Introduction

This course is offered through the UCD Egalitarian World Initiative (EWI), Marie Curie Programme. It forms part of the PEFT (participatory, emancipatory, feminist, transformative) research methodologies programme that the Marie Curie Transfer of Knowledge project is designed to promote in UCD.

The ten week seminar course in qualitative methodology is designed to be both a retrospective and prospective. It looks at some familiar debates surrounding standpoint theories, research relationships and questions of representation (including how to ‘write’ data) from within new research. The seminar will take on board the now historical critique of fixed categories and unitary subjectivity; the challenge to deconstruct our own linear modernist narratives and ethnographies, and of how to use our more sophisticated understanding of discourses as constitutive of both the material and the cultural (and vice versa); as well as the place of positionality and reflexivity, in PEFT work.

Each session will include epistemological, methodological and ontological dimensions. Insights from feminist geography on space and place as social relations, and the dimension of time, as well as location, as a factor in inequality will permeate the discussion. Examples from the field are drawn from the transversal themes of gender,
race, disability, sexual orientation and other factors of ‘difference’, though a number have been selected to approach multiple identities through intersectionality, and not single categories or theories.

Some new methods such as PhotoVoice will be introduced, and older ones such as the ethnographic interview and life-history/narrative will be revisited. A model case study of a ‘tourist resort’ should help us imaginatively devise projects that use qualitative research to understand global inequalities across space/place, time and within the intersectional dimension of identity. Finally, examples from hyperlink cinema provide an alternative (and entertaining) link between these concepts and the representation of embodied persons in the full complexity of their social and physical location in the relational landscape of in/equality.

I hope that the ‘novelty’ value of looking at methodology from different perspectives will inspire our imagination, provoke our critical sensibilities, and replenish our desire to be PEFT researchers.

The following themes will be addressed in the weekly seminars:

1. Retrospective and prospective
2. Standpoint theories and research relationships
3. Positionality, and re-presentation
4. Starting from where we are: space and place as fields of possibles
5. Participatory Action Research and its continuing promise
6. Photovoice in PAR
7. Ethics and validity revisited
8. More than the science of the singular: narratives and auto-ethnography
9. Can the interview take the ‘weight of the world’?
10. The ‘Resort’ case study- for linking structural, multiple, global inequalities
11. ‘Babel’ and ‘Wild Side’: ‘hyperlink’ and ‘realist’ cinema as models for conceptualising/representing multiple identities and interconnecting inequalities in the local/global
Session Description and Suggested Reading

1. Retrospective and prospective

In 1991, and building on the insights of feminist, neo-marxist, and ‘minority criticism’, Patti Lather turned to ‘postmodern’ deconstruction to ‘conduct this exploration in a way that doesn’t totalize, that doesn’t present emergent, multiply sited, contradictory movements as fixed, unified and monolithic’. In the same year Fonow and Cook co-edited their book, Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship and Lived Research, which they have recently revisited in their article appearing in the special edition of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society (2005, vol. 30, no. 4) on feminist methodology. They provide both a revisit, a stock-take of the present epistemological and methodological concerns, and proposals for new applications. In a similarly upbeat, realistically utopian mood, Michelle Fine (2006) proposes a ‘“fictional” methods textbook for researchers interested in studying social oppression and resistance.’

Using these fine reviews and proposals, in this first seminar we will move from a retrospective to a prospective for PEFT methodologies.


2. Standpoint theories and research relationships

The classic qualitative tradition has long been concerned with what how to ‘know’ such as the ‘epoché of the natural attitude’, with the identity of the ‘knower’ as ‘the Stranger’, and even with the relationship between researchers and researched. However, it is with the feminist critique and epistemologies (Lennon and Whitford, 1994) that the exposition of the masculinity of different areas of power; the connections between knowledge and power; the recognition of difference; the critique of the objectivity of science and the development of standpoint theory with its emphasis on the subject in the production of knowledge that has led to a deeply political concern with ‘positioning’ and with research relationships. Challenges from within lesbian and Black feminism to this early feminist epistemology (Stanley and Wise, 1993), the deconstructive disruptions of subalterity (Spivak, ) and postcolonial movements and theories, have further intensified a research engagement with questions of ‘knowing ’ and of ethics in research relations, given the normalizing power of representation, amongst others.

