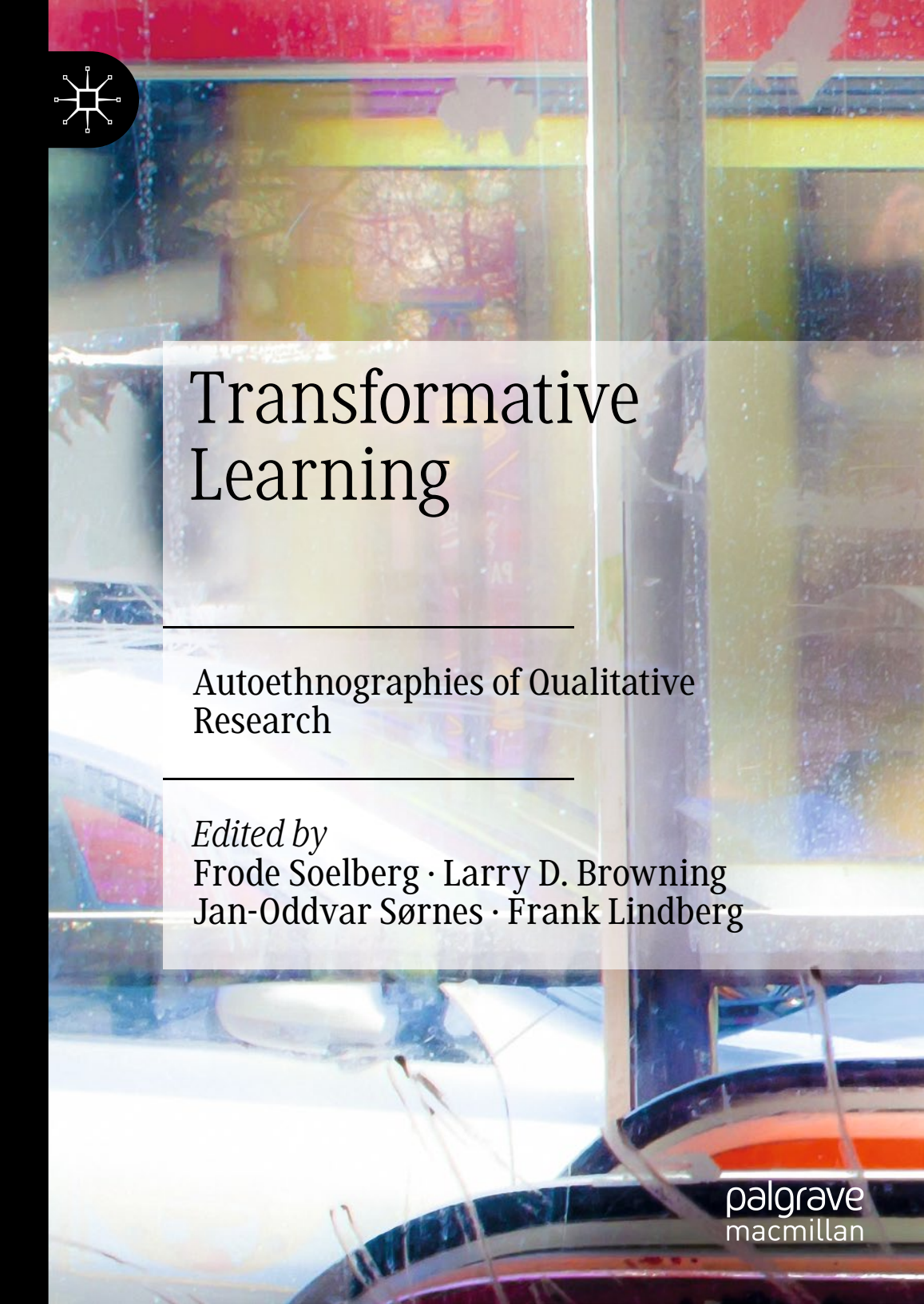

Transformative Learning

Autoethnographies of Qualitative Research

Edited by
Frode Soelberg · Larry D. Browning
Jan-Oddvar Sørnes · Frank Lindberg

palgrave
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Prologue: Heading for a Strange Shore

Nordvegr: Archeological findings imply that the sailing route along the coast of Norway predates historical time. All kinds of vessels have been trading this route, among them the infamous longships of the Viking era. The longships are long gone, but the sailing route is still the same. The route is linked between islands, through narrow (nór in old Norse) straits, which provides shelter from the rough and open waters of the Norwegian Sea on the way to the High North. Hence, *Nordvegr*.

Today, I'm at the port of Bodø waiting for *Hurtigruten*"—often dubbed the costal express route or costal steamer in English—to dock. It used to be dominated by steamships, but most of the fleet was demolished during World War II, and the remaining steamships were finally replaced in the early 1950s. *Hurtigruten* also used to be the fastest mode of north-south transportation in Norway, and even faster than railway until 1960s. Thus, when speaking about *Hurtigruten*, a reference to speed and steamers comes naturally for Norwegians—though, nothing is farther from the truth today. It is a Cruise liner, carrying gazing tourists, that slowly sails through the old *Nordvegr* route.

I'm northbound and heading for a strange shore. The boat is going to take me to Qualitative Camp—a one week retreat from ordinary life and an immersion into a qualitative method workshop together with colleagues from Nord University and the University of Texas at Austin. We're going to team up with 25–30 research fellows from around the

world for this workshop. There will be long hard days of mentoring, teaching, discussing, and having a ball as well. My destination is Lofoten and The Nyvågar Rorbu Resort (hotel). But first, *Hurtigruten* will sail across the Vestfjord and take us to Lofoten Island.

As I'm standing on the pier, waiting, I'm still *here*—you know; I'm still *here* in my ordinary life. Not far from my home, not far from where I work, people that I know are here. But, I know that when the gangway is lowered, I'm going to pick up my bag and climb the strange ladder into the hull of the ship; I'm going to shake off my ordinary life and enter a different kind of life. It's like the ordinary everyday life cease to exist. And there, on the other side of the gangway, I will find Qualitative Camp.

In the distance I can hear *Hurtigruten* blowing their horns.

Frode Soelberg

Acknowledgments

In this book, we feature 13 students who published a research document based on principles taught at Qualitative Camp (here after Qcamp). Using their published research as an example, we asked them to reflect autoethnographically on their experience and the long-term effect of the course on their practice. This book is about their experiences. We find the stories intriguing and hope they will give you an understanding of Qcamp.

This book is based on a Qcamp design developed by our co-editor, Professor Larry Browning, who coined and created the concept of Qcamp in the early 1980s and ran the program as a graduate methodology course at the University of Texas at Austin. The third author was introduced to the concept while attending Larry's course on qualitative methods at the University of Texas in the spring of 2001. Larry was asked to offer a version of the course in Norway and he agreed to do so. Together with the third author the weekend-long Texas version of the course was transformed into a week-long course to be held at Henningsvær on the Lofoten Island off the coast of Northern Norway beginning in 2003 running through 2016. Over this span of years our student and faculty roster is an impressive collection. All in all, Qualitative Camp was offered 15 times, almost 250 students attended, and around 26 faculty from around the world participated. We have held camp at several places including such venues as the villages of Henningsvær, Nyvågar, and Kjerringøy, Norway,

and at the University of Texas, Marine Science Research Institute in Port Aransas, Texas.

Many excellent faculty have contributed at these sites, and we would like to thank the following persons for being part of several Camps: Dorthe Eide, Per Østergaard (deceased), Karen Ashcraft, Ingunn Dahler Hybertsen, Odd Birger Hansen, Lena Mossberg, Øystein Jensen, Keri Stephens, Barry Brummett, and Kerstin Sahlin. The second and third editors have been part of all the Camps, while the first and fourth editors have taught in most of them. This program was supported by the funding we have received through the years, and most notably we would like to thank the Nordic Academy of Management, Research Network Northern Norway, High North Fellows Program, University of Texas at Austin, University of Colorado, Boulder, and Nord University. Conducting a graduate course off campus is intriguing in many ways, especially when designed to take advantage of extended personal contact and the absence of other work and family demands of faculty and students. The retreat is best held in a lodge-like setting away from the campus to create a temporary subculture with a focus on learning qualitative research methods.

As a final thanks, the other editors give Larry gratitude for the Qcamp project because he has been a driving force for collaborative research, advising, and lecturing at Nord University and the University of Texas at Austin over 20 or so years. Many dissertations, articles, and books have been produced as part of our joint-country collaboration over the years, and our partnership remains an active force in our writing and research. There is more to come.

Again, Larry, thanks for your innovative approach to teaching and to qualitative methods in particular. Thanks for sharing your knowledge, for the outstanding lectures, for the many laughs, and for entertaining us at night with your guitar at places where the sun never sets.

Finally, we thank our families for supporting and encouraging this work—and for bearing with us during the many months that were required for it.

About the Book

Transformative Learning: Autoethnographies of Qualitative Research contains a series of autoethnographies written by participants of a program on qualitative methods, designed by the editors, and offered at the Nord University Business School in Bodø, Norway, between 2010 and 2016. These accounts of learning qualitative methodology showcase how the writers were challenged and what they did to adapt to new and/or deeper insight into qualitative method. Some participants internalized the knowledge rather quickly and some tried to keep it at arm's length. Others struggled with fighting off their inner demons that defied them from stepping onto an unfamiliar qualitative landscape. Several contributors addressed emotions like uncertainty, fear of failure, risk aversion, and despair as a part of their learning process. They tell tales of epiphanies, turning points, and transformation.

This book targets several groups of readers: It would appeal not only to those who teach research methodology, particularly qualitative research, but also to master's and doctoral students and neophyte researchers. Because of its emphasis on transformative learning, it might also be of interest to those engaged in studying or teaching pedagogy and to those engaged in broader educational studies.

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Notes on Contributors

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agement control, her research interests have covered the role of human and non-human actors in organizations in the context of logistics, supply chain management, risk management, and smart societies in the High North.

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Transformative Learning
Autoethnographies of Qualitative Research

Frode Soelberg, Larry D. Browning, Jan-Oddvar Sørnes, and Frank Lindberg

This book contains a series of autoethnographies written by participants of a program on qualitative methods, designed by the editors, and offered at the Nord University Business School in Bodo, Norway, between 2010 and 2016. We called the program "Qualitative Camp" (hereafter Qcamp)

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to frame the week-long encounter as a retreat, a training, a seminar, a time apart from daily routine—all rolled into one experience. The purpose of camp was to develop the ethnographic writing skills of reporting—and bringing to life—observational and depth-interviewing techniques. In this book, contributors were invited to write autoethnographic accounts of their personal experiences on learning and employing qualitative methods. The autoethnographies are written as stories to place the lived experience of participants at the center of analysis (Chang, 2008; O'Hara, 2018; Silverman & Rowe, 2020; Adams et al., 2021).

Now, from the position of the participants' current professorships and other professional placements—six to ten years after taking part in the program—they recall, via autoethnographic writing, what they learned at Qcamp. These autoethnographies are advantaged by being far enough away from graduate school coursework to have perspective, yet close enough in past time that readers learning qualitative methods can identify with the existential struggle to write personal stories about their experience. These stories exemplify autoethnographic writing, as they are personal, topical, and theoretical contributions to specific streams of academic research (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Jones et al., 2013; Silverman & Rowe, 2020).

We offer the autoethnographies of participants at Qcamp as dual kinds of evidence—both reports on what participants learned at camp and prima facie examples of the writing skills we set out to enhance at the camp. Thus, the autoethnographies are evidence of both content and process outcomes (O'Neil, 2018). Our claim is that these distillations of Qcamp memories demonstrate how the participants gave meaning to their experiences, and thus are examples of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978; Creek et al., 2000). As the chapters develop, they provide evidence of conceptual change as a result of and as caused by Qcamp.

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What Is Qcamp?[1]

The grand idea behind Qcamp was to provide graduate students training in participant observation methods using workshop simulations in a laboratory setting (Sørnes & Browning, 2011). Because qualitative methodology is a practice where the information processing characteristics of the researchers are central to the credibility of the data, the simulations focused on individual differences and styles of data collection. Students were encouraged to record and interpret field data in various and creative ways. Just as we would expect creativity from renowned researchers, such as Barbara Czarniawska (2004, 1998) and Erving Goffman (1959), who tend to see different dynamics in a social situation and document different data accordingly, the same premise of uniqueness applies to even the beginning researcher. The questions of (1) what the observer sees and (2) the impact the observer has on the research setting are two key issues for the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Bennett Sandler, 1973). These two questions were addressed at a week-long workshop from different perspectives through a series of four continuous exercises on observation and interviewing by repeating a three-step process:

1. Expose researchers to the same data
2. Have them write individual field notes and
3. Discuss the likenesses and dissimilarities in their data and the reasons for them

Following this three-step process means students were continuously comparing their observations. Qcamp used a team data collection motif (everyone looking at the same thing at the same time) to show differences in perceptions of the same events, and to offer practices of developing reliable field notes for future circumstances where team data collection is not possible and singular observations are necessary. The key lessons were to appreciate the subjectivity of field data and to learn to account for individualism when doing research. The workshop adheres to a research question by following the Whyte (1984) premise that qualitative

[1] This brief description is based on a previous publication by Sørnes & Browning (2011).

methodology follows a flexible and emergent design. One is often in the field, doing interviews and observations, before a specific research question can be clarified (Ibid). After a research problem is clarified and pursued in depth, the workshop focuses on practices that increase the researcher's ability to interview and observe with skill and distinctiveness.

To capture the idea of an evolving practice, the workshop incorporates Taylor and Van Every's (2011) phrase "abduction," which refers not to deduction (rationally following procedures) or induction (a classification of impressions), but a "reconciliation of ideas and experience in the endless quest to resolve our doubts by finding a convincing explanation" (Taylor & Van Every, 2011, P. 20). A convincing explanation develops when the researcher argues for a particular point of view. Qcamp participants grapple with the issues of developing a clear argument as they reflect and write about their experiences and reactions to Qcamp exercises.

To show how this development takes place here is a sketch of one of the exercises. First is the on-the-boat exercise, which begins at the harbor in Bodo with a briefing about Qcamp methods in a conference room on the boat. At that first lecture, students are asked to observe the actions and meaning (Harré & Secord, 1972) of the boat's passengers as the craft cruises toward a fishing island off the coast of Norway. After arriving late in the evening on the island and after checking into rooms, students are asked to write up their details from the sketches and snippets they have collected as field notes during the day on the boat. Importance is placed on writing details on the same day the data are collected because the notes will be less detailed and more general after sleeping on them. The exercise for the start of the second day is an extended discussion using the group merger technique—from-twos-to-fours-to-groups-of-eight, with each larger coalition offering and listening to others' observations. The theme of these discussions is to point out the tension created by multiple perspectives: Look at the differences in individual results from viewing exactly the same phenomenon. The point? Make a clear case in writing for what you are seeing. The goal is to construct a convincing explanation (Taylor & Van Every, 2011).

The strength of Qcamp exercises like this one is that they give students direct feedback on their skills at completing qualitative research. Students are also placed in a position to learn by doing and the observation of what other students are able to do well so that they can mimic and incorporate other's excellence into their own observational practice (for examples of

mimicry, see the section on peer learning of this book). A strength of our emergent design is its amenability to modification. For example, the first time the authors implemented Qcamp in Norway after offering it for years in the United States, a student from Denmark resisted the personal and emotional sharing components of the first exercise by saying, "You Americans are so quick to express your feelings. You'll find that we are not so quick at making these expressions. It looks shallow to us!" As workshop leaders we were aware that this person's comment did not represent everyone's thoughts, but there was enough validity to her statement to take it seriously, so we restructured the exercises to give them less of a personal and more of a managerial flavor, and the remainder of the exercises for that qualitative camp were effective.

In the varied modifications of the laboratory design, we emphasized the theme of individual differences in the application of qualitative methods and how students could learn from each other's practice. The constant theme of these various applications reinforces Bennett Sandler's (1973) original thesis: Qualitative research is a communication event because it emphasizes what the observer is able to see in the dynamics of human behavior in natural settings and then to communicate what they see in their field notes and writing.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning has emerged within the field of adult education for understanding how adults learn (Mezirow, 1978; Dirkx, 1998), and can be defined as "*a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions*" (Transformative Learning Centre, 2004, cited in Kitchenham, 2008, P. 11) Several definitional perspectives exist, and what transformative learning means and how it is applied in practice varies considerably. Its development originates from the critique of the rather conventional instrumental view of the learning process, that is, learning as a form of adaptation via a mastery of collected techniques. University learning processes, even at the PhD level, often use such a learning ideal as exemplified by a focus on learning objectives. Qcamp learning, however, is inspired by transformative learning theory and practice, which we will briefly account for here.

There are three different ways of understanding the concept of transformative learning: (1) the transformation of one's worldview, (2) the learning process of a person involved in a transformative experience, and (3) practices that evoke or support transformation (Stevens-Long et al., 2012). Whereas most research attention has been on the transformation of an individual's worldview, and away from taken-for-granted frames of reference such as political orientations, cultural bias, ideologies, stereotyped attitudes and practices, occupational habits, and paradigms in science (Mezirow, 2003), much discussion has been on how the learning process might unfold (Anand et al., 2020).

Inspired by Mezirow (2006), the goal of transformative processes at Qcamp involved students becoming reflective of their own assumptions through communicative learning (Bennett Sandler, 1973) such that (1) they arrive at more justified methodological beliefs by participating freely in an informed continuing discourse, (2) they take action with regard to their PhD project, and (3) they acquire a disposition to act as researchers that gains institutional approval—they become degree-holding professionals. These steps from student to professional are transformational.

