

ETHNOGRAPHY: IS THE CRISIS TRUE AND IS IT NOT JUST AN ILLUSION?

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OUTLINE:

- Conceptual analysis and Concept analysis
- Three Sources: German historicism, American pragmatism and The colonization of the New World
- Three tensions or challenges: “Stranger and stranger”? “What to tell about others”? “Who am I writing to?”
- Final Reflections

BETWEEN CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS AND CONCEPT ANALYSIS

Three Methods of conceptual analysis

(Kosterec 2016):

- **constructive method**; which leads us to introduce new concepts or languages as needed in the theoretical system
- **detection method**: which serves to study the use of concepts to observe their limitations
- **reductive conceptual analysis**: when we apply reducibility between two theories and/or finding counterexamples

Concept analysis (Morse, et al 1996):

- **epistemological principle**: concepts should be clear and precisely defined to be differentiated from other concepts
- **logical principle**: all of them should be coherently and systematically related to other concepts
- **pragmatic principle**: concepts should be applicable to the world
- **linguistic principle**: the concepts, in their contexts, in order for appropriate usage, need to be referentially bound to the rules

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS:

conceptual analysis (Jackson, 1998) is:

- “... the very business of addressing when and whether a story told in one vocabulary is made true by one told in some allegedly more fundamental vocabulary’...”

conceptual analysis (Peltonen, 2020)

- “...Conceptual analysis should examine what is meant by a concept and its expressions...”.

TACTICS OF CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS (5 FROM 21 PROPOSED BY PELTONEN 2020):

- **Consider but be willing to ignore formal definitions.** It is not enough just to have formal definitions if the practices of good ethnography are not displayed in the whole reported study
- **Analyze locution, illocution, and perlocution.** Different meanings of the concept of ethnography, autoethnography. Think on the perlocutionary effect of ethnography
- **Consider who uses the concept and with whom.** It is obvious that people use the same word to refer to different things. Ethnography as qualitative inquiry is diverse over the world.
- **Identify key elements and their counterparts.** Textbooks and chapters in handbooks are relevant to teach and show similarities and differences between approaches but conceptual analysis is more powerful to distinguish limits and boundaries.
- **Analyze beliefs, assumptions, and identities.** Meta-analysis is always essential to unveil assumptions and make interpreted realities intelligible.

- **THREE SOURCES: GERMAN HISTORICISM, AMERICAN PRAGMATISM AND THE COLONIZATION OF THE NEW WORLD**

- German historicism: Vienesse School of Economics. First generation (Wilhelm Rosher, Bruno Hildebrand, Karl Knies). Second generation (Gustav von Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, Werner Sombart, Max Weber). Methodenstreit
- American pragmatism: (Abion Woodbury Small, William Isaac Thomas, Florian Znaniecki)
- Colonization of the New World: (Toribio de Benavente Motolinia, Martín de la Coruña, Andrés de Olmos, Juan de Zumárraga, Cabeza de Vaca)

FIRST TENSION: “STRANGER AND STRANGER”

- The ethnographer is not just any stranger: s/he is trained to observe and to analyze, developing skills to collect data, to write fieldnotes, to conduct interviews, and possesses many other skills that common people probably don't have.
- What are the limits of being a stranger? Can ethnographers move from the stranger position to the friend one?
- Ethical dilemmas around, for example, covert ethnography
- It is important to question who is actually the “stranger” within ethnography. Nacirema example.
- Being friends with participants and acting as a friend, yet not living up to the obligations of friendship?

SECOND TENSION: “WHAT TO TELL ABOUT OTHERS”

- Boelen-Whyte debate on “Street Corner Society”, just an example
- Representation crisis in the eighties of the twentieth century
- What is a real ethnography? Should the ethnographer tell the whole story of what he/she experienced during the ethnography? What if that “revelation” harms people?
- The hard question around if ethnographers made it all up or prepare a “real” ethnography

THIRD TENSION: WHO AM I WRITING TO?"

- Who will be the intended audience of that text? Is the ethnographer writing for their academic community? To the society in general? For the subjects of their research in particular? Ethnographer vs public intellectual: Goffman-Lubet debate as a shadow
- The secrecy of field notes: ethnography goes public
- At the end, the audience indisputably includes the people who were part of the ethnography

FINAL REFLECTIONS

TENSIONS:

- **“Strange and strange”**: our strangeness as researchers, listeners or friends of the people with whom we participate in the fieldwork as informants
- **“What to write about others”**: our honesty as writers or people who are entrusted with intimacy, biography, personal or collective stories and perhaps even secrets
- **“Who do I write for?”**: our role as public intellectuals making decisions about the audience we write for

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