more about safety in an immediate physical sense than security in the sense of an existential threat. It is often difficult to distinguish between the two at the sub-national level, particularly in light of the unstable socio-political situation. Similarly, the societal dimension, with its focus on group identities, allows for greater overlap between safety and security than would be the case with inanimate, institutional referent objects such as the state, since discussion with people will be framed by whichever understanding of bezopasnost is more relevant to them, regardless of theoretical criteria. Throughout this paper I have preserved and highlighted this ambiguity of meaning in quoted interview excerpts by using the combination “security/safety” in quotations, rather than lay claim to “knowing” or correctly interpreting what my respondents meant.\(^\text{25}\) Whilst this deliberate ambiguity may seem unnecessary to some, I maintain that it is justified for the purposes of decentring both theory and the researcher and helping illustrate how “security” is understood in the fieldwork context.

The Researcher and “Security”

So there are very many different aspects of security/safety, of course there is security/safety in the sense of the country, the security/safety of an organisation, the security/safety that you and I are sitting here and have the opportunity to talk peacefully, that you have the opportunity to carry out your research. I simply didn’t know which [sort of] security/safety you had in mind (emphasis added – CW).\(^\text{26}\)

Both theoretically and practically, speaking “security” is a value-laden venture. Ole Waever goes so far as to suggest that the Copenhagen School’s conceptualisation of security, in contrast to the majority of mainstream approaches, has the distinct advantage that it “points to the inherently political nature of any designation of security issues and thus it puts an ethical


\[^{21}\text{McSweeney, Bill (1996).}\]


\[^{25}\text{All interviews were conducted in Russian. All translations are the author’s own.}\]

\[^{26}\text{Interview with Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Bishkek, 06/12/2005}\]
question at the feet of analysts, decision-makers and political activists alike: why do you call this a security issue? What are the implications of doing this – or not doing this?" However, all too often these questions have not been answered satisfactorily beyond epistemologically-based arguments that have little empirical application.

Thus the field researcher is left with a very fundamental question: how to approach “security” in the field? The fieldworker no longer has the “advantage” of merely “observing how others advocate [security]” to paraphrase Eriksson: he is now on the ground alongside his research subject and faces many of the same issues as his informants as he tries to make sense of events going on around him. Contrary to what theory often suggests, events do not happen in a stepwise, logical, measured fashion. Rather, they are “messy” – seemingly unpredictable, random, spontaneous, and in the field have to be dealt with in unedited, complex, multiple form.

Unfortunately, the final research account, framed by theory, is most often stripped of process, of the fieldwork experience. It is a depersonalised, “objective”, step-wise account of completed research that is concerned with “facts” that have largely been sterilised – in effect decontextualised, simplified, edited for presentation. At best we can expect a formal methodological description of the fieldwork, stripped of serendipity, chance and spontaneity. In the same manner, too often the application of theory provides no place for the researcher, either as Researcher or simply as a person. Yet in the field the researcher is an integral part of her research. Her decisions and actions impact on her material, even if only in subtle ways such as how people respond to her. Take for example the quotation at the start of this section: “I simply didn’t know which [sort of] security/safety you had in mind.” Regardless of my efforts to keep the question as neutral and non-personal as possible, my respondent instinctively wished the frame his answer to meet my inferred requirements – in this case the requirements of a junior Western researcher asking a journalist writing for an international audience about “security”.

Our respondents implicitly – and sometimes explicitly – write us into our own research; their responses are given within the context of what they know or have inferred about us, as well as their own personal context. The change in dynamics this can create, with the respondent at times holding the dominant position, further draws us into our research data, making us an integral part of the material we create and subsequently present. It was an exchange during an recorded interview with an ethnic community leader that made me feel my pretence of “objectivity” and, perhaps more importantly, impartiality, was decontextualising my research: the “security” that we were discussing implicitly through reference to the threat of religious terrorism was grounded in our perceptions of each other as much as in my respondent’s personal experiences, as the following excerpt shows:

CW [interviewer]: So you have already spoken about extremism, terrorism. How real, from your point of view, is the threat of religious extremism or terrorism? States are about always talking about it.

Ittipak Representative [respondent]: You know, I’d say once again, if it wasn’t for the machinations of the special services, well, we’ll be open, who gave rise to Bin Laden?

CW: I’d say the Americans.