As you may observe among the nine categories we use to thematize the chapters in the grounded theory analysis provided in the final chapter, Qcamp students frequently begin field research with their own baggage: They have become bewildered with regard to the projects they are researching, and doubt their roles as researchers. This feeling of doubt is often shared among the participants, which has the effect of redirecting group discussions toward exploration of methodological options. The parallel presentations of professors, on a variety of qualitative method approaches, provide input to discussions of solutions, for which the students build competence and self-confidence as researchers. Some students even claim that the new perspective has provided existential meaning to their role as researcher and their career ambitions.

Whereas transformative learning has been criticized for its individualism, rationality, autonomy, and lack of focus on the context (Anand et al., 2020), our version of Qcamp was founded on the ideals of social change in context. Consequently, to choose a venue outside of the university campus for Qcamp has been important, because students and professors must accept being together for four days in isolation without

interruptions. Transformative learning in this methods course relied on imaginative and affective dimensions such as role playing (Dirkx et al., 2006), to add to the rational in-group discussions that were at the heart of qualitative camp.

Autoethnographic Chapter Format

The chapters of the book offer personal accounts of individual experiences of Qcamp at this week-long program on qualitative methods. As stated above, transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and action as a result of the self being challenged (Mezirow, 1978; Creek et al., 2000; O'Sullivan, 2003; Dirkx et al., 2006). Thus, the chapters reflect a personal learning process of becoming more informed and more aware and then writing about this increased awareness. Some chapters are serendipitous and happy accidents; others are revelatory discoveries, or deep recognitions. In all, this book is a collection of personal stories in which the characters weigh emotions, values, and schemes for what is true about their experiences at Qcamp. The editors of this book emphasized to the chapter writers the importance of revisiting the retreat, painting the physical reality of it, reliving the events that mattered, and retrospectively making sense of giving meaning to those experiences.

The stories are written in the format of an autoethnography. As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011; Adams & Herrmann, 2020). Autoethnographers may write about epiphanies, times of existential crisis, or events after which life is not the same (Ellis et al., 2011). In the literature, autoethnography is frequently defined as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience to understand cultural experience (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Silverman & Rowe, 2020). Autoethnography

is, therefore, naturally suited for exploring transformative learning (Zavattaro, 2020).[2]

The chapters are organized to tie Qualitative Camp to previous research the authors in this book have completed. Their stories date back six to ten years, and are based on a single week together at Qcamp. Most of the chapters refer directly to a book chapter or a dissertation that they completed following Qcamp. The editors asked for this direct connection to published work to ensure that commentary in chapters made concrete references to published research rather than abstract ideals and preferences (Winkler, 2018). In this sense, the directions to the chapter writers are designed to offer stories of successful research efforts. Yet a theme in the chapters emphasizes the struggles in learning a complex and evolving method that can take many paths. For those who have experienced the pressure of choosing the right path, there are few phases of academic life that are more important or more ego involving. We remember the joy and pain of learning in equal measure. Long-term friendships formed during camp. The one thing the friendships have in common is the Qcamp experience and their autoethnography about it.

The major sections of the book are as follows.

Section 1: Heuristics (the Method as a Practical Solution)

Heuristics are about the adaptive strategies that qualitative researchers learn by adjusting their approaches while doing fieldwork. A key to qualitative methods is that different techniques are necessary depending on the situational context that is met in the field (Taylor et al., 2015). There are three chapters in the Heuristics section.

Chapter 2: Mining for Outliers in Qualitative Research to Develop Interviewing Strategies, by Eric Waters

Waters takes us back to his early days as a field worker; he is field testing an interview schedule, but doesn't like his early results. He feels as if he

[2] Autoethnography can be an ethical quagmire (Rituparna & Uekusa, 2020). To ensure ethical responsibility all names mentioned in the chapters are pseudonyms, except faculty who made presentations in public as a part of the program. In some cases, informed consent was difficult to ensure as the author was no longer in contact with subjects appearing in their story.

is coaching a team that is 10 points down at halftime of the Super Bowl, and now he must come up with a grand plan to get back into the game. His interviewing technique isn't working. He decides to revisit the session notes from Qualitative Camp and look for guidance to find a better way.

Chapter 3: Researching the Market Violence of Counterfeit Medicines: Insights from Qualitative Camp, by Frederick Ahen

Frederick Ahen delves into how he researched the delicate, multifaceted, and complex topic of counterfeit medicines using techniques from the Qcamp experience. One particular exercise served as a turning point. The task was to make a simple drawing of his project, in which he was instructed to increase focus. What is his piece of research really about? Frederick dug deep and built a firmer foundation for his doctoral project.

Chapter 4: Studying Processes in Organizations: Lessons Learned from Limbo Situations, by Inge Hermanrud

Inge Hermanrud identifies three limbo situations that profoundly impacted him as a qualitative researcher. In this chapter Inge offers insight on how to handle research situations of felt ambiguity: some situations were handled by being very transparent and describing his approach in detail, others by giving less detail and resorting to more mainstream conceptualizations of qualitative methods.

Section 2: Confessional (High Stakes, Epiphanies, Disclosure)

The notion of autoethnography as confessional is based on the realization that fieldwork is frequently, if not usually, a messy experience (van Maanen, 2011). Despite the desire to accurately capture events, via note taking, that were seen and heard at the research site, the work usually fails to go precisely as planned and researchers find themselves in an emotional state of lacking because of the mismatch between intention and outcome. Acknowledging the truth of that failing, or at least accounting for it, is the theme of these confessional autoethnographies. These chapters are labeled as confessional due to the authors' responses to our invitation to give their emotional reactions to Qualitative Camp within the context of the methodological principles that they learned at camp. In doing so, they offer a revealing and reflexive account of how they

encountered camp as a research process. Three contributions fit into this section.

Chapter 5: Self-Observation of Sublime Experience, by Joseph McGlynn

Joseph describes how Qualitative Camp provided a lens through which he could gain cosmological understanding—a place to convene with bright minds and unorthodox thinkers. It offered him a foundation on which to grow as a scientist and critic, to recognize and to celebrate stories, to look for the contradictory, counterintuitive, and aesthetically pleasing elements of life.

Chapter 6: Harvesting Foreign Fields: The Researcher as a Solitary Reaper Away From Home, by Preeti Mudliar

Preeti's story is not so much about Qcamp or the lessons learned attending it. It is more about her experience as a field worker in the High North region of Norway. Hers is an emotional story about feeling estranged, alienated, and insecure, and how she managed to overcome these challenges. Preeti started her fieldwork as an outsider to the Norwegian culture, but at the end she was so engrossed she wonders if she had gone native during the process.

Chapter 7: Contrasting Norwegian and American Prison Systems: Becoming (Un)broken, by Brittany L. Peterson

Brittany's chapter shares her experiences from fieldwork in a Norwegian prison. She interviewed convicted felons and correctional officers. And as she did, her methodological and philosophical foundations were shaken. Her basic beliefs and assumptions about institutional and cultural differences came tumbling down. Brittany's story is a tale of emancipation—and redemption.

Section 3: Peer Learning

Peer learning can be defined as the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals Boud et al., 2001. In short, it is "learning with and from each other" (Boud & Cohen, 2014). Arguably, there is no better apprenticeship for being a helper than being helped. We have sorted three chapters into the section called "Peer

Learning" because the chapter writers chose to showcase the influence of another participant from Qualitative Camp as the key to their learning experience. Despite the role of faculty experts in shaping their understanding of what to learn, someone else in the class provided the spark for what, six to ten years later, the experience meant to them.

Chapter 8: Observing Cultural Differences: Dismantling Ethnocentrism in a Multicultural Environment, by Ashley Barrett.

Ashley set off to explore personal meaning in a remote Scandinavian location. As the reality set in, she quickly realized that her presence as an interviewer became a reservoir of meaning that interviewees drew upon in contrasting ways to make sense of their own identities and workplace expectations. It was clear that she, and her culture, was perceived to be different from them and theirs. Ashley's story follows her relationship with a fellow student at Qualitative Camp and demonstrates how this friendship changed her perspective toward unfamiliar cultures.

Chapter 9: The Sensemaking of What's Going on Here, or Welcome on Board of No Escape, by Nadezda Nazarova

Nadezda writes about her journey as she moves from the firm quantitative stability of numbers to the initial uneasy steps into a softer and spongier qualitative landscape. It is a story about resistance that turns to understanding. While Nadezda's chapter is also a fit for the sensemaking section below, it is in the Peer Learning section because of a comment by Keek, a peer in Nadezda's class, that redirected her attention toward the purpose and value of Qcamp methodology.

Chapter 10: How Natural is "Natural" in Field Research? The Gift of Taking Nothing for Granted, by Astrid Marie Holand.

What does it mean that data occur naturally? Astrid's story starts with a mind-bending discussion from Qcamp. A lecturer, Niina Koivunen, used the notion of "naturally occurring data" to discuss how researchers may take advantage of data that the field produces. But does the presence of researchers on-site change naturalness? This question spurred a philosophical discussion at Qcamp. Can anything really

occur naturally? What do philosophers of science say about the notion of naturalness and what does it mean for the practice of research?

Section 4: Sensemaking (Ambiguity/Uncertainty)

Qualitative research is designed to apprehend uncertain environments and, through the cognitive force of the observer, to make sense of them. If it were any other way, there would be no need for qualitative methodology. Qualitative Camp is designed to reflect the uncertainty that a researcher experiences in the field. Four of the contributions are grouped in this section.

Chapter 11: Moving Qualitative Data from Little Pieces of Colored Glass to an Elegant Stained-Glass Window: Understanding Cyberinfrastructure Emergence, by Kerk Kee.

How do physicists, scientists, and engineers, who are naturally focused on the boundaries of their disciplines, cross those boundaries to form a cyberinfrastructure? While answering these questions, Kerk felt confused and lost. He was drowning in data and searching for clarity, yet found the superficial view of conflicting tensions to be an insufficient explanation. Kerk shows how he found inspiration in revisiting the sessions of Qualitative Camp to untangle the complexities of his qualitative data analysis.

Chapter 12: Walking Out of the Shadow: Observations at Qualitative Camp during my PhD Journey, by Songming Feng.

Songming wandered into the mist, the unknown, the shadows—he got lost. How did he manage to find his way out? He muddled through. Songming describes a research journey filled with twists and turns. But the process curled for better clarity and cohesiveness for his dissertation. He adjusted the research and methods based on practicalities and contingencies through a process of intuitive learning. Songming explains how he learned that a qualitative research process can be creative, and that interpretation starts in the mind of the researcher.

Chapter 13: Finding the Human Story in a Culture of Secrecy, by Tom McVey.
Beyond the basic guidelines for how to handle confidentiality articulated in the methods literature, the management of secrecy in research is unknown. Consider: How to broach the idea to a potential subject of participating in an interview in the first place? How may one gain the subject's agreement to sit with the researcher and document their personal stories? In this chapter, Tom articulates the soft boundaries for establishing trust in interview situations.

Chapter 14: Observational Methodology and Ecological Economics: Understanding My Pre-Understanding, by Are Severin Ingulfsvann.
What is ecological economics? What does it mean to do ecological research? In conventional business research, humans are rational economic actors automated to increase their utility. However, ecological economics challenges this understanding and offers a more complex consideration of human nature. In this chapter, Are reflects on the philosophical underpinnings of his research journey to find a coherent research paradigm for ecological economics.

Epilogue

Chapter 15: A Grounded Theory of Qcamp, by Larry Browning.
Larry presents a condensation of the 13 chapters by organizing them in nine categories—the categories are boiled down and described in this final chapter by sorting and thematizing the content of the book in three axial codes. Their fusion provides support for the transformation thesis stated in the title and introduction. Transformation and depth of meaning is represented in the classic narrative form: There is a character, a predicament, and a resolution, which make up the three axial codes that summarize the 13 chapters of the book.

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Part I

Heuristics

2

Mining for Outliers in Qualitative Research to Develop Interviewing Strategies

Eric Waters

I was blessed to leave graduate school and enter the professoriate sitting on a ton of data. I planned on spending my first two years as a tenure-track professor at Marquette University carving up the corpus and publishing some research that I had not yet addressed in my dissertation. However, we know about what happens to the best laid plans. I was also blessed to have sniffed out a couple grants that enabled me to collect additional data for some other projects. So, as luck would have it, and it usually does, I spent the bulk of my first two years at Marquette out in the field, collecting qualitative data, conducting interviews. As I later read and analyzed the transcripts, I sensed a confidence and mastery in my questioning that occasionally surprised me. I had come a long way from my initial attempts at qualitative data collection during my first year of doctoral study at the University of Texas at Austin.

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I was adding some final touches to a recent manuscript on small businesses and organizational culture when I received an invitation from a colleague to guest lecture in his research methods class. Specifically, he asked me to discuss my research processes and to comment on some recent projects with his students. I responded that it should not be a problem. I had two recent datasets readily available to share, as well as access to my readings and notes from grad school. However, as I began to brainstorm an outline for my lecture, I pondered whether or not I would be shortchanging my audience with such an impersonal presentation. After all, I was recently in these students' shoes. Learning the art and science of creating an interview guide and conducting a high-quality interview takes some time and often requires a few stumbles along the way. Perhaps foregrounding my personal struggles and breakthroughs as part of the process of extracting good data would be more helpful than what is readily available in the library. I realized my outline should start in my grad school years.

Learning to do academic research in Texas' highly-ranked Communication Studies program as a late thirty-something nontraditional industry veteran was a big adjustment for me. While the PhD I was pursuing would be the third sheet of parchment to adorn my wall, nothing I had done in undergrad or business school really prepared me for the intense research methods I was learning. Immersion in data collection was a deeper pool than I had previously swum in. I was accustomed to simply going to the library and paraphrasing what someone else had said. No more.

Prior to starting at Texas I was a District Manager for a popular import auto manufacturer. A major part of my duties in this job was to visit franchise car dealerships in my district and work with the parts and service managers to fix operational problems, which involved a lot of question-and-answer steps to really get to the root causes of issues. As such, I was drawn to qualitative research as it seemed to be the method of inquiry most similar to my recent experience.

My first formal class in qualitative research methods was in the Spring semester of 2012. This particular course, taught by Dr. Larry Browning, focused heavily on working with the outcomes of a good interview. It was my first exposure to grounded theory and how to create theoretical

parallels and connections within a dataset. The course also was my initial foray into narrative analysis. A key takeaway was comprehending elements of narrative appreciation and narrative understanding (Browning & Morris, 2012). These lessons allowed me to pay attention to the various characters described in narrative, how they identify, their actions, why and when they take action, and if morality plays any role. Similarly, I also learned that effective storytelling has the potential to explain causal chains, psychologically transport readers into different places, or raise the reader's interests and expectations. I came away from this particular course more confident in my ability to analyze and write up interview data, narrative especially. However, I was less sure of my ability to collect it. We worked mainly with analyzing a set of narratives that were the result of previously conducted interviews. The experience was invaluable, but I needed more direction on how to actually elicit narratives from research participants.

I decided to take another qualitative methods course offered in Texas' Educational Psychology program in Spring 2013. While this class also had a significant focus on grounded theory, it paid a bit more attention to interviewing. Some of the readings really stressed the finer points, such as how and when to probe (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), as well as the distinctions between descriptive, structural, and contrast interview questions. Descriptive questions are useful for enabling interviewees to describe an experience with particular phenomena in their own lingo. This may include interview prompts such as "Describe your role" or "tell me what happened during the meeting." Structural questions help discover how interviewees order and organize information. "Tell me about the different steps necessary to found a company" or "Tell me about the careers you can pursue with a degree in communication." Contrast interview questions help interviewers extract meaning by asking respondents to highlight the differences between at least two subjects. For example, an interviewer may say, "How does organizational communication differ from organizational behavior?" or "Discuss some differences between an M.A. and an M.B.A. degree (Spradley, 1979). I even had the opportunity to conduct a couple of interviews as part of an assignment requiring me to talk to immigrants about their experiences in America. My first

interview guides were dreadful. Nevertheless, I finished the course feeling a bit more well-rounded.

Concurrently in the Spring 2013 semester, I also took an ethnography course taught by Dr. Diane Bailey at Texas' School of Information, which focused on how to conduct observations, compile and write up fieldnotes, analyze texts, and identify the theoretical story therein. As interviews are inherent to ethnography, we spent time discussing interviewing as a consequence of analyzing ethnographical fieldnotes. Though interviewing was framed as a component of ethnography as opposed to a coequal and independent data collection method, I might have gleaned more practical direction in interviewing from this class than the other two. Assigned books included Weiss' (1994) text on interviewing and Charmaz's (Charmaz, 2006) work on grounded theory. I read Corbin and Strauss' (2008) qualitative research textbook as well, but I connected much better with Charmaz's chapter on data collection. Some of the finer points from Dr. Bailey included using transitions to get interviewees back on topic, separating the interview guide into sections using headings, and resisting the need to be excessively theory-driven. I got the opportunity to practice these techniques during two interviews at a research site Dr. Bailey had previously received access to. As a result, I now felt much more confident in my ability to conduct high-quality interviews.

The finale of my scholarly journey into qualitative investigation came in the form of Qualitative Camp, a week-long program of concentrated lectures, discussions, and activities designed to hone and expand qualitative research knowledge and skill sets. The camp took place on Norway's Lofoten Islands, and I was admitted as part of a larger research fellowship with Nord University in Bodø, Norway. Throughout the week, presenters such as Dr. Browning and Dr. Barry Brummett from the University of Texas, Dr. Jan-Oddvar Sørnes and Dr. Frode Soelberg from the Bodø Graduate School of Business, and Dr. Ingunn H. Lysø from the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy led sessions that added new, insightful perspectives to the information and techniques I thought I had previously mastered. Some examples included framing research questions as mystery problem statements, using theoretical constructs to give codes structure and make analysis less chaotic, and avoiding the trap of overcoding data. After completing Qualitative Camp, I was 100% certain I

was up to the task of sitting across from any research participant and extracting every word of data. Or so I thought.