Whilst originating in debates in the 1990s, many pressing questions still remain unresolved. In this session they will be explored through the following themes:

1. recognising researcher values in determining what is (and can be) known
2. the dilemmas of ‘Otherness’ and how it is negotiated in research relationships
3. power imbalances between researcher and researched
4. the positionality of the native informant and the collaborative production of knowledge, including exploring some of the advantages of being an ‘outsider’ in the field
5. turning the lens on ourselves as researchers (and our culturally appropriate/inappropriate methods), questioning our regimes of truth
6. ‘living on the ground’ research as a means of developing shared knowledges


3. Positionality and representation

Working through two fields, disability studies and feminist geography, other dimensions of the ‘positionality’ debate, in particular, the impact of institutional demands on research and research relationships, are explored. Nagar’s (2002 and with Ali, 2003) proposal that we abandon the impasse of uncovering the researcher’s identity in terms of preconceived categories, for a reflexivity that addresses the institutional, geographical and material dimensions of researcher positionality, is unpacked. Within disability research, how to produce collaborative knowledge provides further insight into the positionality debate and reminds us that a commonality of purpose might be more important than understanding the impact of standpoint difference for knowledge production. Shifting from ‘Who speaks for whom?’ to ‘Who speaks with whom?’ (Kobayashi, 1994, p. 78) means that instead of looking at personal attributes, we should look at histories of involvement, and how ‘difference is constructed and used as a political tool’. Fine’s (2002) ‘troubling method’ suggests that (and this is again a question for the institution) we ask, always, ‘Who’s not here?’ and how this ‘presence of an absence’ affects the research process. From within queer/querying theory (Manalansan IV, 2006) and the work on care and gender in migration studies, we find
that even the most reflexive (feminist) researchers can produce heteronormative (and ethnographically erroneous) texts.


Kassabian, A., M. McCall, J. Snieder and M. J. Neitz (2001) Writing and reading feminist poststructural criticism in US sociology: retrospectives on Patricia Clough’s ‘The end (s) of ethnography; from realism to social criticism’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, pp 541-538


Nagar, R. (2000) Mujhe Jawab Do! (Answer me!) : women’s grass-roots activism and social spaces in Chitrakoot (India ), *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 341-362


4. Starting from where we are: space, place and time as locus of intersecting relationships

The refiguring of identity theory has emphasized the relational, a move which is matched and supported by the reconceptualisation of space as a relational construct (Massey, 2004). Suggesting that we ‘make space through interactions’, and think of place as the locus of intersecting relationships (Massey, 2004), allows us to pose a number of political questions. Here this perspective will be used to review a number of topics with implications for thinking about difference/inequality and methodology. These are:

1. how urban geographies of change are shaping new youth identities, and related masculinities ‘the territory of identity’ (Nayak, 2003a & b; Fine et al 2003)
2. how space is marker of social stratification (Loboa and Saenz, 2002)
3. the economic effects of globalisation on particular groups i.e. migrants
4. a new concept of site/field work and the challenge to the ahistorical nature of thinking about field (Gillie, 2001)


Harris, J. (2003) ‘ All doors are closed to us’: a social model analysis of the experiences of disabled refugees and asylum seekers in Britain, *Disability and Society*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 395-410


5. Participatory Action Research and its promise

In this session on PAR, the engagement with epistemology, ethics, method and politics is facilitated through four examples from the field. The promise of PAR for challenging inequality and empowering participants has long been recognised. Here, severely disempowered participants such as youth in Kenyan refugee camps, or female prisoners in New York prisons, teach through their participation, what PAR can offer in terms of new knowledges, challenges to organisations, advocacy and solutions to problems. Fine and Torre (2006) show how PAR amplifies demands and critiques, permits various standpoints to be represented, broadcasts subjugated knowledges, carves spaces of trust, and develops communities of learners. It also counters the heritage of extractive, inequitable research and the ‘fatigue’ of powerless minority informants who have been subject to ‘disaster tourism’ (Cooper, 2005). The process of PAR, the ‘change’ outcomes, the challenge to ‘write’ for a diverse audience with a diverse team of research collaborators, and the risks as well as advantages for all participants, will be discussed.