IR: Well, then, you see, it’s politics again. And then evidently something somewhere didn’t work out, or may be it’s still something, some kind of continuation of that game. And today, to say that, supposedly, religious fanatics are ruling, well then, let’s acknowledge that these problems have been in the Christian world. Ulster, right, and it still is [a problem]. But yet again I understand that they [the problems] have occurred where? That means where a certain Catholic minority has been subject to discrimination. If this wasn’t the case, then there wouldn’t be these problems. …

My respondent firstly drew me in, turning the tables on me as interviewer by asking me a question, forcing me to take a position that one way or another had the potential to affect our rapport and therefore what opinions he expressed in the remainder of the interview. Implicitly

29 Interview with representative of the Uighur Association Ittipak, 19/12/2005.
my answer, which in this case corresponded to his perception of events, created a degree of shared understanding about the subject being discussed. Secondly, his use of Northern Ireland as an example of religious-based conflict further personalised and contextualised our conversation. On a basic level it reflected his awareness that he was talking to someone of British nationality but, as he had previously established by asking about Bin Laden, who was not uncritical of Western foreign policy. It also permitted him to keep control of the conversation as he explained his views to me using “safe” examples from a political point of view, before moving to talk about the more politically-sensitive topic of China’s labelling Uighurs as religious extremists.

Reflecting on the transcript of this interview and others, I was struck by the dishonesty of using excerpts as evidence of “security” without contextualising how this “security/safety” was created. Firstly, there is the ethical matter of how we represent our informants and their words. Particularly with people who could be identified and whose position is politically or socially sensitive, not making the context of their comments clear would be highly irresponsible. This contextualisation does not just extend to using longer excerpts of transcripts to situate what is said. It also needs to involve reflection on the interviewer/researcher’s position and how this may have affected what has been said. Particularly for groups that feel marginalised or discriminated against, talking to a foreign researcher or journalist can be a way to be heard, to have a “voice” in some respects. Beyond the basic level of feeling that someone is paying attention, appealing to a foreign or international audience is often seen as a potential way to get one’s narrative accepted and demands met.

One example of this concerned people involved in long-term protests demanding that the government allocate land on the outskirts of Bishkek after the protesters had moved from rural areas to Bishkek and seized land. After several months of fruitless protests both on-site and in the city centre outside the main government building, the White House, the protesters started including placards in English (see photo below), rather than Kyrgyz and Russian.

This would seem to imply that this group of protestors had decided to focus on an international audience, most probably in the form of international organisations such as the OSCE, UNDP or USAID which all have a presence in the republic, in the hope that they would endorse their protest and help elicit a favourable response – usually unsuccessfully.

Returning to the theoretical framework of securitization in instances such as these proved largely unhelpful. After all, given the unstable socio-political state of post-Akaev

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30 I use this term to avoid the more controversial and politically-loaded appellation “post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan”.

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Kyrgyzstan, virtually all issues were being framed in existential terms on multiple levels: the future existence of the country was being questioned, as was the future of many societal groups, including the Kyrgyz themselves, and on the personal level people did not know how they would live in the future. Indeed, many people were quick to tell me that there was no security in Kyrgyzstan, reflecting the mood of extreme uncertainty in the face of a seemingly endless stream of crises that the government often appeared unwilling, or unable, to respond effectively to, in spite of occasional and often belated pronouncements to the contrary.

At the same time, there was no shortage of groups demanding immediate solutions to their problems regardless of the legality of their demands. Such demands were often expressed publicly and loudly through public demonstrations, some times with threats of violence, including self-immolation on several occasions. Effectively, “normal” politics – the Copenhagen School’s default starting arena for the launching of a securitization – did not exist, as could be expected following the overthrow of the president and his apparatus. In effect, there was no vertical of power that would act as a filter for securitizing moves by establishing who had sufficient social capital to effectively speak “security”. Instead, the situation was one of multiple voices struggling to be heard on multiple geographic, social and even political levels. Reference to theory here was little use as the framework and even the basic criteria could not capture the nuances of the situation.