Let's fast forward to the summer of 2015. I was in the midst of collecting data for my dissertation. This project investigated how tech start-up entrepreneurs—seeking legitimacy for their ventures—interact with investors who could grant legitimacy in the form of capital investment. I had recently completed six months of observations at two start-up incubators. I used the fieldnotes to help me construct an interview guide. I began reaching out to entrepreneurs, mentors, angel investors, and venture capitalists in hopes of gaining unique perspectives. I did my first interview. And it was a disaster. Disaster is probably a strong word. I suppose I just thought it would go differently. And a bit longer. The entire exchange clocked in at just over 44 minutes. As I read through the transcript, it was not a bad interview. But it was not necessarily a good one either. Coming to my dissertation committee with too many mediocre interviews would not get me any closer to graduation. I resolved that it was just the first interview and the next one would naturally be better.

But it wasn't. It was worse. My second interview was only 24 minutes long. This caused me to panic. Beyond the disappointing length, I was also very concerned about the richness of the data. As I compared my transcripts to previous findings in my literature review, I couldn't find any new, groundbreaking "nuggets," as Dr. Browning would say. Many of the responses might as well have been pasted from a blog on TechCrunch or Richard Branson's autobiography. Others were simply basic, awkward, and uninteresting. This exchange in particular, where my questions about seeking investment sent me face-first into a brick wall, is characteristic of my early struggles:

Interviewer*: Have you pursued any fundraising yet?*

Respondent*: No. I've bootstrapped my business so far, so we'll see, if I'm going to get to that stage, if I pick up a little more business, so we'll see. That's part of my idea—fundraise maybe a year or two from now.*

Interviewer*: Do you have…I guess you don't have a pitch deck or anything then?*

Respondent*: No.*

In the following interaction, even the interviewee knew this was not going well. I was expecting to learn more about her growth strategy and influential advisors, but soon discovered I was barking up the wrong tree:

Interviewer*: Are you trying to make it bigger, scale it up?*
Respondent*: More of a lifestyle business, I think.*
Interviewer*: Are you seeking any mentorship from anybody?*
Respondent*: I do have mentors, I have friends that I sit and talk with, but not in the way of official business mentorship. You know what I mean?*
Interviewer*: Okay.*
Respondent*: So, I don't know if I fit…maybe I don't fit into what you're writing…what you're working on.*

To say carving out an original theoretical contribution with my current data would be challenging would be a gross understatement. If this situation did not improve quickly, I would be facing several problems. First, the plan that I worked out with my dissertation chair called for me to finish data collection and analysis over the summer and devote the Fall 2015 semester to writing up the chapters while applying for jobs. This would allow for a Spring 2016 dissertation defense and graduation. If my interviews did not start improving, I would likely still be collecting data into Spring 2016, which would push my defense and graduation into Fall 2016, as my chair warned that neither she or any of my committee members would be available over the summer. This would result in me paying for another semester *and* attempting to finish the dissertation during the first year of whatever tenure-track position I managed to land. Or even worse, not getting a job due to not being close enough to completion. To avoid this outcome, I needed to diagnose and fix the problem in a hurry.

I did learn from Dr. Bailey's ethnography class that early interviews are meant to be learning experiences. So, with about a week before my next scheduled interviews, I took myself back to school. First, I played back the audio to listen for my mistakes. Did I ask leading questions? As far as I could tell, I kept the questioning in the strike zone. Did I interrupt my interviewees? Nope, I made it a point to stay out of the respondents' way. Did I engage in excessive academic jargon? I hate writing that way, so of course I opted for layman's terms. Did I probe when necessary? I did not

let any of my respondents off the hook. I concluded that the interviews themselves were not the problem.

My troubleshooting led me to re-evaluate my interview guide. Upon initial inspection, I thought it was pretty good. The most recent iteration included about 25 questions, divided into four sections to align with my four research questions. Questions such as "Tell me about the most important feedback you have received" were fairly open, while questions like "Tell me about your short- and long-range goals" were slightly narrower in scope. I stared at my interview questions, wondering if changing a word here or there would make a difference. I compared the interview guide against my notes from class to see if I was breaking any rules or missed a step somewhere. As best as I could tell, the guide reflected my formal training.

Until I realized it didn't. My error hit me in the head like a dodgeball. This was the moment I thought to return to my notes from Qualitative Camp. I hadn't reviewed that information in nearly two years, but I hoped I might find the silver bullet in there. As it turned out, what I actually found was the silver "funnel."

During the last day of Qualitative Camp, Dr. Barry Brummett led a session on interview question dimensions and sequencing. He began by reviewing the contrast between closed and open questions. Closed questions offer the research participant limited freedom in selecting a response, but are useful for making the participant more comfortable with sharing information. Open questions allow research participants maximum latitude in their responses, enabling them to engage in elongated recollections, harangues, or diatribes. Then, Dr. Brummett introduced three strategies for ordering questions in an interview guide. First, he discussed the *tunnel*, or a string of closed questions useful for getting at more specific questions. Next, he talked about the *funnel*, a technique where an interviewer starts with open questions and gradually gets more specific. Finally, he defined the *inverted funnel*, where the questioning starts narrow and progressively becomes more open and general.

I re-examined my interview guide for any semblance of sequencing strategy. I was simultaneously disappointed and relieved to see open questions followed by closed questions with little discernable order. I was annoyed with myself for not reaching this epiphany before data

collection started, but I was excited to apply Dr. Brummett's advice before it was too late. Based on the questions I already had, I reasoned that the most efficient path would be to adopt the inverted funnel. I scrapped the four groups of questions and split the entire list into two groups. The first group included more specific questions such as "Tell me about your product/service" and "Describe your brand." The second group featured more open questions like "What do you think investors are looking for?" and "How did you learn to be an entrepreneur?" As I studied the reorganized interview guide, I was hopeful and optimistic that the first group of questions would provide an adequate setup to really knock the second set out of the park. The first opportunity to find out was rapidly approaching.

My next interview came a few days later. As I waited for my interviewee to finish a phone call, I mentally rehearsed the rearranged questions from my revised interview guide. Admittedly, I was anxious to see if the inverted funnel would be effective. I felt somewhat like the coach of the team down 10 points at halftime of the Super Bowl. The adjustments I made could be the start of a comeback win or a blowout defeat. As it turned out, I was on the path toward victory. The interview went extremely well, clocking in at just under an hour. As I played back the audio, I heard story after story from this interviewee detailing his relationship with God, his passion for his company and product, and his long circuitous path from the elevator industry to designing predictive analytic software. Later that afternoon, my next interview was similarly fruitful. This respondent spent 55 minutes talking about society's need for his product, his struggles with self-doubt, and the many other individuals in the tech start-up world he regards as mentors and heroes. Here, he discusses advice he has received from other entrepreneurs and how it impacted his venture early on:

> The first thing I discovered was that my idea of getting the patents in place and basically without having done any proof of the market to be able to sell the technology for a million of dollars and have a pay date, which what I originally envisioned was, you know, this is great. If I get it patent on my own, I'll just sell patent and make a lot of money. Well, there's an entrepreneur, an old friend of mine, he says, 'I hate to break your bubble, but that's just not going to happen. Nobody's going to pay you anything until you

prove that there's a market there. And you're going to have to get these things out into the market and verify that in order to do that.' So that was the first piece of advice that was transforming in the very way I viewed this, because then I realized this was going to be a long haul. I'm going to have to build these things, and I'm going to have to not just design them and have a great idea, but I'm going to have to actually bring them to life. So, I could accept that, and I started looking at it, and I started with my industrial safety device which is a very complicated engineering device. I found that it was going to be very difficult for me to pay for the technology in the rubber chemistry that I was going to have to have in order to get that to work. So, I pivoted away from that and went to my geriatric fall protection.

The first piece of advice that I got from another entrepreneur that was transformational was my whole idea of selling technology. It wasn't going to be easy, it was going to be a long haul. So that was the first one and the second one was, probably, when I came to the realization that there's a great deal of liability with my devices, and because of that, I was not going to be able to start a manufacturing company, build these things and sell them, because the first time somebody was injured from the device itself or it didn't perform 100%, I would get sued, and as a fledgling company, I'd just get knocked out of the box. And it would never come to fruition, so then I started realizing in consulting with my friend who's an entrepreneur with more business experience that really my exit would be developing these things, building a few of them, putting them in with the beta testing in a controlled environment, getting feedback from that, and then being able to sell the technology to a large corporate entity. A large corporate entity would be able to take it to the public, because they could withstand the liability associated with an individual coming and suing a big corporate entity, and they have the wherewithal to defend against that, and it wouldn't put them under, and plus they had the experience of manufacturing things in general, but you know, medical devices, and would be able to easily manufacture this. To me, finding out how the outsource the manufacturers can be a very complicated and difficult brand-new endeavor for me. So I still have to do that because I have to build about a thousand of them and put them out into the market in order to do beta testing, so I still have that challenge, but trying to grow that and then then, you know, make two thousands of them and then find the threshold where you go from doing it by outsourcing to building your own facility—all that stuff.

Before even reading the transcripts, I knew this shift in strategy had gotten me back on track. In the course of a week, I went from worried and dejected to energized and excited. I looked forward to coding the transcripts with unabashed anticipation.

Over the course of the next three months, I conducted over 50 interviews using the inverted funnel sequencing method. Through constant comparative analysis of the consequent data, I was able to surface several overarching themes that I later theoretically connected into a narrative explaining the interactions and relationships shared by entrepreneurs, their advisors, and investors. These patterns were the foundation of the contribution that enabled me to successfully answer my research questions and defend my dissertation. However, I also discovered several surprises that emerged in the form of contradictions and misaligned perceptions. As Dr. Browning once said, "the exception proves the rule." These negative cases proved to be the "hidden gems" of my data. In addition to strengthening my arguments, these outliers have proven useful in generating future research pursuits.

For example, one theme that emerged from my data centered on coachability. Investors preferred giving money to entrepreneurs who were receptive to advice and mentoring. They perceived entrepreneurs who were coachable as more legitimate. Most of the entrepreneurs I spoke with expressed a willingness to take investor feedback to heart. But not all. One of my respondents went on an unsolicited rant describing her dissatisfaction and frustration with mentors and investors. She said:

> I've had mentors say, 'You should quit because no one cares about helping people.' That's fine, that's valuable. It really didn't pain me until one day I was trying to get funding. I wasn't even trying to get funding, I was trying to get connected and someone told me the same thing like, 'You should just go back and work real estate or whatever.' This person has no insight to my energy or the industry either. If people don't have insight, they can still give you valuable information but it's only based off of their experience and what they're able to see. You have to be able to take every grain of salt and you have to be able to pull its value from it… I don't care what my mentors say because they're not handing me a check. I don't mean that in a mean way, I mean that in a very honest way. All the people who will give

you advice on your company—if they are not handing you a check it is bad advice.

Another respondent offered a similar critique. She said:

We've also had feedback that has not been very helpful, and we have followed. Especially early on as a company. This is the first start-up for a lot of us. So, it's good to be receptive but at the end of the day, you should know that you know your business better than anyone else and you also need to follow your gut. I mean, it's good to listen to feedback but you should filter it because you know your business better than anyone can from the outside.

These comments caught me off guard because one of the most basic assumptions of founding a start-up is the necessity of multiple mentors to provide advice and counsel. Some incubators and co-working spaces tout access to mentors as a selling point. Many of the more competitive start-up accelerator programs list access to certain mentors as a benefit of acceptance. Some investors also play the mentor role. Nearly all investors expect the entrepreneurs they work with to listen to feedback and take the appropriate actions based on that guidance. To hear my respondents openly defy this doctrine was startling.

Another example is the concept of a founding team versus a solo entrepreneur. Investors repeatedly mentioned that companies founded by cohesive teams of specialists were more legitimate investments than solo founders attempting to be a jack of all trades. Most of the entrepreneurs I interviewed had surrounded themselves with co-founders who specialized in technology, marketing, finance, and so on. But some did not see it that way. One of my participants outlined why he felt contracting some work out was more efficient that assembling a permanent team. He said:

So, when you start something, I mean, you're all in. It's like being a general contractor for your own house. At some point, you're going to pick up a hammer, right? And, even if you don't, you're sitting there, looking at the framing, looking at all the details. Well, after a while, looking at the code and what the people were doing, I realized, 'You know what? I can do some of this—and just get it done a little bit faster.' So, I've been going a little bit

> back-and-forth between others and doing a little bit by myself because I feel that's the best answer right now.

Similarly, another respondent questioned the prevailing preference toward teams by noting examples of outsourcing expertise:

> I was going talk to the accelerator but I was told by someone that I wouldn't get in because I didn't have a technical cofounder. I sat around for eight months trying to find a technical co-founder or this archetype of what they say a technical co-founder is and I was unsuccessful… There have been tons of companies that have received funding and they don't have the developers in-house, they outsource it. Why should I be any different? I'm being real, why should it be any different for me?

Most of the start-up ecosystem agrees that no one successfully does this alone. For every Steve Jobs, there is a Steve Wozniak and a Ronald Wayne. Mark Zuckerberg is the face of Facebook, but he had co-founders: Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Eduardo Saverin. Tech people usually can't sell, marketing people typically can't write code, and neither effectively know their way around an income statement. As such, investors eschew the "one-person shop" in favor of a co-founding team. They cite the value of specialization and having the right people in the right roles. Most entrepreneurs don't want to be perceived as a "jack of all trades and a master of none," so they seek co-founders with diverse areas of expertise. Hearing that some entrepreneurs do not buy into this prevailing notion was an interesting surprise.

These differing perspectives did not begin presenting themselves until after I restructured my interview questions into an inverted funnel. I believe that strategically arranging the interview guide so that it gradually invited greater liberty in responses increased the possibility of discovering interesting abnormalities or deviations in the data. As I reflect back on earlier versions of my interview guide, the lack of strategic sequencing and grouping by research questions was putting me in my own way. I honestly do not know if I could have captured such open rebukes of dominant patterns had I not made the adjustments I did. Though these hidden gems were not the focus of my research objectives, discovering

them helped solidify my dissertation's contribution and inspire future research from this dataset.

This period of trepidation and triumph in the face of difficulty has helped me become a better researcher. In the years that have passed since my dissertation data collection debacle, I have used the mistakes I made back then as guardrails to keep me from making them again. I have also used the lessons that resulted from those mistakes as arrows in my qualitative data collection quiver. I learned those lessons the hard way, but future generations do not have to. I decided that for my upcoming lecture, I will not merely send students chasing down all of the books and articles I have read in my scholarly journey. Rather, I hope I can provide them with the understanding that Qualitative Camp gave me. There is no singular best way to do this work. But if you remain flexible, curious, and receptive, you can always find a *better* way.

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3

Researching the Market Violence of Counterfeit Medicines: Insights from Qualitative Camp

Frederick Ahen

An Odyssey within an Odyssey[1]

Åbo, Finland, Summer 2012. I had received acceptance of competitive papers to three conferences across Central and Northern Europe. Each conference follows the other in a short period of time. I had articles to be presented and doctoral colloquia in each of these conferences. I had been assigned to mentors who will offer comments and guidance on my on-going doctoral dissertation work. These work trips are customarily

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recommended in Scandinavian Higher Education institutions for at least three crucial reasons: First, to introduce budding scholars to the epistemic community for networking and getting used to the institutional logics and rules of the game. Secondly, they are special occasions where seasoned scholars other than one's own supervisors help doctoral students work through their insecurities and build confidence through face-to-face encounters. Thirdly, these encounters are teachable moments that open the floodgates of epiphanies and new revelations about methods, approaches, new theories, and even data sources and of course, prestigious international outlets that are more sympathetic to one's line of enquiry. Such journeys within the research journey, are more than justified if novices seek to become active members of the community by keeping abreast of the state-of-the-art of their discipline through professional development. Moreover, these conferences are for enhancing personal growth besides serving as opportunities for training the next generation of international scholars. One can simply refer to these annual or bi-annual gatherings as intellectual pilgrimages. Given the intensity of the doctoral work, some useful distractions are warranted. Apart from the official trips, there was something interesting brewing excitingly in the private sphere. It has as much to do with writing as the conferences. Right after these conferences, I will be the best man at the wedding of a dear friend in Verona, Italy, in a place where Romeo and Juliet 'may have' had their amorous encounters. I looked forward fervently to meeting my former college mates and old friends in Italy. We hadn't met in years. For this one too, like many other occasions, I must write a speech and deliver it in front of over a hundred guests. I must write and polish what I write until it is saturated with the fine prose and quasi-poetic elegance to captivate. That also means writing and editing at airports, reading in the restroom at home when kids are wild and playing, as well as having long walks in the Finnish forest and at the beach. The latter, a routinized, luxurious, and ecologically conscious private amusement is just meant to help me reflect on what I am writing and to cool off a bit from the multiple things I am writing at the same time. However, there is an obscured problem. Many a time the line between what is scientific, artistic, spiritual, or humorous writing gets blurred; I must walk a fine line between these styles. Sometimes each must stay in their own lane but in all cases, one

cannot miss the creative elements that go into getting a reader hooked from start to finish. Making this process smooth is what I dreaded. However, I did my best to overcome those fears, albeit having the weird feeling whether I am good enough. This is always the case until recognition comes to tranquilize and amuse my confusion and sense of inadequacy. Then again, which reader must be hooked? I must have my target audience for the specific investigation that must be accepted by two external reviewers of my doctoral dissertation. This also means that apart from meeting certain laid-down criteria regarding rigour, depth, novelty, and relevance set out by my university, there are some rigid rules to follow creatively.