1. urban youth (Fine et al 2005) and refugee youth (Cooper, 2005)
2. attending to race in PAR, with antiracist intent (Varcoe, 2006)
3. feminist action research today (Reid, 2004; Reid et al 2006; Lennie, et al. 2003 )
4. liberating through PAR in prison (Fine and Torre, 2006)


6. Photovoice in PAR

In this session we will review the work of Wang and her colleagues (1997, 2001, 2006, 2007) in promoting Photovoice as specific methodology which has three main goals: to enable participants to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns; to promote critical dialogue about important community issues; and to reach policy makers. In Photovoice, the participatory means of sharing expertise and insider knowledge and meaning is achieved when people act as recorders, use the visual image for evidence, and locate positive as well as problematic visions of the community and its needs. As a methodology it is premised on feminist, Frierian and documentary photography principles. Advantages and disadvantages will be examined, also by looking at the application of the technique with individuals such as learning disabled mothers, and in highly visual/ocular cultures such as that of the Deaf community.


Booth, T. and W. Booth (2003) In the frame: photovoice and mothers with learning difficulties, *Disability and Society*, vol. 18, no 4, pp. 431-442


**7. Ethics and validity revisited**

In previous sessions both ethics and validity will have permeated our discussion: questions of positionality and power in research relationships and in representation; of keeping participants in PAR safe; of not subjecting research to the unethical demands of institutions or journal editorial boards or even of Ethics Approval Committees; of negotiating with participants what can be included or even omitted; of the ‘surveillance’ questions to do with Photovoice, amongst others. Here, some of these questions are taken up in more detail, and illustrated with the example Halse and Honey (2005) provide from working with girls with (?) anorexia (?) (the very categorisation of whom raised a number of ethical dilemmas). Another topic is the issue of recruitment, and Woodring *et al*’s (2006) study on people with disabilities and role of intermediaries is instructive. Ending participatory research requires separate consideration. Finally, is qualitative research, even with PAR, very different to the voyeurism or surveillance culture (the debate between Marx, Nagel and Staples on the narrow line between sociological research and voyeurism/surveillance) of postmodernity?

Turning to validity, we start with a brief discussion on the (supposed?) differences between transactional and transformational validity (Cho and Trent, 2006), to then revisit Lather’s (1993) frames for a ‘transgressive validity after poststructuralism’ which has implications for how to write provocative, antifoundational texts (rather than not write, as Clough (Kassabian *et al* 2001) suggests) which create a space of ‘constructed visibility of the practices of methodology’, with implications for methodology itself. Against ‘your father’s paradigm’ of ‘evidence-based practice’, Lather (2004) proposes a validity of ‘indisciplined knowing’.


*Ethics, Place and Environment*, (2003) vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 43-78 (special editions Short Communications) Act of Ethics: a Special Section on Ethics and Global Activism, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 43-78


Kassabian, A., M. McCall, J. Snieder and M. J. Neitz (2001) Writing and reading feminist poststructural criticism in US sociology: retrospectives on Patricia Clough’s ‘The end (s) of ethnography; from realism to social criticism’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, pp 541-538


Lather, P. (2004) This is your father’s paradigm: Government intrusion and the case of qualitative research in education, *Qualitative Inquiry*, no. 19, pp 15-34