One possible way to “filter” the mass of primary field data that can be observed and documented would be to see which narratives are reported by the mass media. This would, in principle, provide a benchmark if not for securitizations, then at least for “significant” securitising moves, echoing the Copenhagen School’s recognition of the impact such moves can have on the broader situation.31 However, this method is not without its problems either, as Hans-Henrik Holm notes, pointing out that what makes the front page is determined by local cultural, historical and ideological context.32 In this respect the media act as a gatekeeper, with their own agendas to pursue and promote. The editor of the independent local newspaper Itogi nedeli in Osh was blunt on this matter, noting at his choice of front page was dictated by what would sell the most copies. For example, a recent issue uncovering the awarding of incorrect degree certificates33 apparently sold very well, whilst “when there is a political theme, there are far fewer copies sold.”34 Similarly, IWPR’s Country Director noted that the material published reflected the interests of the international audience, explaining that

...we want to tell people what is happening in the world through the voice of simple journalists. Usually it happens that some correspondent or other comes from abroad, spends two or three days in the Hyatt, files his story and leaves. That is, he’s here for one event or another. We try to make sure that local voices are heard on the international level, and this predetermines our choice, that is, we want to cover those stories that are understandable to an international reader, [...] sometimes it might be topics that are exotic and interesting for an international reader.35

As can be seen, different audiences receive different information, and, particularly in the case of “speech acts”, the media effectively filters what narratives get heard. One further way the researcher may seek to triangulate her impressions is through the use survey and public opinion data. Aside from the problem of direct comparability between data sets, there is also the issue of the contingency of results. The magnitude of contingency’s effect should not be underestimated, as the following example illustrates. In both Bishkek and Osh I arranged to have a social survey about perceptions of identity carried out.36 In addition to questions about native language, nationality, religion and aspects of personality, a general question on political views was included: “Are you for a democratic society or for strong power (or other)?” As

31 “A better measure of importance is the scale of chain reactions on other securitizations: How big an impact does the securitizing move have on wider patterns of relations? A securitizing move can easily upset orders of mutual accommodation among units.” Buzan, Barry, Jaap de Wilde & Ole Wæver (1998): 26.
34 Interview with editor of Itogi nedeli, Osh, 05/05/2006.
35 Interview with Country Director, IWPR, Bishkek, 06/12/2005.
Table One below shows, there was a large difference in the responses from Bishkek and Osh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of respondents in Bishkek (Dec 2005)</th>
<th>% of respondents in Osh (June 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For democratic society</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For strong power</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For both</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table One.** Responses to the question “Are you for a democratic society or for strong power (or other)?”

One might expect some differences between responses in the northern, more secular, more Russified capital and the southern city of Osh, with its large Uzbek population and reputation for being more religious and conservative, but the results seem to be counterintuitive: it would seem logical for support for democracy to be higher in Bishkek than in Osh, as the former is less traditional, more socially liberal and more open to external influences. However, the statistics suggest the opposite is true.

In this case, it is possible to suggest that the timing of the survey had a significant effect on the results. In Bishkek on October 28, 2005, there had been a large public rally under the slogan “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Organised Crime”. This was the culmination of a series of protests by competing groups that was sparked by the murder of a parliamentary deputy on October 20. The leader of one of the protesting groups was the murdered deputy’s brother, the known criminal authority Ryspek Akmatbaev. After several days of protests demanding the immediate resignation of the then-Prime Minister, Feliks Kulov, President Kurmanbek Bakiev agreed to meet with a delegation from the group protesting against his Prime Minister. Understandably, this raised fears amongst the public that the government was weak and in danger of becoming criminalised. Given the resonance of this situation, as well as evidence that residents of the capital are relatively more aware of crime and concerned about instability, it is perhaps less surprising that a relatively low proportion of respondents said they were solely in favour of a democratic society.

Similarly, a consideration of the situation in Osh, as well as Kyrgyzstan more widely, in June 2006 suggests that the survey data is highly contingent. On a local level protests in Osh had been extremely limited in number and size and generally related to local issues such as perceived unfair arrests. There was also a general sense of “protest fatigue” even when speaking about opposition-led rallies being held in Bishkek, if indeed people were aware of them. In the same way, nationally the situation had been less tense and there had been fewer protests overall, with those that did occur taking place predominantly in the north. Perceptions of instability may also have been lower due to different and more limited media coverage of protests in favour of more local concerns. In these circumstances democracy is more likely to be seen in positive terms, such as a guarantee of being able to practice one’s religion, rather than an ineffective form of government in the face of serious threats.