In this process, I must also consider the philosophical soundness, coherence, and logical flow of my text. It is in this latter academic liberty that I must express myself with much innovation and make my creative writing prowess shine. Outside that scope not much makes sense to others. My writing must communicate well, attract attention, influence policy, touch hearts and minds, and enlighten others. I must write to be noticed. That is, I must have something important to say to get cited (Alvesson, 2013).—So, all this learning is simply meant to perfect my art of writing. The details of my schedule show that my summer is full of intellectual marathons—not the 'academic tourism' type, because I mean serious business. I must attend the symposium on cross-sector social collaboration and present my paper in Rotterdam. After three days, I will proceed to Aalborg, Denmark for the doctoral colloquium and conference presentation on international business. I will then return home for a couple of days and head back to Helsinki on my way to Oslo, from where I will change flight to Trondheim, then take the ferry to Bodø and eventually Lofoten where the 2012 Nordic Qualitative Management Research Camp will be held. This camp was sponsored by the Nordic Academy of Management and Research Network Northern Norway—meaning food and boarding were covered in the stipend. For a PhD student such economic incentives matter. This was my itinerary for a summer academic marathon where I am the main protagonist running against myself.

I must leave every conference as a much better-trained version of myself. Not only for the sake of writing better but for a much higher

purpose; to become an excellent teacher of research methods—especially in conducting qualitative research. In what follows I present an autoethnographic account of my research journey. Consistent with autoethnographic approach (Vesa & Vaara, 2014); Prasad (2019), the methodology challenges the epistemological orthodoxy of mainstream analysis and the presentation of management literature. Here, reflexivity is prioritized above the assumption that 'knowledge itself is ontologically divorced from its creator' (Prasad, 2019, p. 73). Self-reflection as a tool will guide the foregoing account of my intellectual odyssey.

The Research Journeys

I study international business, society, and global health governance. My focus can legitimately be considered the 'commercial crime scene' type, a reality that presents itself like an evil fiction. Inspired by critical management scholars, I belong to the unpopular tribe of intellectuals who question power and domination and the impact of such dominance on people, the environment, and our common future. Despite its noble intentions, this tribe has readymade enemies and fake friends everywhere. 'But He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world'. We win. This tribe thinks in terms of people before profits; our planet first; not the power and profit of a self-centered few. We are annoyingly critical of illegality and unethical business-political practices and serious with innovative ideas for a sustainable world for all. We serve the very people who despise us so that they can breathe fresher air and live healthily on a safe planet or be protected from counterfeit medicines (devoid of safety, efficacy, or active ingredients but potentially full of toxins). A series of interesting circumstances led me to this area of research. None of them involves an attempt to appear sanctimonious or engage in virtue-signaling.

The idea of understanding and explaining global health inequality, a dire human condition (engineered by politics), and the role of international business and politics in it started way back during my Bachelor's studies. Humans crave life but they do not express it in the way they articulate all other things. Life is not only about keeping a biological

system alive, but it includes all the things that go with it: money, power, fame, crime, health, appearance, shady deals, pleasure, truth, lies (lots of it), cover-ups, ego, freedom, social acceptance, cooking the books, justice, and a lot more non-essentials and essentials such as efficacious quality medicines. I study the business and politics of this latter need—the illegal version, to be precise. That means the research goal here is to to go undercover and investigate how bad guys employ modern technologies to acquire wealth by exploiting the human conditions or consumers' vulnerability through legal loopholes in the sale of counterfeit pharmaceuticals. In the literature, this is called market violence (i.e. the symbolic and material harm or suffering inflicted by the logic of the market) (Fırat, 2018), or what I call—value destruction (Ahen, 2015). The protagonists are sinister folks who smell evil even before they commit any wicked thing. We don't know their friends, but we know that in any illegal activity that brings in huge cash flows, they are never found wanting. This market, which is ever more expanding, is greater than prostitution, cocaine, and other illegal businesses put together. In the beginning of the investigative adventure, I didn't know what to say about the counterfeit phenomenon, let alone how to say it in black and white for a reader.

How did modern proliferation of counterfeit medicines become a multibillion-dollar business, a danger to population health, but hardly a tragedy for the perpetrators? How did it become such a mighty, silent nightmare? For many scholars, this is due to the US government's war on drugs (narcotics). Many in the narcotic trade have sought refuge in the market of counterfeit medicines. They can do it even from their garages and sell them on-line using deceptive marketing strategies. Due to regulatory lapses, the legal consequences for such illegal commercial activities still have sentences as light as a minor slap on the wrist compared to those who deal in cocaine. Sometimes such medicines have no active ingredients at all, other times they contain too much of the substance or even toxic agents that can have serious adverse effects on human health or even worsen the existing pathology.

The search for answers requires treading on murky territories. If you seek the truth, you always walk alone—they say—because when it comes to counterfeit medicines, no one has seen anything, no one

knows anything, and no one wants to say anything—although everyone is a potential victim. This is because the bad guys pose a real threat when it comes to protecting their interests. Soon, I shall tell you how I managed to speak to insiders when I got to Washington DC—my data collecting site, among others. But before that, I paid an official visit to the office of the Ghana Food and Drug Authority (FDA Ghana) to conduct an interview and to collect documents. Whilst there, one morning, the director arrived with a team of his agents with whom he had conducted a sort of 'early morning blitz'. He looked confused and overwhelmed. They had been attacked by the public that they were there to protect. They had visited a place called Agbobloshie, in Accra the capital city of Ghana. There (at the time), both lawbreakers and hustlers, who don't know any better, manufactured and sold all kinds of smuggled and counterfeit medicines. The FDA team was literally attacked and asked to go away because they were deemed heartless people who were willing to take away other people's source of bread—even if that source of bread requires damaging the health of others. The world indeed is a business. This is how dangerous it is even for legitimate public authorities fighting the economic crime of counterfeit sales and the market violence it produces.

But there is more. Over 70% of people in developing economies make use of herbal medicines, which can also be another source of threat besides orthodox fakes. Consumer ignorance of the wicked side of counterfeits is also a major source of concern. Many of the medicines that are mostly purchased are lifestyle medicaments and not the cure for diagnosed pathologies. For example, products against hair loss that is not the result of a medical condition, male performance enhancement pills, and other medicaments for beauty enhancement are among the most sought after. Meanwhile, others are real medical conditions where individuals resort to counterfeits when they cannot afford expensively branded prescription drugs or are unwilling to share their medical condition story with a clinician. They then turn to the internet or unauthorized street vendors instead of seeking proper medical help. After all, humans crave life and survival but other humans with violent instincts are market predators who will prey on others for profits. Once they taste and see that the profits are 'delicious', they never stop.

Will a Hypothetic-Deductive Approach be Useful Here?

In this phase of the journey, an inductive approach is privileged over positivist philosophy of science and/or hypothetic-deductive approach to finding answers to the research question. How do we uncover the complex criminal activities with intricate global networks when the phenomenon under investigation is not only constantly evolving but doing so in obscurity with various sets of actors yet to be identified? In my search for answers, I must be discrete, steps ahead in my investigation, but most importantly, I had to understand that if I succeed well enough, lives can be saved because of the awareness about the dangers of counterfeit medicines and the consequent policy innovations for consumer protection. Moreover, I will be contributing to theoretical knowledge on the role of institutions in governing evil actors who shape global health. This is no trivial subject. It is about the human condition, ultimately as Jon Franklin puts it. Here then, I have solved the relevance aspect of my writing puzzle. In the end I must answer the 'and so what' aspect when I present my results. It must be convincing and compelling enough.

The investigation must be disguised as any other but with a goal that requires a higher calling. I had been to several conferences to present my preliminary work. However, traditional ways of doing research limited me to academic niceties and strategies that were not ruthless enough in investigating as a pro. This is another dilemma among many dilemmas. I was already forming my idea about some academic canons based on the existing apparatus of justification to convince everyone that business school research was all identified and sanctified, logical, mathematical, statistical, and scientifically unambiguous. Some of those who spoke like this spoke out of inferiority complex to their natural science counterparts. They have never owned or run a business before. They know little to nothing about the emotional, artistic, instinctive, spiritual, creative, philanthropic, trickery, criminality, deception, and truthful aspects of business and its management aspects or moneymaking, buying, and selling reality that looks like a fictional movie. They think based on rational models that hardly work in the real world and assume that there is such a

myth as rational consumer with perfect knowledge of her preferences. Science attempts to study what can be seen and observed. A lot of business, like the world in which we exist, is shrouded in secrecy. This is natural because of competition, and it is even supported by law. Patent rights and certain tacit forms of scientific, creative knowledge, recipes and aromas are never announced. That is why industrial espionage exists. Secrecy prevails even more in counterfeit commerce because it is illegal. Having been born into an entrepreneurial family and practised international business myself at a younger age, I knew this all too well to be a natural state of affairs. My family imported and sold heavy-duty truck parts and agricultural machinery. With this background, any plastic or artificial explanation about business must better be based on reality. Any attempt to teach the methods of doing qualitative research must recognize the complexity as emanating from a conglomerate of interesting and multifaceted rough edges.

Tricks of the Trade: Delving Into Qualitative Research Methods at the Qcamp

Over the years, I listened as some scholars talked statistically about pieces of art and scientifically about creativity. They omit relevant dimensions that ought to be more important than what is emphasized, sometimes in exaggeration and unnecessarily complex approaches to '*scientify*' something qualitative and spiritual/emotional or metaphysical. They forget so quickly that even sports car buyers don't only buy horsepower and durability; they buy design and aesthetics. So, it is with all things in fashion, medicine, and entertainment—it is what appeals to the eyes and ears or other senses that sells—just like good writing. But even here, every genre of writing has its market segment.

But to stay in the game, one needs other perspectives, too. Then in 2012, the Lofoten Qualitative camp happened. It was the place to draw inspiration from for any naturalistic investigation. The meeting of seasoned and budding scholars helped to dig deep into the art and science of doing qualitative research. The ambient for that couldn't be more

perfect—a picturesque coastal sanctuary for the mind to relax, increase in intellectual curiosity, and make sense of naturally occurring data. It was a relaxing but intense interaction and mental exercise. I took every opportunity to educate myself or enquire about how much people at the camp knew about the counterfeit phenomenon. Some were totally oblivious to it; some had heard about it, but others didn't even realize how much it mattered. But it mattered that I was prepared, expected much, and got so much from the camp. I meticulously kept my diary. I frequently consult it for ideas when writing a qualitative paper. In Lofoten, I presented a paper that received excellent comments and I reciprocated that by offering constructive comments to others. The Qcamp represents an extraordinary metaphor for how to investigate and write about the world and it more than served its purpose; making us sensitive to clues and nuances—exactly what I was looking for.

I keenly observed and listened with rapt attention, discussed, reflected, questioned, and sampled ideas from presentations by different experts from different academic traditions. The strategies used in the sessions by some professors have become very useful pedagogical tools that I still employ in the classroom. Taking the flight, the ferry, the bus, dining, sharing an apartment with a European American colleague all gave opportunities for fruitful interactions. But how should one go about investigating a subject that is both delicate and potentially dangerous in terms of how it may expose the nefarious acts of certain people? How are relevance and quality ensured in qualitative research when interpreting a complex set of triangulated data? These are some of the burning questions that I answered in my dissertation with inputs from the Qcamp.

The Lofoten camp served as a coaching field where I learned to train my eyes and ears to observe and listen to what others don't notice, and what others gloss over, to listen to such minor details that can serve as clues to the deeper things.

One exercise stuck with me. We were asked to draw an image of the central idea of our research and how we imagined it going forward. That was such a simple but profound activity that required lots of imagination. At first, it was a little difficult. I am not the Picasso type, but it got me thinking. How do I put a whole complex world of counterfeits in sustainable global health in a simplified drawing in an image? In its

multifacetedness, what must I focus on? How do I explain the most important things with a simple image? Then it clicked. Health, the ultimate human condition has several unspoken political and economic undertones and most of all moral status. I started training my mind to build models as a simplified representation of the complex world. I had many such models in my dissertation.

How do global health institutions and the pharmaceutical industry affect each other? From there I investigate how counterfeit medicines affect consumers. These were recorded in my diary. It was eye-opening. But it was just the beginning. My intention was to accumulate skills in the approaches and design of qualitative research. Then it occurred to me that every single research has uniqueness that requires a certain degree of creativity to demonstrate. It is amazing how different people interpret the same image using different wordings to 'repaint' what they see. Some are so effective that they can even make an image breath and feel alive. But there are many challenges, too. My approach has always been to respect the rules of logic and reasoning but remain unperturbed in my use of academic liberty in defying certain orthodoxies. This is partly my political act of visionary defiance that seeks to direct attention to the bigger questions and not the trivial ones that get easily published because they do not upset the system. I have learnt the hard way that not everyone in the whole world is seeking positive change. Some people even love chaos and depredation if they can gain from it. As Murdoch (1999) puts it '*Those who tell you "Do not put too much politics in your art" are not being honest. If you look very carefully you will see that they are the same people who are quite happy with the situation as it is…What they are saying is, "don't upset the system*"'. But who or what is the system? They are the multifarious enemies of truth who have infiltrated both industry and academia.

My personal experience at the Qcamp was that I moved from just knowing a lot of theories and methods to effectively applying them and not being afraid to do so in any given context. I learnt to systematically develop logical justifications for why they are appropriate for a certain research question. This means that a journal that must be sympathetic to a certain style of presenting research must be carefully chosen. What made a difference with the Qcamp compared to other conferences? It was

hands on, full of activating teaching models that were far from boring. All the insights from discussions, sessions, exercises, or extracurricular activities provided intense action and pause for reflections as well. In pedagogical terms the course was constructively aligned in all its elements. This taught me how to teach practical things that students can use while employing various activating models. The Qcamp drew me closer to the art of investigating important matters. Here, there were valuable lessons; valuing and treating a wide variety of data as important evidence for unlocking hidden truths, connecting the dots, magnifying the quasi-invisible, shedding light and punching holes into prevailing paradigms and overlooked notions, making sense of complex phenomena, communicating purpose, and inspiring deeper understanding like a professional investigator.

The influence of the Qcamp on my dissertation was enormous. Collecting and analysing data was one thing but presenting the narrative in a polished and accessible manner is quite another. My attention was drawn to this all-important fact. Furthermore, the actual process of making research statements and stating the purpose, goals and clarifying the research methods was emphasized. These lessons were learnt when we were given an example of a research abstract with empty spaces to fill. I returned from Lofoten having a template, more or less of what must go into my dissertation and what mustn't. My confidence went through the roof as I realized what I was doing right and what I was doing wrong. Clarity of purpose is a healthy dose of intellectual vitamin.

I learnt from the different new approaches to qualitative research, especially because I had hitherto been ignoring *naturally occurring data*. Here, I delve a bit deeper into this engaging lecture at the Qcamp by Niina Koivunen (University of Vaasa) that served as a turning point in my learning development. It seemed so mundane but also so profound and useful. This idea is based on Silverman (Silverman, 2007*: A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about qualitative research*). Koivunen explained the boundless opportunities that come with engaging with naturally occurring data. Contrary to data that is the result of researchers' effort, naturally occurring data can best be contrasted with what Silverman refers to as manufactured data (through survey, interviews, experiments) or what he calls researcher-provoked data. Here, we

are rather dealing with the analysis of talk, textual, documentary, or archival data, observations and interactions that naturally occur without the researcher necessarily producing them. The idea seems to solve a host of challenges that researchers face with generating fresh data, especially in investigations such as mine. The point is to be more selective, critical, and transparent in presenting such analysis in order to ensure trustworthiness. In the aftermath of the course, everywhere I looked new data was conspicuosly present. This was something I previously ignored or could not notice. My trained eyes and analytical mind are the essential tools for case studies, ethnography, and other naturalistic approaches to investigating the social phenomenon of counterfeits medicines. What are the actual implications? Familiarity with the strange can now be called discovery. Endowed with a probing mind, strong intellectual curiosity and critical view of social phenomena I was led to seek answers to pressing questions. An ethical requirement here is sensitivity to easy-to-ignore nuances; not uncritical or out of naiveté or a know-it-all posture, but a responsible ministry to the world with humility because we never really know—we are ever knowing.

Treating the camp experience as a one-week-long observational data piece brings into life the vivid memories of key moments where I, the researcher, seek solutions to complications. The camp and its secluded setting, the diversity of people, as well as the different disciplinary backgrounds of both instructors and students added to the richness of the camp making it feel as though it were a veritable boot camp for scheming secret plans about sophisticated writing. My diary also detailed the richness of my experience at the Qcamp and contains several interesting points. It contained questions, doubts, and more questions—a lot of them but also great answers. I was wondering about the many situations in which I have been warned that academic writing is dissimilar to writing a novel. It is a totally alien-type of complicated writing that requires the writer to present facts dispassionately and remove him−/herself from the phenomenon he/she is investigating. It is a well-structured style of intellectual engagement rather than creative prose with all the literary elements to capture the imagination of readers. The thing that was reinforced was to train myself to listen selectively and trust my intuition. Good academic articles also read like a storyline and those narratives

matter as much as the rigour. Thus, writing well matters because it wins by succeeding to communicate.

The intense and relaxing interaction was mainly centered on honest hard talk about the process of doing qualitative work and the difficulty involved. It is not an easy, simple, and straightforward thing. One must manoeuvre through muddy waters with passion, energy, and critical thinking, otherwise it is not worth it. Writing is not for the slothful. Serious writing is time consuming and if one has nothing to write, one better not write. But if one writes, then one should write, write, and keep writing more, for therein lies some gems. Further, case study data, for example, can serve the researcher his/her whole career, and keeping a keen eye and a sharp mind on naturally occurring data is not a thing for the inattentive. These are some valuable lessons from the Qcamp. Listening to all this along with many others, I was both excited and overwhelmed. At times I felt someone else with a special talent must do this. But then I was assured that this talent can be nurtured, so, I chose to keep writing. And more writing I have done since then based on my data.