8. More than the science of the singular: narratives and auto-ethnography

Recently Atkinson and Delamont (2006) have suggested we ‘rescue’ narrative from qualitative research, reminding that narratives are one social phenomenon amongst many,
that the approach should be analytic rather than celebratory, and that whilst an important form of representation, narrative is not unique. They warn against the ‘recuperative role’ of giving ‘voice’ to otherwise ‘muted’ groups, that as performance narrative is no more authentic that other forms, and that in the ‘interview’ culture a more social (suspicious?) analysis should prevail, in particular with ‘fieldwork confessional’. Here, whilst this critique is taken on board, it is also shown to have limits. Presser (2005) provides a thorough account of the performance of masculinity of her incarcerated male informants, but fails to say anything about their history of poverty. Classically, the narrative has been used to study both reported events as well as the teller’s interpretation of the meaning of the event (Cortazzi, 2007). Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes between narrative analysis and analysis of narratives. In each case, the connection between individuals and their social world provides the vital meaning for social analysis. In feminist research, narratives have indeed had a (deservedly, it will be argued) privileged position. As intellectual biographies they have provided a symbolic location for a group that had been written out of history. For specific men and women (Connell, 2004 on class; Spivak, 1990, on subalterity; Bhavnani and Haraway, 1994 and Brah, 1998 on race; Morris, 1992 on disability; Rich, 1996 on sexual orientation) the intellectual biography has provided a positional, ‘embodied’ and political basis for theory and action. Grounded, contingent and political, the ‘personal is political,’ still provides a challenge to dominant discourses and to their erasure of ‘Others’. It not only asks who speaks but also ‘who listens’? Singular, as unrepeatable difference, but repeated, it is ‘an instance in a collection of repetitions’ (Spivak, 2005, p.475). Years ago, Luce Irigary (1985) wrote that we should ‘start from where it most unbearable’. Where people still live unbearable oppressed lives (as some of the examples to be discussed below demonstrate), narrative can have an empowering role as well as provide access to deeply personal knowledge of the effect of intersectional/multiple inequality on human experience; it can ‘incite’ into action and provide a counter hegemonic discourse through the testimony of brave public intellectuals like Antonia Darder (Borg and Mayo, 2007) amongst others.


Darder, A. (2007) From madness to consciousness: redemption through politics, art, and love, in Borg, C. and P. Mayo (Eds.) Public Intellectuals, Radical Democracy and Social Movements, Peter Lang


Darder, A. (2007) From madness to consciousness: redemption through politics, art, and love, in Borg, C. and P. Mayo (Eds.) *Public Intellectuals, Radical Democracy and Social Movements*, Peter Lang


9. Can the interview take the ‘weight of the world’?

In this session, the value of the long interview for a reflexive, structural sociology (as distinct from a sociology of reflexivity, Kenway and McLeod, 2004), is approached through a review of Bourdieu *et al*’s (1999) *The Weight of the World* and subsequent debate around the project. The political turn (Schinkel, W. 2003) in the method, where Bourdieu *et al* (1999, p. 629,) argues that though producing awareness of these mechanisms (of positional suffering) does not neutralise them (Grenfell, 2006) it can lead to a remedy ‘what the social world has done, it can, armed with knowledge, undo’, is inspiring. The long interviews are not simply small and personal stories of personal suffering (and Bourdieu has argued that this is no personalist view but the uncovering of immanent structures in contingent statements, an *idiosyncrasy*) but accounts of communities (space/place), work places and relations in structure, which permit the examination of the effect of political, economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital and lack of it, of inequality, on different groups and individuals. Placed together, the collection of interviews sometimes work in the juxtaposing of ‘spaces of points of view’ cross-generationally, or by contrasting the dismay of the State service providers in the retreat of the welfare state, with the despair of the poor. Advantages of this type of interview includes the ability to represent intersectionality - the individual’s point of view (Coulldry, 2005) within different structural positions and historical trajectories (Grenfell, 2006) across social space. Mc Robbie (2002) has produced a rather more negative critique, finding both the methodology, and the data derived, weak, with ‘decontextualised… voices of pain’, and lacking in thick description, amongst other criticisms. Are these interviews good examples of the ethnographic interview, and what can they offer equality studies?