The researcher is therefore not necessarily any better off in relying on the media or statistical data as an indicator of securitizations. Once again, it is a question of slowly building up a composite picture using as many sources as possible and taking care to critically evaluate

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37 As of 2005, according to official data Uzbeks comprised 31.25% of the population of Osh oblast. (Figures from the Osh Dom druzhby, 23 May 2006.)
39 Informal interviews, Osh, 26 April 2006.
all information and associated assumptions. Broadly speaking, an ethnographic approach is likely to be most suitable for this, even if it requires setting aside one’s theoretical framework to ensure one does not simply find what the theory suggests should be found. Adopting such an approach is not the anathema many theoreticians suggest. Rather, as Bayard de Volo and Schatz point out, “The irony is that although political scientists, as students of power and politics, are well positioned to consider these links, the discipline tends to ignore them.”

Similarly, the Copenhagen School is not fundamentally opposed to empirical studies; indeed in Buzan and Wæver’s most recent book there is explicit recognition of the current lack of empirically-based case studies of securitization. The question, as we have seen, is how to conduct such a study.

Talking bezopasnost, Security and/or Safety

Q: What, in your opinion, does the word bezopasnost mean?
A: The government has in mind the absence of war with neighbouring countries, we have more in mind… all this bloodletting, inequality, it’s frightening. There’s such a sense of fear now.

In light of the centrality of reflexivity to undertaking a successful empirical study of “security”, ambiguities that arise must be particularly closely considered. I was already conscious of any “interviewer effect”, or simply of potentially contributing to perceptions of insecurity due to my (junior) status as a Western researcher. Widespread distrust of the government and authorities has resulted in people expressing a preference for information from non-governmental or non-Kyrgyz sources, extending to asking the opinion of visiting contractors on issues such as water cleanliness rather than trust published statistics, for example. It was necessary to be careful, therefore, to ensure as far as possible that I was not seen as an expert in any way. In terms of appearance this was largely uncomplicated due to being perceived as very young and previously having been known as a student by several key contacts.

When talking to people I generally avoided calling myself a political scientist, which is considered quite academically prestigious, preferring to refer to my background in Russian language and literature (academically not prestigious), or sometimes calling myself a sociologist. Furthermore, during interviews and conversations I described my research in very broad terms, stressing that I wanted to hear what people thought and learn. I tended to present the issue in a number of ways, usually mentioning the words "society", "perceptions of security", "relations with the state", "identity" and "communities", avoiding defining any particular sort of “security”, or indeed, “safety”. I feel this approach was warranted in light of the value-laden nature of words like "security", but on the other it meant that locating “security” became a very context-dependent venture, both in terms of what events had recently happened, and potentially how exactly I framed the question.

To help address this issue I introduced a check question during interviews: “what does “security” mean to you? On its own this question would have been wholly inadequate, but within the wider context it proved to be very important in picking up nuances, contradictions and ensuring I did not leap to conclusions on the basis of limited information. In addition, from a theoretical perspective, it further highlighted the need to understand what we – and others – mean when we use certain words, since no word is value-neutral and our usage informed by a myriad of socio-cultural factors that require explicit interrogation by the fieldworker.

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42 Interview with representative of the Osh branch of the Uzbek National-Cultural Association “Orzu”, Osh, 05/06/2006
43 Reported in conversation with a DFID contractor, Bishkek, November 2005.
Of all the interviews I conducted in Bishkek and Osh, only members of Kel-Kel, a youth organisation that was a high-profile actor in protests leading up to the "Tulip Revolution", immediately moved for a definition related to the state rather than considering a number of levels first. Answers ranged from a largely abstract consideration of “security”, as in the case of the above quotation from IWPR’s Country Director, to very personal accounts, such as that given by a member of Labrys, an NGO supporting lesbian, bisexual and male-to-female transnegendered people:

For me security/safety means when nobody intrudes into my personal life, when nobody hurts me, when my rights and beliefs are respected. And security for me is when it is quiet on the street, when I can walk around alone at night, when I do not fear meeting my husband somewhere around the corner (which I often did). Security/safety is when you just know that your day will be calm, free of stress or negative experiences. My husband used to beat me up constantly… So when I go to bed without having been told off or beaten up or having had my mood spoiled by anyone, I think I have had a safe day. That is, security/safety is when nothing threatens you.