The camp represented a metaphor for how to investigate and write about the world in detail, from a point of view that is overlooked, with nuances that seem trivial on the surface but are deep when written in compelling prose. However, at the same time, there is a fine difference between academic writing with its strange rules and orthodoxies and other forms of writing. The rules must be followed creatively, birthing out interesting ideas that then eclipse the original intended ideas by leading us to a new discovery that fascinates us to study more, contemplate more, and work harder. But the 'fiery immediacy of the concrete certainty' of the burning issue still becomes illusive to many for which an artistic measure of prose must be deployed to convey, convince, and correct. One can achieve much by developing the language in one's own style. The approach does not only narrate with elegant wordsmith but shows and allows the reader to live the experience. In the end, this mode of painting and articulating various phenomena with words is to help shed light on both the beauty and wretchedness of the world that is hidden under an artificial façade that says all is well. Simultaneously, such an approach must have a built-in self-criticizing system that highlights limitations and in so doing demonstrates the limits of human artistic

creativity instead of looking from one prism with a false narrative tainted with deliberate or inadvertent omissions and a focus on trivialities that hardly touch the human condition.

While Reading Mary Karr's 'Art of Memoir' and Jon Franklin's 'Writing for Story' it dawned on me that all the incisive minds have produced a unique version of something or a novel perspective of the study of the world by writing about it. In writing one must seek clarity that amplifies and gives voice to truth instead of mystifying social phenomena, something that I am working on. My participation in the Qcamp had an enormous impact on my writing approach. However, I also learnt later on that for each genre of writing, I must adopt a different style. I must improve the way I generally see things.

Chasing Data Across Continents

The need for medicines is a big problem in tropical regions of the world, especially where malaria infections are widespread. Malaria has stayed with humans for millennia. It comes from the bite of mosquitoes that carry a parasite, known as *Plasmodium falciparum*. It has caused some of the world's biggest armies to fall, killed four popes in the past, and today it still has a massive impact on productivity because those it affects cannot go to work or school. The financial cost to households is even more burdensome for those who can't afford medicines to treat it. Cheap counterfeits then come in. I started writing my dissertation early, but I still needed to learn the nitty-gritties and practical savvy required to advance with data at the granular level. For all these reasons and many more, I visited a chemical company to understand how two PhD holders living in Chicago and working as directors of research on tropical diseases in a colossal pharmaceutical multinational have moved to Ghana to solve the problem with access to affordable medicines. It was not an easy move for them. Upon arrival in Ghana, they went over and above the requirements to make the factory's internal and external environment the most ideal for drug production. Their sacrifice, determination, and hardships were all to seek to improve public health. That notwithstanding, they struggled to obtain the World Health Organization (WHO) prequalification

that could have allowed them to produce medicines in Ghana. I left there with good data but more questions than answers because something doesn't add up in global health governance. My curiosity increased with every encounter, but I had to be creative, not deceptive. I picked the right time and moments that allowed me to appear less threatening. Knowing things was one thing, honing the skills of an excellent writer in reporting the world via naturalistic interpretive modes was quite another. It quickly dawned on me that almost everything has been written; there is nothing new under the sun. If I wanted to be original, then I must navigate my way outside the compartmentalized world of private business and venture into deeper questions that have been ignored by scholars despite their importance. Writing it my way made all the difference—it's called originality.

My mission didn't end there. I attended a meeting held at the National Press Club and Newseum in Washington DC. This is where the major global health decisions are made. It is where the big wigs from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), FBI, consumer associations, industry, and academia meet. I had read about a conference organized by the Partnership for Safe Medicines. I happened to have a conference in New York then, so I insisted on attending that meeting to see what other form of data can be found. I took that opportunity over the course of three years to meet the above-mentioned representatives and many other stakeholders including consumer advocacy lawyers who gladly offered their insights. They were very welcoming and helpful, and my persistence paid off with large data sets, thanks to being in touch with some of them via email so that I could get my questions answered.

The Final Grand Piece

All the above informed my dissertation with the following uncomplicated short title 'Strategic corporate responsibility orientation for sustainable global health governance: Pharmaceutical value co-protection in transitioning economies'. Following the interpretivist tradition, I seek to contribute to the neo-institutional theory through qualitative fieldwork. I also draw attention away from seeing corporate responsibility (CR) as

pertaining to businesses only. I meaningfully reframe the CR concept differently from the mainstream CR discourse that ignores the non-business actors such as governments and other agencies when it comes to value destruction activities such as counterfeit business. Additionally, I reorient attention from organization-centredness (resource-based view) to a consumer/patient-centred perspective for value co-creation/co-protection. Principally, the study provides a new theoretical model in the form of a metaphor of a value parliament to explain how global health governance works. The study concludes that value creation only comes about through the central role of strategic ethical leadership and values-based managerial entrepreneurship, pockets of excellence emerging from efficient cross-sector interactions, and institutional responsibility on the part of transitioning economies and international organizations. This is achieved through collaborative investments in patient-centred global health instead of organization-centredness.

Overall, the study develops *the theory of the ultimate preference for non-optimal solutions* in global health governance, which has relevance for the COVID-19 pandemic. The values of major actors and micropolitics, power asymmetry, corporate irresponsibility, and institutional path dependence, are the explanatory variables of this theory. Breaking this down further, here's the translation from 'academese' to human-friendly language: For any given set of global health solutions for creating value (such as consumer/patient-protection from counterfeits, or prevention of public health governance failures that allow counterfeits to thrive on the market), a range of market and institutional possibilities always exist. Nevertheless, the data show that deliberate quick fixes are mostly preferred to sustainable options. This allows actors to maintain the status quo (relevance/survival-seeking) and the attendant incentive structures—leading to weak governance structures that undermine the sustainability and institutionalization of global health as a major concern. The theory explains why medico-techno-scientific products remain geopolitical commodities through which powerful actors leverage competitive advantage, allowing them to maintain the path dependence of global health outcomes in transitioning economies. It is the above deficiencies that counterfeiters worldwide have sought to take advantage of, to the detriment of consumers. This section borrows heavily from.

The Rewards of Qcamp

We started with journeys, so let us conclude with a journey. At the traditional doctoral conferment ceremony, I had the honour of representing the doctoral body by giving a speech on behalf of all the doctors. I recounted my travail with jest, some of the things one must go through every day apart from the pressure, research grant applications, and journal article rejections. They are occupational hazards, so I move on. However, my long-held dream of owning a private jet partially came to pass with a ride from Oslo to Helsinki after the Qcamp; just me, a colleague sitting far from me, the flight attendants, and the pilots on board. It felt presidential, or at least a foretaste of it. Luggage controllers in Oslo were on strike, so no passenger could board any flight; however, mine required no baggage check in. I was just welcomed on board to go home and juggle my other writing life—a partial victory over market violence or a new-found motivation of sorts to continue my academic career. Besides the best doctoral dissertation award in 2015, in June 2019, the Centre for Consumer Research of the University of Helsinki organized an international seminar where my presentation on counterfeit medicines received the 'most violent' paper award. I thank all the colleagues for their interest and input.

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4

Studying Processes in Organizations Lessons Learned from Limbo Situations

Inge Hermanrud

Introduction

My research has for more than a decade focused on organizational learning, knowledge sharing, and identity formation processes in relation to learning. The challenge with researching organizational learning and related topics is to grasp the complexity and make sense of different processes that are entangled with each other. We begin with a brief review of the complexity of organizational learning and the application of grounded theory to it. Organizational learning stems from individual learning processes, and therefore it is necessary to understand individuals' learning in order to understand organizational learning. However, the organizational context is more complex than the individual learning environment. It is not simply a collective of individual learning processes, but involves interactions between individuals in the organization, interactions between organizations as an entity, and interactions between the organization and

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its context (Basten & Haamann, 2018). By studying processes, I here mean researching events, activities, and choices as they emerge and arrange themselves over time (Langley, 2009). The study of processes is important because of such studies' explicit emphasis on temporality, an important dimension of the world that is underplayed in variance-based research that tends to ignore it or to compress it into variables (Bizzi & Langley, 2012). Grounded theory strategy (Orlikowski, 1993: Langley, 1999: Locke, 2001) and narrative strategy (Bizzi & Langley, 2012: Langley, 1999) are recommended when studying processes due to their ability to uncover complexity. Grounded theory has furthermore become one of the most preferred methods within qualitative studies due to the systematic research procedures the method offers for qualitative studies (Hallberg, 2006). Put very simply, grounded theory offers means of studying human behaviours and interactions and creating new perspectives and understandings of common behaviour (Blumer, 1969). Some use grounded theory as a research strategy, while others only apply the techniques for data analysis. The narrative strategy involves the reconstitution of events into a "thick description" and has clear links to ethnography (Bizzi & Langley, 2012). These two strategies or approaches were in particular focus at the PhD course Qualitative Camp at Nord University.

My personal nature is that I love to tell stories, and maybe sometimes, admittedly, I exaggerate to get attention, and present a story in a way to make my point very clear and hopefully of interest. In light of this, my participation at the Qualitative Camp was like coming home. I found qualitative research to be an approach that fits me well as a storyteller. To find a workable approach for research, as a novice researcher I read books and guidelines and looked for templates in articles to better grasp how to conduct qualitative data collection and analysis. There are many approaches to qualitative methods and therefore not one guide for what to do, but several more or less competing approaches (Patton, 2002). For example, even within the grounded theory strategy, there is a controversy between Glaser and Strauss the originators of grounded theory about newer variants. This chapter is about me struggling through different limbo situations—uncertain events that are uncontrollable and unchangeable during the course of becoming a researcher.

My experience as researcher can be described as a learning process where I have gone through different limbo situations in my interactions with journal reviewers and editors, and how I have perceived what peers, journal reviewers, and editors judge as good—and not good—qualitative research. While Qualitative Camp gave me a strong identity as a grounded theorist, my experiences have made me less clear in my approach. Finally, I will reflect upon my learning in relation to qualitative methods. Through reflection, I can create a distance to my own expectations, and this provides new opportunities for interpretation of my experiences. When something is perceived as unclear, a dissonance can arise that triggers reflection, and in some cases this leads to the pre-understanding being challenged and the previous meaning perspective or frame of reference being changed (Mezirow, 1990). In particular, I will look into my use of qualitative methods when studying processes in organizations.

"Theory": The Variance View and the Process View in Research

What are the dependent and independent variables in your study? This is a common question I have gotten at conferences and from peers reviewing my articles. The question illustrates that research very often is viewed from one methodological view, the variance view. When studying processes, however, the variance view has its shortcomings. The challenge is often that there are too many variables and that the significance of the variables changes over time, as exemplified in organizational learning. Instead, researchers choose to study events and the actors' actions to develop theory about learning process. A key concept in social learning theory is a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which is a process theory that illustrates an individual's gradual acquisition of professional skills through apprenticeship that leads to membership in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, through "ontological drift" (Thompson, 2011), this theoretical concept has become more "frozen" to refer to a separable structure, described not by the ongoing situated learning activity constituting it (i.e. a process view),

but by the elements qualifying it, a variance-based view (Langley, 1999). The skill in process theorizing is therefore in continuing to be focused on the doings in the data and how the data evolve.

Lessons at Qualitative Camp

Lesson 1

Take Notes and Create a Good Story that Is Interesting

Qualitative Camp was first a journey at sea. We started with a boat trip from Bodø to Henningsvær. On the coastal steamer, we were asked to look for activities on the boat and to describe them. In the reflection after the exercise, we became aware that each individual PhD student had described different activities on the boat, which gave us different insights into the work taking place on the coastal steamer. The lesson provided me with this insight: The researcher is the main "instrument" for the research. Your interest, your biases, and your attention will influence the research, whether you like it or not. Is this a bad thing? Not now and not then in my view, but one must acknowledge it, state your biases, and bracket your biases in your data collection and analysis. Look in the direction you think you will find your answers, but also put that direction on "pause" and see what happens: do you see something else? I remember focusing on the coastal steamer cafeteria. Are there other activities on the boat that are more or equally important to understanding happenings on the boat? And maybe the processes are linked?

Lesson 2

"The More I Know about a Phenomenon, the More I Focused my Data Collection and Analysis"

Professor Larry Browning opened up about his research practices. He told us that the more he knew about a topic, he was able either to end an

interview early (nothing of interest here) or have more questions ready to ask. What does this mean? Again, who you are influences the instrument used in the study, which is you! Lately I have come to the insight that the more I know and the more I focus on elements that can highlight a contribution in relation to existing theory and/or related research, the more distinctive my research. Reviewing this lesson underscores the important role of the researcher's prior knowledge when collecting and analysing data.

Lesson 3

"That's the Same Way we Do Phenomenology!"
At Qualitative Camp, faculty members were asked to place themselves in different traditions, like grounded theory, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. The goal was to give us insights into the different traditions and to emphasize their similarities and commonalities. Even though I felt some discrepancies, the overall impression was that the faculty at Qualitative Camp had more in common than what divided them. However, I got the impression that no one agreed or understood each other's approach fully but continued to talk about their own approach, while highlighting a common ground. I embraced grounded theory and narratives as my research strategies. Why these choices? Narratives because I like to tell stories, and grounded theory analysis to ensure depth and "thick descriptions." Grounded theory appealed to me because of the ability to get close to the data. Now, three limbos.

What Is Good, and What Is Bad (Research)?

Experience 1: This Is Good Work!

This was my first paper as a PhD student (Hermanrud & Sørnes, 2009). In this paper I used axial coding as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998). In the paper, I carefully illustrated the axial coding and the

identification of the relationships between the categories of concepts emerging from the data analysis. The aim of axial coding is to add depth and structure of categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) tell us to use axial coding to investigate conditions of situations described in interview data, the actions described, and the consequences resulting from "relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). And so I did, coding, creating categories, and modelling one of my supervisor's papers as a template. I felt like I was making a quantitative analysis by counting incidents, but also being creative when collapsing categories and developing a context-factor model of the phenomenon under study. I presented the paper at a conference in Amsterdam. I had also signed up for the pre-conference PhD workshop, and my paper had also been accepted for the main conference as well. I was very happy. On the first day of the PhD workshop, one of the professors who held the workshop came up to me and told me that I had the best paper of the PhD student papers. The PhD student who had reviewed my paper added to my feeling of having done good work when she said: "When I read… I thought… this is really good work!" But, what was really the good work? I had just followed the template. But it was my analysis. I had systematically and convincingly presented the interview data through counting events, detailing descriptions, and categorizing the incidents in my data following the tenants of grounded theory. In retrospect I think my paper made a strong impression because it unveiled the data in words, numbers, categories, and a model, which gave a strong impression of rich data and accuracy (Weick, 1995; Langley, 1999). My work showed the transparency of the process of data collection, and in particular the transparency of the steps taken in the analysis.

Have you Developed any Taxonomies?

I remember standing in the main hall ready to present my paper. A surprise to me, the best paper (?). I did not think of it then, but later it came to me: the organizers had made me the first one out, it was an honour. Yes, as yesterday at the PhD workshop revealed, the paper was very good,

and the strength was my use of grounded theory in my qualitative analysis. Other papers were presented in small seminar rooms, but I was presenting in the main conference room. I presented the paper, theory, findings, and the model I had constructed based on my data. It was not the best presentation I had ever given, but nevertheless well done. I presented my study of formal networks across professionals and their ICT use when sharing knowledge. However, at the end I got a question: Have you developed any taxonomies? Sadly, I was unable to answer. An embarrassing moment. Later I learned that taxonomies are defined as formal systems for classifying multifaceted, complex phenomena (Patton, 2002). Taxonomies are viewed among researchers as promoting increased clarity in defining and hence comparing processes in organizations (Boyatzis, 1998). They are themes that are recurrent unifying concepts or statements about the subject of inquiry and therefore could have increased the generality of my work (Weick, 1995; Langley, 1999). This critique had an impact on me. My research should not only be high on accuracy, but should also add something useful for other researchers, something they could use in their work.

Experience 2: "I Don't Like Grounded Theory, but Don't Mind Me"

My second experience of getting a critique of my qualitative work was a from a few years after obtaining my PhD. I attended a conference and my paper was selected for publication in a special issue. The paper was process oriented and described how people try to solve some of the problems of cultural differences and find new rules for learning and new ways for working together. It focused on knowledge sharing across spatial, cultural, and cognitive distances (Hermanrud, 2017). I had identified activities using process terms like "developing and creating mutual understanding" and "rules for learning" to describe the activities. The paper had to be reviewed by the editor before publishing, and she was very positive. But one comment had an impact on me: "I don't like grounded theory, but do not mind me". Why? I did not get any answer, and then it became clear to me. As I do not know all approaches, neither

do reviewers and editors. So, there are prejudices against some research strategies, views that are not based on insights but on perceptions based on a thin foundation. I was at first angry, but later I came to terms with it. This time this paper was published, without deleting "grounded theory", but later on, in other papers, I more often switched to using qualitative study or case study and stopped mentioning grounded theory as my approach. Not even mentioning that insights or techniques from grounded theory were used in order to avoid potential problems. I started to just label the studies of my research as a "case study" or "qualitative study."