10. The ‘Resort’ case study- for linking structural, multiple, global inequalities

How can our very local, grounded, fieldwork studies support the challenge posed by economic globalisation? One way is to use the work-place case-study as a basis from which to explore the interconnection between work position and the experience of different workers, examining how both the classic categories of class, sex,’ race’ disability and others, as well as new classifications such as ‘illegal migrant’ produce different in/equalities in specific places linked to global social spaces. Here, Adler and Adler’s (2001, 2004) 6 year study of a Hawaiin resort, using participant observation and in -depth interview will provide a model for a ‘global study’ of ‘global inequality’. Whether in Hawaii, Ireland or Malta, hotel luxury resorts, location for the playing out of gross disparities between producers and consumers in the leisure industry, their ‘incessant society’ temporality, and ‘new’ slavery (Lindo-McGovern, 2003) are ideally placed to study global inequalities. Whilst many workers are legally employed, the resort often depends also on the export of female labour found more particularly in the domestic (gendered and unprotected) labour of Filipinas across the globe (Lindo-McGovern, 2003). A comparison between groups (legal/illegal; unionised/not unionised (Holgate, 2005, 2006) ) will provide further inroads into understanding the relation of multiple identities/intersectionality and inequality. Who is considered suitable for employment in the industry and who is disposable (disabled persons, Groschi, 2005); how gender, sexuality and race intersect, providing ‘resources’ for the resort (Adib and Guerrier, 2003) are other directions the ‘resort’ case study can take.


11. ‘Babel’ and ‘Wild Side’: hyperlink cinema as model for conceptualising/representing intersectionality and interconnecting inequalities in the local/global

With the increasing complexity of difference and our understanding of it ‘as social relation .as the historical and contemporary trajectories of material circumstances and cultural practices which produce the conditions for the construction of group identities’ (Brah, 1998, p.118) new ways of thinking in/equality need to combine the material and cultural. Inequalities of condition are not only differently experienced in different spaces and time but the intersectionality of our multiple identities also complicate our understanding of how inequality works, so as to position subjects, relationally, in ways
that in different discursive sites, times and places, subjects may/may not have equality (of condition etc.) How can we produce accounts (a calling to account) that are analytically accurate, ethical and aesthetically meaningful representations of this complex human experience? Accounts that can free the subject to his or her subjectivity at the same time as accounting for the objective (and objectifying) conditions of existence? Two examples from recent films, Inárritu’s (2006) aptly named ‘Babel’ and Lifshitz’s (2004) ‘Wild Side’ will be discussed. The documentary naturalism of Wild Side, together with experimental editing/hybrid aesthetic, allows the film to re/present both in content and in form, what Lifshitz (Rees-Roberts, 2007) calls ‘the precarious material lives and increased emotional anxiety of those excluded from neo-liberal hegemony: immigrants, sex workers and transgender communities’. Place and time provide the material structure of dissident sexuality, where Sarkozy’s authority politics has used ‘sexuality as the smear screen for the real target of immigration’ (Rees- Roberts, 2007, p.144). The centred narrative links the three main characters through their common experience of precarious sexual and economic life, but represents without falling into the ‘class tourism’ of the voyeuristic gaze. The combination of using both content and form to construct the centrality of ‘link’ in global inequalities, is best presented in the ‘hyperlink cinema’ genre. In ‘Babel’, as in other films in the genre, multiple story lines and multiple characters intersect obliquely, in ways not always known to them. Events in one story have impact on another, as ‘flows’ work in a globalized world. A person powerful in one place and time, loses power in another. Spanning global locations, the film illustrates how social (transnational) relations construct space whilst the movement of people and commodities (the gun) link lives across the globe. Disparities between those inhabiting the same place but different social spaces (the American couple and their Mexican nanny, the Japanese father and his deaf daughter) are evoked to fracture the cosiness of affect between persons in apparent proximity, but social, economic, political, racialised, dis/abled, difference. Hyperlink cinema, in form and content, aesthetically represents the analytic links we wish to make in our tracing of the path dependency of global inequality. Reviewing ‘Syriana’, critic R. Ebert wrote that more than being able to ‘follow’ it, he could be ‘surrounded’ by it. Can we imaginatively create methodologies that ‘surround’ our audiences?


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