Several respondents were keen to stress the absence of security/safety in Kyrgyzstan: “Security/safety, it seems, means that there is such a system in the country so that there is respect towards individuals and that people are permitted to be themselves, because at the moment we don’t have this. So, in this sense, we have no security/safety” reasoned one youth activist in Bishkek.46 Another youth activist who also worked as a journalist framed his answer with reference to an attack he had recently suffered:

Safety/security isn’t even a topic here now, I’ll just say one thing, everyone, most likely, knows, there’s been attacks on deputies, they have openly made threats by telephone, openly said to me that if I don’t leave Osh they’ll come and get me. I did a sort of hidden interview with them, the border guards come in, even in the open they’re not afraid of me and openly beat me badly. That was in Osh not long ago, around the 6th or 7th of December. Well then, what sort of talk about security/safety can there be?

Most frequently, however, interviewees were keen to stress the range of possible definitions, often contextualising their answers in considerable detail. For example, the president of one local NGO working on conflict prevention and mediation explained how definitions of “security” have changed over time, but that currently different actors – in this case the Kyrgyzstani government and the NGO sector respectively – are using differing definitions of security:

… this is possibly from my experience of work. Now we already have several understandings in the region of what SSB is, incidentally thanks to international organisations, that earlier by SSB we always had in mind state SSB or regional SSB and today we focus on the term human SSB. I think that this understanding [of the term] is getting through to a certain elite, to a certain section of the elite. Secondly, who answers for it, if earlier, as we said there was such an understanding, a sovkou understanding, as state SSB, then the institutes of state were responsible for state SSB. As a rule this is the Ministry of Defence, the police, the Committee for National Security, and so on. Today, since we’re now talking about human SSB, there is also the notion that not only state institutions are responsible for it [i.e. SSB], but that the civil sector should also carry responsibility. … Further, since we’re talking again about state SSB, it is borders, one’s territory, the territory of the country, maybe it’s natural resources, it’s intelligence officers, the CIA and the like as a threat. Today we include in SSB such things as a quality education, for example, equal access to resources, ecology has become a very serious matter, and, well, quality of life in general. So we’re already changing the component parts of the word SSB. Well, and, if earlier when we talked of SSB then, as a rule, we were looking as an external enemy as a threat, some form of inter-state war. But today, when we talk about SSB, here , undoubtedly, we’re talking about internal political chemistry, put it this way, about the interrelationships between the authorities, the opposition and citizens,

45 Interview with member of LBT NGO Labrys, Bishkek, 14/12/2005.
47 Interview with representative of KelKel Youth Movement, Bishkek, 22/11/2005.
about the presence or absence or weakness or strength of mechanisms of state institutions or other institutions that are capable of resolving disputed, conflictual problems.  

The researcher is thus faced with a problem. All of these interviewees were selected as representatives of communities who had in the past been able to effectively act as securitizing actors (successfully or unsuccessfully), invoking a societal referent object and presenting a threat narrative in the public domain (usually via the mass media). Yet, as can be seen, when interviewed they often spoke in far more personal terms than solely as a community spokesman. The Copenhagen School’s assertion that societal identities can be viewed as largely stable or “sedimented” is therefore problematic, since the degree of stability does not preclude other identities intersecting with them and indeed shaping the societal identity in question. The inherent relativity and contingency of identities, both those of the people in the field and our own, place the researcher in a unique and often uncomfortable position between the field and theory. 

Once identity is viewed as more flexible, multiple and co-constitutive with events, then we once again see the importance of contingency in securitization and therefore the necessity to consider the relationships between individual securitizing moves, which often operate across multiple levels, appeal to multiple audiences and may be in direct conflict. This is especially true in Kyrgyzstan, as in other so-called “weak” states, where there are multiple loci of power, both official (various levels of government, political opposition, national-cultural organisations, the NGO sector) and unofficial (local criminal authorities, sections of the mass media), meaning that non-state actors with sufficient social authority have as much “voice”, or even more “voice” as state-recognised actors such as politicians. The researcher cannot simply locate “security”, or indeed any other phenomenon. Rather, she must build up sufficient description around it so that it is made “visible”, in much the same way as an artist may draw an object using negative space. The negative space in this case is “security”, which is interpreted in relation to that surrounding it, namely the field context and theoretical framework.

Interpreting “Security”: Local Knowledge Between Theory and Fieldwork

**CW:** What, in your opinion, are the most acute social problems in Osh?

**PG:** Oh, but I’m not a sociologist…

**CW:** No, but from your perspective as a journalist?

**PG:** I won’t take… I’m not going to talk about it, it would be unfair, I’m not a researcher or statistician. The last few months I’ve just been the manager of the newspaper, I demand that my journalists tell me what’s happening. I don’t have any right to even talk about it because I just switch on the TV and watch the news, I’m just a consumer.