Experience 3: "Your Text Is Hard to Read, Please Add the Events More Chronologically"

This was a fairly new experience, where I had selected a journal that I knew accepted process-oriented work and which I also thought would have understood grounded theory, but I did not mention it, and just did what had become a habit, labelling my research as a "qualitative case study." My co-author and I were able to respond to the review, getting feedback and re-writing the paper. But as the heading to this section underlines, one reviewer wanted me to make the process learning over time more clearly in the text by using dates and by creating figures illustrating process events in a chronological order. Adding phases or stages, like what Langley (1999) calls "Visual mapping." The reviewer also underlined that our study of a learning process was in need of some longitudinal data (which we had), but which we had to write more about in the paper. This experience helped me to re-orientate my focus even more to the role of time, events, and the actions taking place in my process research in order to make it more readable. Finally, on track, I learned things when getting feedback and re-writing the paper.

Discussion and Reflections

Qualitative Camp resonated with my interest in telling stories and was crucial for me to identify myself as a grounded theorist. In the years after Qualitative Camp, I have often become emotional and have defended the approach when someone is talking badly about it. The lessons learned from the observation exercise and teaching at Qualitative Camp is that the qualitative method is a personal process, using myself as the instrument, and that qualitative methods are not one but many approaches that are not well understood and sometimes disputed. There are several reasons for this. Qualitative Camp emphasized that a grounded theory approach fits well in combination with a narrative approach. The teaching during Qualitative Camp provided a good basis for taking a position for grounded theory. What I have learned in interactions with academia is reflected in my handling of the limbo situations that I have experienced, as illustrated in the three experiences.

The first limbo was about me positioning my research among the many different traditions within qualitative methods. Qualitative Camp focused on common ground across different qualitative research approaches, but grounded theory and narrative research strategies were stressed and made the foundations for my identity as a "grounded theorist." My presenting "the best paper" at the conference in Amsterdam further strengthened my identity as a grounded theorist. A template paper was efficient in providing me with early academic success during my work with my dissertation, but at the same time I felt that my work was not as useful for others as I would have liked it to be. It made me see some limits in the way I had done grounded theory. In other words, my identity as a grounded theory researcher became stronger due to positive feedback, but the experience from the conference in Amsterdam also created some seeds of doubts about the usefulness and limitations of the research strategy. The role of model papers or templates is debated (Köhler et al., 2021) because using them can be very persuading for the reader and very useful, especially during the early stages of a career as my Amsterdam experience indicates. However, the downside of using

templates is that it can reduce methodological plurality and maybe also the novelty (and findings?) of the research (Köhler et al., 2021).

Second, the limbo of negative feedback regarding positioning a study as grounded theory has made me reluctant to state that I have done grounded theory in my papers. This is because I know that the approach is not liked by everyone, and based on my experiences I choose to tone down my own research approach. An unintended consequence of this is that I cite less, read less grounded theory, and do not learn and apply the developments within that research strategy. My learning as a grounded theorist somehow stopped, and when I do not use it, I might risk losing it. What are the main reasons for me being in this state of limbo with the grounded theory method in research? In my view, this limbo situation is due to the magnitude of different approaches and that no one fully can know all of them in depth. But if I do not learn and write better about it, then both groups of peers, those who do and those who do not understand grounded theory and have good knowledge of it will not recognize my research.

Third, I have found myself simultaneously in another research limbo, a limbo between variance research and process research. This is a limbo that is similar and partly overlapping to my limbo situation with grounded theory and narrative research strategies. It is hard to learn and move forward when the feedback on my process studies is based on the variance view, forcing me to emphasize some variables in a study. When you have to use a variance perspective and a quantitative language when doing and writing your research, it is also difficult to make use of the strengths of grounded theory and narrative research strategies. The skill of process theorizing is for me to continue to be focused on the doings in the data and how the data evolve. This is done by collecting data at different times and being close to the data, but also trying to uncover the relationship between different processes and their trajectories. Like I have done in a recent paper on how a trained mindset fades out in an organization (Haukåsen & Hermanrud, 2022). Applicable here, Flyvbjerg's (2006), argument from a phenomenological perspective, underlines the difficulty of summarizing and generalizing processes. They should be written and read as narratives to create an entirety-based understanding.

My experience is that qualitative data analysis and research communication are two deeply entangled processes, and getting in-depth insights that are interesting is a skilful communication process with yourself (the instrument for research) and your audience (reviewers and editors).

Conclusion

Doing this autoethnography account, I have identified three limbo situations that have had an impact on me as a qualitative researcher. The first limbo was me situated in a landscape of qualitative method traditions, making it difficult to move forward within the grounded theory approach when interacting with peers and editors from other traditions within qualitative methods**.** My response to this limbo situation was to stress strong aspects of grounded theory techniques appreciated in quality research in general, in particular make coding and development of categories transparent to the reader of the research. The second limbo was the fear of not getting my research published if I label my methods in such a way that it arouses opposition from editors or referees. I have tried solving this situation by toning down my grounded theory approach, and instead I turned to more mainstream conceptualizations of qualitative methods. The third limbo was the fear that the strengths of grounded theory and a narrative research strategy might get lost when I have felt pressure to use variance and quantitative language in my papers, which also might imply that I am creating a bias in my research towards variance and not process. To solve this, I have become very picky regarding where I submit my papers. I only submit my work to journals that understand and value process research.

Based on these findings of limbo situations seen through a lens of systemic reflections (Mezirow, 1990), there are some cultural conditions that have constrained me to become a grounded theory researcher. These is a landscape of different subcultures of qualitative research, the pressure to publish in our sector, and the fact that process research sometimes is evaluated as variance research. Are these limbo situations unique for me? Based on the experiences I have from working with master's and PhD students, and other researchers, there are always some kinds of concerns

regarding the criteria of what is good qualitative research. The literature on qualitative methodology also supports this view, like how the terms "reliability" and "validity" have for a long time been disputed among qualitative researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and how the alternative of "trustworthiness" has been established as a key concept in recent years in qualitative analysis (Aguinis et al., 2018; Lerman et al., 2020). Trustworthiness is enhanced by showing that researchers have an in-depth knowledge of the data (credibility), have been consistent in data analysis (confirmability), and have considered a study's outcomes in relation to other contexts (transferability).

When planning further research, I will look more into the visual mapping approach (Langley, 1999), an alternative strategy to grounded theory and narratives. To me it might only mean a technique to supplement my grounded theory and narrative approaches when doing process research. I have more to explore regarding the use of grounded theory and narrative approaches when studying processes because narrative and grounded theory are regarded as high on accuracy, but low on simplicity and generality. The latter can to some extent be compensated for by visual mapping to ensure simplicity (Langley, 1999), and critical case selection can increase generality (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In addition, grounded theory and narratives offer ways to increase generality if the concepts developed or the stories told are meaningful and are giving the reader new insights. This is something I have experienced happening when presenting findings for practitioners. They often find my concepts or stories useful to get another perspective on their own experiences and practices.

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Part II

Confessional

5

Self-Observation of Sublime Experience

Joseph McGlynn

"Nearly all the best things that came to me in life have been unexpected, unplanned by me."
Carl Sandburg.

It's 3 am, the sun is shining, and I'm living inside a Monet painting. Heck, I feel so good right now, I might *be* Monet. Monet reincarnated, with less skill and more whiskey, but the same unabated appreciation for waterscapes. Ice-capped mountains rise from the horizon. Red and yellow houses line the peripheral. Translucent clouds sparkle a powder blue sky. There's a boat, you can just barely make it out in the distance. I'm standing on a bed of rocks, but my mind is in the clouds. I tiptoe to the edge and stare out to the ocean. I can't yet tell if it's an abyss or an oasis. Fully aware of my senses. Hearing. Feeling. Seeing. All at once. Overwhelmed.

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The water is so clear you can see your soul right through it. I feel new parts of me I didn't know existed wanting to spring alive. But, as I'm standing at the edge, I hesitate. Pausing to wonder, "How will I be different? How will it feel?" Enough pomp and circumstance, the time has come to decide. I'm reminded there are risks to overthinking and rewards for taking chances. I arc my arms in a circle, pirouette into the frozen oasis, and *splash*. Ripples echo every direction.

* * *

I'd never been to Norway. I'd never been anywhere, really. Perhaps that's why my eyes widened when a friend remarked she'd be heading to Norway later that summer for a qualitative research camp.

"Oh?", I remarked casually.

"It's cold but sunny," she said, fueling my curiosity with the contradiction. The people are excitable and make great hosts. You are treated like queens and kings while there. Which is great because it can be more expensive than a Royal Wedding. But the people will take care of you. "You won't starve."

I learned later that they actually might let you starve, but you'll never go thirsty. At the first sign of feeling parched, spontaneous happy hours unveil themselves right before your eyes.

"They actually need more people for the program," she said. "You should apply—but hurry, the application window closes soon."

I rushed home and quickly wrote some balderdash of an idea I could research while at the camp. Something about organizational narratives of Norwegian businesses and their effect on competitive mindsets. I knew the idea was half-baked, but I had hoped it flashed just enough potential to gain some traction with the camp leaders. And I sure as heck made sure there weren't any typos in the proposal. Many a promising idea gets disqualified for a single typo. Incredibly, it was accepted. I packed my suitcase a month before takeoff. Which sounds crazy, and certifiably was. I added and removed and re-packed several times. I prepared for months. After googling every "Norway what should I bring" webpage in existence, I took some U.S. cash to exchange at the airport, a silk eye mask, and a handful of melatonin to help my body adjust to the new sleep schedule.

Other than some gnarly melatonin-fueled dreams, the voyage was mostly smooth. Although I tried to anticipate every detail of the trip, I see now that was largely a waste of time. An exercise in quelling uncertainty. Sometimes you just have to jump.

The Ferry

Upon our arrival, we were dazzled by our local guide. Blond and athletic with an easy smile, she represented to me an entire country all at once. The first Norwegian I'd met in their proud homeland. It was a good impression. We tend to overextend group characteristics based on small samples of interactions, and I was no exception.

She picked us up in her early 90s Honda hatchback. It was late in the day and we'd be racing daylight to make it home before dark. Or, we would have been, if, during the summer, the sun ever went down in Norway.

We were stationed 50 miles above the Arctic circle, featuring 24 hours of sunlight every day in the summer. It's the type of thing you can read about beforehand, but not intuit. We take for granted the natural rhythm and rhyme of celestial beings. The sun punctuates our day all on its own. Left to our own devices, and with sunlight available at any time, you must make your own schedule. It provides a built-in Rorschach test to determine your own preferences, to learn how you value time outside of predetermined galactic routines.

The hatchback scooted the six of us weary travelers around town, running errands and getting adjusted one kilometer at a time. I volunteered for one of the middle seats in the back, but got voted to having someone sit on my lap in the front. There was no time to discuss, we had a ferry to catch that would take us to the island where the camp was being held.

Arriving at the dock, we met the rest of our cohort. There's a picture somewhere of all of us, waiting to board a huge ferry to take us across to the beginning of a new world. We were a motley crew anticipating the thrill of ensuing adventure. I presumed this is how figures of Norse mythology felt leaving home in search of glory and fame. We hadn't yet departed, but it felt like we'd already made it.

We rode the ferry across to the island. It felt crisp. Windy. Mesmerizing. I'd never seen nature so crisp, so honest. It did not at all feel like the pictures I'd pored over beforehand. From the deck of the boat, I stared into the mountains. They had time to burn and secrets to tell. I sat in silence for a moment, wanting to connect to their history. To hear their stories of hope, tragedy, perseverance, and fear. To learn the risks through which they'd lived.

Our hair whipped like flags on Independence Day. We beamed smiles like headlights, finding it hard to contain a naïve joy. The trip was a first for nearly the entire lot. There's something about new experiences understood only once you're there. It operates on a plane of consciousness that cannot be anticipated. It's sensorial. Reactive. Dynamic.

We're standing on a ferry and I'm living a dream and I can honestly say, it's the time of my life. I recognize it in real-time. But even when you recognize important moments as they're happening, you still can't comprehend what they mean. You can't predict what you'll remember, what memories will reverberate.

But you always remember your first. First kiss, first overseas flight, first Norwegian ferry ride, and the first time you truly distinguished yourself from the ideology of your parents.

Avoiding Losses

I'm a highly competitive person. It's not that I'm obsessed with winning; I'm not. I'm obsessed with *not losing*. I feel losses deep into my core where they knot up and refuse to leave for weeks on end. And while research camps aren't exactly a competition, we all felt the desire to create something momentous and worthwhile, in accordance with the unique opportunity we'd received.

I was raised by my parents to avoid losses. My mother, in particular, instilled a mindset of caution and hesitation. To this day she fails to give herself or her imagination much credit. For example, she's a captive to kitchen recipes, refusing to improvise or trust her instincts. Even when the directions seem completely wrong. Such as the time a mistyped recipe for brownies called for a cup of salt instead of the rightful cup of sugar. I

don't think any of us will ever fully get the taste of those SaltBrownies™ out of our mouth.

So it goes with an undying allegiance to conformity and an unbridled adherence to caution. Growing up, the topics of sexual activity and recreational substances drew my mother's ire the most. "Did I ever tell you your cousin Michael got a girl pregnant at age 17? Ruined his whole life!" When not using her breath to disparage the future-erasing pitfalls of sexual activity, she'd remark, "One day you're smoking marijuana behind the school under the bleachers, next you're in the gutter wondering where your life and family went. Look at cousin David. It can happen to anybody!"

When not being overprotective, or perhaps more aptly, *while* being overprotective, my parents were both loving and supportive. They instilled confidence and self-esteem in droves. They were caring and physically affectionate—but not overly so—we're Irish, not Italian. None of us have actually ever been to Ireland, but you wouldn't know that by the way we brag about our heritage. To be in our family was a blessing worth keeping safe from harm.

And so it went throughout my childhood, a dichotomy of support from my parents that produced a paradoxical sensation of both "You can do anything!" and "Be careful doing anything."

I'd come to learn later that this habit of thinking is called *loss aversion* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), a prominent cognitive bias that affects decisions people make when faced with uncertainty. Loss aversion reflects a tendency to overweight negative outcomes in relation to the potential attainment of equivalent gains. That is to say, "losses loom larger than gains." The principle of loss aversion is sound from an evolutionary perspective—setbacks and losses often do feel worse than gains and incur greater harm than equivalent advances. However, I've come to learn this bias has an indirect, unintended effect. It keeps people from realizing their full potential. Loss aversion deters would-be adventurers from chasing opportunities. When we become obsessed with avoiding losses, we forget to take our chances and roll the dice.

People's risk judgments are akin to cognitive bets on a given outcome (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). Whether it's choosing a career, deciding what to wear, or debating a purchase, all decisions involve risk

(Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). When making judgments, people weigh the magnitude of risks against the value of rewards (Fischhoff et al., 1979). Although this practice of weighing risks against rewards is entirely rational (Slovic, 1987), the barnacles of loss aversion nudge people to stick to the status quo (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), to fold their hand at the poker table. Rationality usurps creativity.

The Patio Deck

We're on a patio deck, looking into the ocean, and it's 5 o'clock somewhere. The joke was that no one sleeps during the summer in Norway. Perpetual sunshine infuses the people with never-ending energy. The sky sparks an orange hue as we lounge on a wood-stained patio. Just enough chairs for people, we sit back and tell stories. Tall tales potentially half-true, if you squint just right. We were one part A-team, one-part MTV reality show.

"Skål!" Glasses clinked as people celebrated our arrival to the camp. "Skål" is Norwegian for cheers, or salud, a salute to good health. "When should I exclaim skål?" I asked. "Anytime," they informed me. "It's always a good time to skål."

When celebrating, "Aquavit" is the beverage of choice. The drink is a source of local pride. Tequila with a hint of the ocean. Kentucky bourbon without the smoke.

Talking Shop

During the days of the camp we convened to talk shop; to learn research methods and explore the heart of quality inquiry. Sessions focused on thinking in story, appreciating cultural context, and grasping the lasting effects of unexpected aesthetics.

It was a brazen move for them to schedule the first learning session for 8 am. Did they consider us superheroes? I appreciated their confidence in our abilities to regenerate like an animated Marvel character.

Waking up in a European twin bed, surrounded by colleagues I was quickly getting to know (Stan wears an eye-mask, Lee snores like he's trying to murder a tree with a chainsaw). One guy in our group had somehow trained his body to sleep for exactly 20 min, the perfect amount of time for a nap. No alarm clock needed. He laid down, closed his eyes, and fell asleep for 20 min on the dot. Brilliant trick if you ask me. How many false starts were there before he figured it out? How many missed meetings? Me, I set five alarms. Why take the chance?

Feeling the buzz from the beeps jerk me from rest, I throw on jeans and a sweater and load the coffee well-past the recommended "max fill" line in my canister. This was no time for conservation. A time to seize. Live Fast, Die Young. Sleep When I'm Dead. You know, that kind of thing.

Coffee is basically a rite of passage in Norway. A rite founded on one core belief: "Stronger is better." The coffee was a powerhouse unlike any I'd ever consumed. A black Lamborghini racing through my bloodstream. Fire it into my veins, they don't make java like this where I'm from.

Watching the workers prepare the morning supply, they took me back to being a kid in Philadelphia, shoveling snow to clear the driveway. The more and faster I scooped the better. Heaps of beans were stacked in droves into an overtasked filter. I wondered to no one, "Are you sure you don't need two filters there?" Like everything else I worried about while in Norway, the filter made it through just fine. One morning the coffee was so strong I hallucinated and thought I saw a dolphin jump from the ocean. I refilled my cup and headed back into the morning session.

We were, admittedly, a tough audience. Fresh off a cross-country flight, we were a mercenary lot of outside the box thinkers and cognitive rebels, seduced by the peculiar lifestyle of academia, financially downtrodden though we may be.

An academic learns quickly in their career that they're not the ubergenius they once thought themselves possible to be. Reluctantly, within the first few years you realize that writing is hard and publishing is even harder, even when it's your full-time job to get things in print. There are researchers more innovative, more dedicated, with less friends, and a lower dependence on the lure and appeal of getting sidetracked by new ideas, theories, and stories. But what the others may outpace you with in

discipline, dotted i's, and crossed t's, I learned in qualitative camp you can make up for by seeking the unexpected.

There's two general ways to have big success in academic research. Path one: You do everything you're supposed to do, exactly as you've been trained to do it. You leave no room for interpretation or error. Everything is designed as it should be. The roasted chicken dish of an Italian restaurant. Predictable, solid. Consistent.

Path two: You realize you'll be outsmarted in the traditional sense. Instead, you rely on adrenaline, a flair for improvisation in the biggest moments, and your need for a suitable challenge to summon the lifeforce within you. Think of this path as creating the nightly special as a chef. Each night, the pressure is on to push the pace, advance the innovation, come up with some new curveball. This path is a high-wire act that depends on your ability to improvise, anticipate, and excel in time-pressured situations.

The best research teams have members with expertise in each path. It's not as simple as to say, "an idea person" and a "details person." It's more nuanced than that. It's the yin and the yang, the expected and the unforeseen, the straightforward and the oblique. Coming together, the combination has the potential to make mountains move. People in Path two rarely succeed if they cannot join forces with a Path one. But let's admit that they both need each other to reach their full potential.

More than any other gift it offers, qualitative camp presents researchers the opportunity for a meeting of the minds. At the camp, researchers gather to present ideas and cultivate creativity and critical thought. During one particular seminar, Jan Terje Henriksen presented research from his dissertation (Henriksen, 2010). During the talk, Henriksen spoke of the "ripple effects" of organizational decisions, adapting tenets from Giddens's structuration theory to highlight the network effects of organizational actions. During the presentation, Henriksen remarked how organizational decisions have ripple effects, many of which are the *expected* consequences of events. But even more important, he argued, are the *unintended* ripple effects of risk decisions. He urged caution and said that we must consider the effects we do *not* expect when making risk judgments.

Henriksen clearly intended the adage as a warning.

But I took it as an invitation.

My eyes opened to the idea that it could be the unintended effects of risks that offer the highest reward. I began to understand the benefits of the unconsidered. But because of the tendency to protect against potential losses via loss aversion (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), people mistakenly ignore the upside of the unknown. Henriksen's inadvertent invitation provided crucial insights for my work as a scholar, honing my thought processes to weigh the upside of things I could not foresee in risk-reward evaluations. Although I spent countless hours preparing for any and all situations and benefits I could imagine at the camp, my thoughts focused too much on the intended ripple effects, the *known* benefits and risks. In the process, I underestimated the value of benefits inherent to dynamics of the moment.

At the camp, we also learned that some stories have greater effect than others. Certain stories are more compelling, more relevant, more memorable than their counterparts. Some papers get published and cited, others fail to gain traction, and not on scientific merit alone. During the sessions at camp, we learned strategies and techniques for finding and telling compelling stories. For our own stories, and for those of other people and narratives of the culture at large.

The aesthetic qualities of a story often determine its reach. We learned from the camp sessions that aesthetics of stories increase impact the most when they are *oblique*. That is to say, stories are most effective when the quality of a story catches you by surprise. When they shake you out of your comfort zone, and sometimes, all at once, heighten your interest in an idea.

Lists are not beautiful, powerful, or engaging. Stories can be, and are pivotal to effective research. While I recognized aesthetics were primary in music, theater, and art, I learned during the camp that this same principle applies with academic study.

It's the counterintuitive that catches our imagination. I applied these insights directly on a 2014 manuscript I worked on later that summer, "Public support, private alienation: Whistle-blowing and the paradox of social support" (McGlynn & Richardson, 2014). I'd been working on the paper for months, but at the camp it became clear to me the need to expand on the parts of the data that "didn't make sense," that intrigued

and compelled. In this case, the "paradox" of social support received by individuals who elect to report organizational wrongdoing.

For the study, we'd interviewed whistle-blowers who reported wrongdoing in college sport contexts. Such as when a college athlete receives money under the table or does not write their own papers for class. The research focused on how whistle-blowers experienced and characterized support during the process of exposing wrongdoing. But what didn't make sense, and what became the crux of the whistle-blowers' story, was the *duality* of social support they received. Much like my aforementioned parents' supportive dichotomy of extreme love and intense concern, the whistle-blowers noted they received adequate and consistent support from colleagues in private. But in public settings, colleagues and even friends kept their distance, isolating the whistle-blower for their report, accurate though it may have been. When interviewed, the whistle-blowers indicated they foresaw some resistance before reporting, but they had not anticipated the inconsistency in their friends' and colleagues' behavior. After all, they themselves had done nothing wrong, the whistle-blowers had only reported the misbehavior. The risks they experienced were not the risks they expected.

Addressing the importance of the unexpected in stories and research, speakers at the camp further described the effects of sudden vs. gradual realizations. While gradual realizations compile and develop over time, sudden realizations present an epiphany, a spark or catalyst. They click swiftly and all at once.

But here I am, a stranger in a foreign land, trying to understand the experiential difference between sudden and gradual realizations. I understand the theory, but I'm not sure of the practice.

The Plunge

The Polar Bear Plunge is a bit of a tradition at Qcamp. To complete the plunge, you simply leap from a pillar and into the freezing ocean water. You then focus on surviving the brisk swoosh of cold that permeates your entire body. Although incorporated into the camp as a jovial rite of

initiation, for me the Polar Plunge became a catalyst for understanding the quality of sudden realizations.

The plunge hit me like a sledgehammer.

I thought I was cool when I jumped in. Turns out I didn't know the first thing about being cool, cold, or anything else frost-related. As I hit the water, the rush filled every cell of my body. Like an ice-cold Slurpee pumped through my veins. Have you ever had a brain freeze? This was like that, but from the inside out and all over. This is how ice cubes feel when they get cryotherapy.

The plunge for me was a testament to why experience cannot be substituted. You can prepare for experiences, you can anticipate them, but they're still not what you expect. Your reactions to uncertainty are not how you imagined when you read about them in books. They are more ethereal. Tangible. Interactive.

In that moment it feels like I'm in a movie. Except in a movie, you can stop and rewind; you can begin again, record multiple takes. The novelty of experiences comes quickly and then evaporates. You know in the moment that it is sand slipping through your fingertips. You just try to enjoy the grit of the silt as it slides through.

After the plunge, we headed back and celebrated our victory of survival in the frigid ocean water by warming ourselves with coffee and whatever else we could find.

The Knife

A few hours later, we had reached the "time lapse" portion of the evening. That zone where time disappears and you're fully and completely in the moment. When you become immune to the rationale of fatigue. At the height of this feeling, I took a quick opportunity to grab some fresh Norwegian air.

Staring out at the crystal-clear water, I pause and reflect before taking a visual photo memory and heading back. "Nice night," I thought, closing the front door behind me while I stepped inside. Swinging my right hand back behind me to leverage the heavy door closed, my right ring finger catches in the door frame. "Oh!!" I yelped. "Ouch!!," I said out

loud to no one in particular. "That's going to sting tomorrow," noticing it had bruised both suddenly and immediately.

And *that's* how, two days later while still at the camp, I ended up in a restaurant bathroom with a man of great focus and concentration hurtling a steak knife, up and down, again and again, upon my blood-tipped fingernail.

"*Hold still!"* he exclaimed, ignoring the fear in my face as he reminded me, "You could lose your finger if we don't let the blood out." Well, that comforting tip sure helped me relax. Thank you *Zen Master Knife Man*. Breathing deep, I held my hand over the bathroom sink and tried my best not to imagine the knife breaking straight through my nail and through my fingertip.

After dozens of thrusts, what seemed like hours, and multiple moments of self-doubt that trusting this guy's medical advice was wise—Eureka! We struck gold. Or, uh, crimson. My fingernail acquiesced, and the clotting blood flowed like red wine on a summer day. Formerly black and blue, my nail now flared bloody red. Victory? I suppose. Survival at the least. The guy with the knife sure was excited. I wrapped the incised nail in a bundle of single-ply toilet paper and walked out to rejoin the camp. Triumphant, but not proud.

Lessons Learned

This chapter tells the story of unexpected echoes, lasting lessons learned from surprising sources at Qcamp. It began with a plunge in sub-zero water, included a dearth of sleep, an abundance of strong coffee, and culminated with friendships and a revamped outlook on life and the importance of narratives and stories. While I anticipated certain benefits of participating in an on-site collaborative research environment, the most lasting lessons came from unexpected, and frankly, unpredictable insights and events I never did consider, even during extensive risk calculations. My careful deliberations underestimated the upside of the unpredictable.

My experience at qualitative camp illustrates biases that people show in risk judgments. Too frequently, we overemphasize the known benefits

and risks and underemphasize the potential of the unanticipated. Taking on temporal, social, and sometimes even physical risks in Qcamp provided me vital opportunities for my personal and professional growth. The risks I took sparked ripple effects of creativity, insight, and research production, including the paradox of social support for whistle-blowers and counterintuitive attributions of risk and expectation in uncertain conditions. Although I prepared diligently for what to expect from the camp, the most enduring insights caught me by surprise.

There are windows of opportunities that we experience as a person, as a writer, as a researcher. But even if you see the window closing, that observation alone does not automatically provide you the tools, motivation, or knowledge to take advantage of the opportunity. Walls caving in don't come with instruction manuals. If you hesitate, it evaporates.

Qcamp provided us a lens through which to understand the world; a place to convene with bright minds and unorthodox thinkers. It offered us roots to grow on as scientists and critics. To recognize and to celebrate stories, looking for the contradictory, counterintuitive, and aesthetically pleasing elements of life. Qcamp presented us opportunities for reflection. Did I choose the right career? What are my core areas of expertise? Which qualitative method best matches the research goals? It's not the predictable that resonates. Our legacy becomes the chances we take, the stories that we share.

In some ways, the camp taught me that I don't know anything at all. And that I'll never have all the information to make informed judgments. The camp relayed the importance of meeting experience head-on in the streets (or in this case, the water). Tangible experiences open up possibilities unimagined by merely contemplating them. Experiences manifest sudden realizations. It's like watching a movie versus being *in* a movie.

My most important and lasting lesson from the camp was the realization of my tendency to overthink risk decisions. The camp taught me to stop wasting time trying to figure out every last detail. I know now our time is better spent honing our senses to recognize the unexpected, to focus on discovering hidden insights other researchers have not uncovered. As academics, sometimes we think and think and think and think. And often times we get it wrong anyway. It is better to train your

awareness, keep your eyes peeled, and trust your instincts to react. Whether that moment comes gradually, or all at once like a Polar Plunge.

I'd like to think it was my own hint of genius that put me on the path to academic success. That guided me to a rebellious journey of seeking out the counterintuitive. That motivated me to listen to unexpected echoes that persist through memory and time.

But it was Qcamp all along.

At the end of the camp, I did not want to leave. I had only started to live. I felt like I might never sleep again and that would be just fine. There were more memories to make, more coffee to drink, more frozen dives to survive. Thoughts of burning my passport and living in a yellow house off the island fluttered through my brain.

As I look into the ocean, I'm reminded that nothing lasts forever. That the stories we've lived and tales we've shared will be all that's left of us when we go. At any given time, we could be called to move on from this life.

And at that moment of realization, be it sudden or gradual, we'll be faced with tremendous uncertainty as we traverse the risks of the great unknown.

But from what I've learned, I wouldn't worry too much about that.

It's probably not what you'd expect.

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6

Harvesting Foreign Fields, the Researcher as a Solitary Reaper Away from Home

Preeti Mudliar

My first night in *Bodø*, Norway, I was mostly content. Except when I remembered that I had forgotten to bring Maggi noodles. I wouldn't be receiving my stipend until a few days later and was wondering how long I could stretch the energy bars that I had. If you grew up in the 1990s in India, you would understand the discontent over having forgotten to pack Maggi noodles. If you are not a 90's Indian child, never mind. Just know that the logistics of food can be a primary obsession when journeying in foreign lands and finding yourself without your favourite instant noodles to tide you over a few days of uncertainty can cause considerable discontent. I could have kicked myself. Except I didn't. For starters, it was 23:30 h. Only, I had daylight streaming in through my open windows and a waxing moon whose presence seemed to signal all kinds of defiance against the sun's refusal to let the night take over. The soreness I felt over the lack of Maggi noodles soon receded and I stepped outside for a walk to fully marvel at the novelty of the 24 h daylight. I also needed to gather my thoughts.

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The dreaded 7 h layover at Newark airport en route to Oslo was not bad. I had left Austin, where I was a graduate student at the University of Texas, Austin, by a 6.30 am flight and had spent most of the 3+ hours flight time to Newark alternating between napping with my neck uncomfortably strained in one position and jerking awake frequently to find my mouth embarrassingly open as I drifted in and out of sleep. At Newark, I walked to my gate and was presented with the engrossing spectacle of Jewish families waiting for their flight to Tel Aviv. Jews were not a familiar ethnic race to me and watching the orthodox Jews sporting, in varying degrees, the distinctive markers of their faith was fascinating. One Jewish family had spread itself out in a corner of the lounge that I was determinedly eyeing. When they left, I arranged my luggage and slept contentedly for a good 3 h before I boarded my flight to Norway.

The cheery red curtains on Scandinavian Airlines put me in an upbeat mood. I was looking forward to participating in the week-long qualitative summer camp organized by the *Bodø* Graduate School of Business at the University of Nordland and then setting off to do my own research. My agenda was to study Norway's local governance system and see how it compared to the Indian local self-governance system for villages. I planned to interview citizens, journalists, elected representatives, and academics researching governance in Norway and travel to Oslo, Trondheim, and Bergen. The idea was to soak in as much of Norway as I could. Unfamiliarity with the language was a concern, but reports from past participants of the summer camp about the willingness of the average Norwegian to make the effort at a conversation in English was also reassuring. I felt confident that I would be able to work on collecting data towards understanding the Norwegian model of participatory democracy. Unlike the interrupted sleep I had on the Austin-Newark leg of my journey, this time, I slept well. I even had a pleasant little dream and when I woke up, Norway was beginning to take shape in my head in very pleasurable ways.

My first impression of Norway when I landed was that Oslo airport smelled very good. It is also very laid back, or at least as laid back as an international airport in the capital city of a country can get. Used to the stern performance of security checks in the US airports, this was a remarkable contrast. Yet, the Indian passport has the power to disrupt even the

most placid of ways. The smiling ease with which the Norwegian immigration officer was waving in travellers came to a screeching halt when I presented my passport. That I was going to cause a bump in this man's smooth processing of travellers, was something that I was fully aware of. Indeed, I was looking forward to knowing how it would all unfold and I felt wicked anticipation when counting down my turn. I was not disappointed. As I presented my passport, one eyebrow rose delicately and the officer peered at me carefully. Then he looked at my documents. The visa was scrutinized. Something was tapped into the computer and my passport was checked against it. I was politely asked if I would leave for the United States when the visa expired. And then his smile was back and he waved me through. I felt like I had scored a collective visa regime hurrah for the brown skinned everywhere. It reminded me of Gupta and Ferguson's (1997) observation on how field sites are defined at the intersection of a range of eventualities ranging from visa and clearance procedures, to the interest of funding agencies, and intellectual debates that define a discipline.

As I walked through the airport to the gate for my flight to *Bodø*, Norway began revealing itself to me in little fragments. There was the counter retailing jewellery and timepieces that very curiously called itself 'Schmuck Art' and I made a mental note to find out more about how a store had come to call itself by this very cheeky German name. And then as if to assist me in knowing more about Norway, I came face-to-face with a neat row of aircrafts belonging to the Norwegian Airlines. The tailfins of each aircraft displayed pictures of prominent Norwegian personalities along with their names and professions. I recognized none except Edvard Munch and I thought this was a novel and informative way to honour Norwegian achievers.

Landing in *Bodø*, I realized that I was closer to the Arctic circle that I had ever been in my life. I updated the time zone settings on my phone to display Indian Standard Time (IST), Central Daylight Time so that I could time myself to Texas whenever needed, and Central European Time in Norway. This was my way of locating myself in the temporal disruptions that I experience far away from home. In Austin, I was used to adjusting for the time difference in India. It often seemed like I lived suspended between two worlds. I would see India get into the swing of

the day when it was time for me to sleep and I would wake up to life winding down back home. Now, I had to be mindful that the time difference between Norway and home would be a mere 4.5 h. Instead of a neat binary of day/night that allowed me to more easily switch contexts and keep up with home when I was in the United States, here I would be playing catch up. Either way, the IST would continue to race ahead and I would always be the laggard.

Four years of being away from home meant that matching the time to IST was second nature to me. This was essential not only for very practical reasons such as coordinating calls with family and friends, but also because I just simply liked to know. On days when homesickness welled within me, I liked to sit back and imagine the unfolding rhythms of life in India. The silence that descended over my hometown as shops downed shutters for the afternoon siesta, the bustle of the evening traffic as people made their way for some street food before heading home, the raucous liveliness of a million games of cricket simultaneously unfolding on the playground, the sounds of pressure cookers whistling in time for dinner, and intercutting with the plot twists of TV soaps. In the silence that grew around me in Austin, I was used to summoning the sights and sounds of life to the beats of IST. Some weekends, I would head to the local Indian stores. There were a fair number of them in Austin to serve the sizable Indian and the larger south Asian community. Wandering through their aisles was a chance to inhale the heady fragrance of Indian spices, see shelves stocked with familiar brands, and feast on some hot samosas. Those were the contours of home and they were readily available on hand to tide me over in whenever I felt overwhelmed at being away from home.