Ironically, given the lengthy illustrations of the importance of context, positionality and reflexivity I have provided so far, much of the clearest explanation comes directly from the people being researched. Accessing this “local knowledge” is perhaps the most vital component for ensuring our work is fully contextualised and focused on the subject of research, not on the researcher. In this sense it is up to the researcher to present this knowledge and use it to both contextualise and decentre herself and her research. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from an open letter to President Kurmanbek Bakiev on November 30, 2005, by two representatives of the NGO sector that was circulated by email:

If the courts worked, and citizens’ problems were solved by competent state administration system specialists who were not indifferent, then there would not be any need to go out onto picket lines, demonstrations and protests. People decide to do this only when all other methods have been exhausted – letters, meetings, dialogues, appeals to the mass media.

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50 Interview with editor, *Itogi nedeli* newspaper, Osh, 05/05/2006
[...] in any case when people take to the streets and squares, it is vital for the government to pay particular attention to the reasons that led to such a step. This will give the opportunity to be in the course of all events, and a dynamic solution to the problems will facilitate the gradual recovery of society.\textsuperscript{51}

This letter concisely elucidates both the context – the failure of state institutions to address the needs of the people, the problem – public protests and immediate demands, as well how it can best be addressed in the authors’ opinion – understanding how the situation arose and keeping abreast of events as they happen. If, therefore, we are seeking to investigate a phenomenon that is fundamentally linked to events such as protests, using knowledge from the field to inform not only our conclusions but our methods would seem a logical step.

According to an opinion poll conducted in April 2005, “security” was rated as being the most important value to Kyrgyzstani people.\textsuperscript{52} Yet, as has been explored in this paper, such a “fact” is largely meaningless when taken out of its socio-political context. Recourse to theoretical frameworks cannot replace the detailed and careful interrogation of the object of study within a specific locale, paying attention to local understandings. Moving the local to the foreground of study, permits us to focus on specificities, ambiguities and the disjunctures between theory, method and the field. For the study of social phenomena, such an approach is likely to be far more revealing and nuanced than a focus on commonalities both theoretically and empirically, as well as facilitating the bridging of the gap that too-often exists between these two integral parts of research.


\textsuperscript{52} “Security” was given a mean score of 7.48, where 1 – “important to me” and 9 – “most important to me”. IRI, Baltic Surveys / The Gallup Organization Kyrgyzstan National Voters Study April 2005: 45.
Policy Statement

Traditional peace research has focused on violence and its consequences. Such a focus may divert attention from non-violent conflict resolution and similar actions, which often exist even in the midst of massive violence. It is possible that traditional peace research has thus neglected non-violent conflict resolution as well as the capacity for non-violence in peoples and cultures.

Therefore, the main task for the Centre for Peace Studies (CPS) at the University of Tromsø is to promote non-violent conflict resolution and the creation of peace. We believe that valuable knowledge may be found in areas of low levels of violence and that more useful lessons may be learned from successful conflict resolution than from areas of atrocities and failed resolution efforts.

Peace studies are concerned with inter-state relations, but also with a wide range of other social conflict lines, such as those related to gender, generation, culture, class, race, ethnicity and nation, as well as the conflict between human society and nature. Our studies are global, and our position in the peaceful Far North with a vast and sparsely populated area in a tough natural climate and a history of complex ethnic and cultural relations including the problems of hierarchy, recognition and cultural oppression, gives us a chance to learn from a wide range of non-violent conflict resolution methods. The wider region of the North of Europe also gives us a unique context in which to study conflict resolution while enabling us to compare our experience with experiences from other areas.

Peace studies consist of theoretical-empirical, critical and constructive work. As an applied science, peace studies should pay attention to the constructive part of the work.

From numerous and diverse cases ranging from everyday quarrels to large-scale massive unarmed revolutions in the last two decades, there are valuable experiences to study which may have been underestimated, lost or unjustly treated as insignificant by researchers. Even in the midst of violent conflicts, there are often actors using active non-violence. CPS will study non-violent conflict resolution empirically and comparatively and will apply a multi-disciplinary pluralistic approach. We will discuss the theoretical implications and communicate the results to a wide audience.

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