None of which I expected to find in *Bodø*. It was after all, a town in the High North region of Norway, just off the Arctic Circle with a population of approximately 40,000. Why would a place like this have any linkages to India? I reached Hoglimyra, the student housing at the University of Nordland and rang the doorbell to the suite that I was to share with three other students. The door opened and I found myself shaking hands with not one, not two, but nine students from India, all pursuing their doctoral programmes in aquaculture and fisheries. They were amused at how shocked I seemed to be and I learned that the university in India that they had graduated from regularly sent students to *Bodø* for higher

education owing to an exchange programme that the two universities had signed. Information about Norway and *Bodø* flowed through the cultural filters that I shared with these students. I learned, much to my surprise, that not only were there south Asian students studying in *Bodø*, but there were also a couple of families from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka that had made *Bodø*, their home. The students had been in *Bodø* for over two years already and they said that while the winters were a terrible hardship, they still enjoyed studying in Norway given the superior research facilities and supportive professors. They were also very busy and spent most of their time at their labs on campus and given my own travel schedule, it was unlikely that we would get to see each other much. Still, the initial conversation I had with them was very valuable in how I was beginning to make sense of Norway. Henceforth, never would I err in entertaining the thought that there could possibly be a corner on this globe bereft of Indian presence.

And thus ended my first day in Norway. It was 1:00 am by the time I returned from my stroll. I drew the curtains on the daylight and went to bed.

The qualitative research camp was still a few days away. We were to head to Nyvågar in the Lofoten islands where we would be spending a week reflecting and discussing methodologies and how they would apply to our respective research projects. In the meanwhile, I found myself thinking a lot about Time and contrary to my preoccupation of making sure I was temporally in sync with IST, this time around, I was engrossed in making sense of the Norwegian sense of time. Given that I was experiencing 24 h of daylight, this was a natural curiosity. However, that was not the only reason for my pursuit of the Norwegian sense of time. I found that understanding Norwegian's sense of time was a very good entrée point to understanding Norwegians themselves.

When I arrived in *Bodø*, Norway was slowly, but surely disappearing for four weeks on what is termed here as the 'common holiday'. As I learned the hard way, this means that they switch off their availability completely. They will not answer any emails or any correspondence when they are on a holiday. You just have to wait it out until they return, no matter what the perceived urgency of the situation. I began feeling restless. For one, I was receiving no response to my emails requesting

interview appointments for my research. For another, my stipend was extremely delayed due to a key person being off on holiday and the international transaction fees on my credit cards were fast adding up to a tidy sum.

My experience of the common holiday syndrome was sometimes accompanied with doses of darkly comedic undertones. A senior adviser to the government in Oslo whom I wanted to meet said he would not be back until August 16. By then, not only would I not be in Norway, but I would have also finished my annual trip back home to India, made a trip to Mauritius for a conference, and would be back in Austin for the start of semester. One professor I emailed asking for a meeting surprised me by his instant replies to my messages. Only thing, his reply was to say that he was leaving his office in 30 min and wouldn't be back until August 13. I was having an email conversation with him when mid-way his responses switched to his automatic vacation responder. It said 'Out of office until November 21st!!!' I never heard from him after that. Be warned. If you plan to be in Norway on business, get here before mid-June and after mid-August.

I had to admit though. If I put the shoe on the other foot, I found that it fit very nicely. Slowly, I began appreciating a culture that takes its holidays seriously. Nobody expects you to answer emails. Nobody expects you to do any work at all. If you are ill, nobody expects you to turn up with a doctor's note for sick leave. And Norwegians have a very good reason for it. For instance, if it is a common cold, then the belief is that it is better to let nature run its course and not treat the cold with any medicine. This means that you quarantine yourself and let your body relax and give it a fair chance to fight its way to recovery. Not only that, antibiotics are frowned upon in the country. Living in the lap of nature's bounty makes the Norwegians take the nature seriously. There is a lot that I began learning from this way of life. I learned to place my own needs into perspective because my sense of urgency about research was not shared by others. I learned to walk at a more leisurely pace and give in to the oft-repeated cliché of taking the time to stop and stare at the pretty yellow flowers blooming in summer splendour all across the country's magnificently beautiful countryside. Most importantly, I learned to not feel guilty about not being constantly busy. It was nice to not have to

deal with work guilt. Norwegians do not rush themselves or anyone else. They value their time off and respect yours.

However, this learning did not come easy. In the early days, when I was frequently confronted with a lack of response to my communication overtures, I experienced a fair bit of anxiety and confusion. Was I being rude? Should I be phrasing my emails in a different way? Was I wasting my time in trying to do research in Norway? Worse, was I experiencing racism? When you are brown skinned, this is a thought that occurs very frequently when something seems to be off mark in social interactions. The correct answer, of course, was, 'None of the above'. It was just a culture that was more laid back and did not believe in working itself into a frenzy of work. One would think that newspaper offices are generally safe bets for all day round business. The business of news means that journalists are generally on call round the clock and begin work days during late afternoons. Right? No, wrong! I walked into a local news office in *Bodø* at 3.30 pm one day only to be told by the front desk that everybody had left for home and would I please return on Monday? This was truly an enlightening moment for me about the Norwegian culture. As a former journalist, I would get only a day off and would easily work more than 14 h a day during the rest of the week. The busiest time of the day at my office in India would only start at around 5.00 pm as the reporters began filing the stories and the desk began putting together the pages. The entire contrariness that I experienced at the news office in *Bodø* was the final nail that completely drove home the point of the Norwegian way of life into my head.

However, the temporal differences were something that I came to terms with very slowly and the anxiety took its time in receding. This was partly owing to the solitary nature of fieldwork where I did not have anyone to debrief. Writing about the 'observant ethnographer', Fine (1993) notes that while on the field, misunderstandings stem not from incompetence, but because we may not be situationally knowledgeable. It is here that the research camp helped. Exchanging notes with other participants, seeking the views of Norwegian participants and instructors at the camp on my apprehensions, was partly reassuring, but I still couldn't shake off the feeling that my approach was all wrong. Increasingly, I began feeling more vulnerable and isolated. As Heller et al. (2011) note, having to

depend on other people in the field contributes to fatigue and the self-image that researchers construct of themselves as independent and confident can unravel in various ways. In reflecting on my susceptibility, I follow Dwyer (1999), who argued that in ethnographic writing, it is fundamental to 'confront rather than disguise the vulnerability of the Self and its society in the encounter with the Other'.

Disoriented and disheartened, I began seeking home and soon I was tapping into the Indian Diaspora in *Bodø*. To be fair, theirs was not a presence I could completely avoid. For one, the main street of *Bodø* had a prominent restaurant called the 'The Great Gandhi Tandoori'. That Gandhi was a vegetarian and would have likely blanched at the thought that his name was being used to sell meaty dishes is of course a trivial detail and one that we shall ignore because I could not stop myself from entering the restaurant and introducing myself to the owner. This was the easiest way to tap into the Diaspora. For another, a stray comment someone made at the qualitative camp provided a renewed sense of purpose to my research. A Norwegian participant mentioned that she vaguely remembered a lot of press attention directed at an Indian woman who assumed office as an elected representative after being voted into power. The participant was unable to recall any more details and our frantic searches online yielded nothing. Feeling more sure in being able to crack the Indian diasporic network in *Bodø*, I decided to temporarily retreat from my original quest of seeking to interview Norwegians until the acute feeling of alienation dissipated.

For all the irony in its name, The Great Gandhi Tandoori restaurant was indeed fortuitous in my research journey. The owner immediately sent me home to meet his family comprising his wife and three children who warmly welcomed me and treated me to a hearty home-cooked meal. Not only that, the family was indeed very close friends with the Indian woman who had been elected as a democratic representative. Her name was Harjeet Jassal and she lived on a tiny island called *Røst*. Quick calls were made and I soon found myself booked on a ferry to *Røst* where I was to spend a couple of days with Harjeet and her family to document her story, which I have recounted elsewhere (Mudliar, 2015).

Meeting Harjeet and her family was an important inflection point in my Norwegian research journey. It allowed my vulnerability to recede

and I felt replenished in more ways than one. Through her story, I succeeded in breaking through and gaining tremendous insights into the Norwegian system of participatory governance that allowed a person holding an Indian passport to assume office as an elected representative of the country. I also learned a great deal about the Sikh community from Punjab who formed the bulk of the Indian Diaspora in Norway. Most of them left India because their lack of education made gainful employment in the country very difficult for them. The routes they took to reach the city of *Bodø* are interesting. Almost all of them first went to the Persian Gulf and many countries in between before landing in Oslo and from there they made their way to the High North region of Norway. Once here, they took to cooking as one of the easiest ways to earn their living. The spirit of hardy entrepreneurship combined with unmatched hospitality that is so much a part of the Punjabi spirit soon led them to establish themselves in food-related businesses. Today, the community in *Bodø* prides themselves on never having to take recourse to the social welfare benefits that Norway provides to the unemployed.

Interaction with the Sikhs in *Bodø* and friending them on Facebook also unexpectedly brought me attention from a whole lot of their Punjabi relatives in India. The young male relatives of these families back in India noticed this sudden befriending of one girl by their extended family members in Norway and a couple of them tried friending me on Facebook too. This was slightly disconcerting, but it caused more amusement than worry. Sikhism forbids its followers from cutting their hair so the men usually tie their hair in turbans and wear their facial hair with flair. Most of the men who were requesting to be added to my Facebook all had profile pictures where they were twirling either one side or both sides of their generous moustaches. Their profiles were all open so I curiously poked around fascinated at the lives of my compatriots from a different part of the country. They seem very sweetly harmless in their display of macho maleness. One can't help but look comical when you are photographing yourself with your smartphone in one hand and the ends of your moustache in another, although I don't think they intended having that effect. Stumbling across their photographs revealed so much about the lives, aspirations, and cultural expressions of the Punjabi male. It served to reinforce the absolute diversity and heterogeneity of India and

I marvelled at how we managed to stay together as a country despite knowing very little about one another. Hitherto, my familiarity with Punjabis and Sikhs was limited to the visits to the gurudwara (the Sikh place of worship) near my home in Pune. In Austin, my roommate was a Sikh too.

Yet, a Sikh in Pune or the United States is so different from the earthiness of the average Sikh male who is rooted to the *mitti* (mud) of his native land. Their upbringing and their expressions of manhood are so culturally different to what I have grown up seeing. I had never visited Punjab, but looking at the proud expressions of male virility and their enormous investment in their moustaches, which seemed like an integral part of online self-presentation on Facebook was very revealing. It helped me understand the Punjab that I had never visited a little better. Mediated by Bollywood—the Hindi film industry, I have always danced to Punjabi music, sang Punjabi songs, and enjoyed the sweetness of the language. Yet, the profiles of these men on Facebook helped me understand the stereotype that drives the Punjabification of Bollywood a little better. It made me feel at home and for that I had Norway to thank.

The gloom that had enveloped me in my early days in *Bodø* vanished and my data collection picked up momentum. As noted by Fine and Deegan (1996), before the field takes on the mantle of the routine, errors, stumbling's, and surprises are particularly likely to occur. It occurred to me that I had likely overcome the constant feeling of being misaligned and mistimed with Norway and could now appreciate its culture as a matter of my own routine. I started remaining unfazed when experiencing delays in responses and found myself exploring and enjoying Norway. I discovered that Norway has a tremendous culture of trust and openness that is very striking. The complete absence of the suspicious scepticism that marks all aspects of American life was very remarkable. For instance, I found children unaccompanied by adults everywhere. They would be freely riding their bicycles on the road, skiing cross-country, and jumping trampolines. Children are very visible in the public space in Norway in sharp contrast to their marked absence from public spaces in the United States where they are under constant parental supervision and protection because of a deep distrust of strangers.

In another instance, while returning back from Svolvær, we had a 5 h wait before we could board a cruise ship back to *Bodø*. Weighed down with luggage, our group walked into a hotel to ask if they could hold our bags for us while we walked around town. The friendly receptionists at the hotel directed us to another hotel across the street and said that they would have room for our bags and asked us to give her reference. Not only were we welcomed by the other hotel, but the equally friendly receptionists at the second hotel carried all our bags inside and said that they could hold it for two days if we wanted.

And that was it. We were not asked for any IDs or any proof of travel. Not a single piece of proof of ourselves or the purpose of our trip was demanded. I could not help but contrast this to the climate of fear that prevails in the US after 9/11. It is well-nigh impossible to even conceive of this as a possibility in a country that does not permit storage of luggage even in airports or bus stations any more. It had been even less than a year since Norway suffered a devastating terror attack in 2011. Yet, the sense amongst common Norwegians was the determination to not allow that episode to change the essential principles of their society and how they chose to live. This is the kind of trust that almost borders on naivete. The Norwegians at the camp were quick to recognize this perception and explicitly told me that they are definitely not naive. These were just ideals that they live by and they find no reason to suspect anyone unless they have very good reason to do so.

Suddenly, I had a lot of stories to share. My field notes exploded. There was so much that was new, so much that was exciting that I found myself posting photographs and status updates on Facebook—a departure from my usual reticence on the platform. This was compounded even further when I started travelling around the country. It can get very lonesome on the road. Especially when you are in the loveliest of cities and have nobody to share all the things that you are experiencing. I found myself turning to Facebook more and more to document my research sojourns and take visual notes of my travels. I began looking forward to Facebook notifications about likes and comments and the visibility made me feel good.

However, the sudden publicness that I was bringing to my fieldwork began making me uncomfortable. I began feeling self-centred,

narcissistic, and boastful and found myself thinking far too much about what I was going to be writing on Facebook than writing field notes with the rigour that fieldwork demands. To Wolfinger's (2002) discussion on writing field notes, I could perhaps contribute the strategy of documenting field notes on Facebook as a way to alleviate loneliness on the field. I began experiencing fatigue of a different kind. The sheer exhaustion of experiencing so much stimulus and the novelty of my experiences needed an outlet. I had to make a conscious effort to disentangle myself from my digital life so that it did not interfere with field work and turned to blogging as a way to both document my travels and not get sucked into the dopamine hit of Facebook likes.

My field work now began progressing rapidly and other than data, also brought a wealth of experiences. In *Bodø*, I met Shirley Bottolfsen who made me realize the importance of marching to your own music. I met old men who were willing to share their perspectives on love and life and patiently answer my many questions beyond politics. I walked into quaint bookstores and restaurants and interviewed their owners. In short, I began handing out my curiosity as my calling card and invited strangers to share their lives with me. No one refused. I realized that people love to talk about themselves. I felt lucky that so many of the ones that I met were articulate, intelligent people who made for some stimulating conversations. I limited my questions to the fewest words possible and then sat back and soaked everything they said. Some days, I felt so full of everything that I would cry. The narratives I was gathering were very personal. As people spoke about their involvement with politics and governance, it necessarily also meant encapsulating their lives. The stories, emotions, triumphs, and failures of my interviewees became my own. Every interview that I would do would leave me drained with the exhilaration of having people share so much about themselves with me. All I would want to do then is to retire to my room and turn over our conversations in my head.

During my visit to Trondheim, I took a guided walking tour of the city. When the guide walked us over to the Nidaros Cathedral, he told us that the cathedral was declared built numerous times, but each time some misfortune would cause it to come crashing down. To ward off this ill luck, they fashioned a statue of a mason laying a brick to symbolize that

the cathedral would forever be a work in progress and never be built completely. And the cathedral stayed put after that. This anecdote helped me cope with the demands of data collection that I had imposed on myself. As my departure from Norway neared, anxiety about having the 'full story' to complete my fieldwork in Norway took centre stage. Contrary to the principles of qualitative research, I began focusing more on a notional number of sample size rather than the quality of interviews I was getting. Hearing the incompleteness of the magnificent Nidaros cathedral humbled the arrogance that I could ever fully comprehend Norwegian governance in two months. It helped me orient myself to my fieldwork again and not stray into an unproductive frenzy of interviewing and I recalled Ingold's (1993) words, 'the activities that comprise the task-scape are unending, the landscape is never complete: neither "built" nor "unbuilt", it is perpetually under construction' (p. 162).

By the time I began making sense of my foreign field, it was time to leave. The week before I was to leave for India, *Bodø* was full of rain and dark clouds. When the sun came out of exile, the people did too. The Norwegians were out in full force trying to catch some natural sun and not spend their money at their local tanning parlours. The sky and the ocean were a deep blue and the sun was a toasty yellow. I walked along the harbour in *Bodø* and watched pretty little sail boats bob up and down. As the wind blew through my hair, I turned my face skywards and gave thanks for the chance to be living in a country that thought it perfectly natural to not do any work when the sun stopped by to say hello. I wondered if I was going native when I realized that I was thoroughly enjoying being on Norwegian time even as the number of unanswered emails in my inbox was steadily growing. The same sense of time that had sent me spiralling into anxious concern a few weeks ago was now a rhythm I completely understood and appreciated.

I looked at my watch to see that it was late afternoon in India. It was early July and the weather report told me that the monsoon had hit home.

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7

Contrasting Norwegian and American Prison Systems: Becoming (Un)broken

Brittany L. Peterson

Whenever I share the story of my scholarship, jaws inevitably drop. People are often in awe of, or perhaps aghast at, this choice. The whys and hows flood our conversations, framing my work as both honorable and frightening. *How can you look at them, talk to them, shake their hands?* My question: But how can I not?

Prison. For many, Americans in particular, this word conjures images of barbed wire fences and cement block walls, of shanks and stripes, of gangs and drugs, of bodies being slammed into walls and inmates taken to their knees in forced submission. But in Norway, the experience of incarceration is a far cry from the realities experienced in US prisons.

Though I've been *to prison*, I've never been *in* or *of prison*, but my brother has. Ben spent the better part of a decade—his formative years—locked up in a prison in the US. And now, nearly 5 years after his release,

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the ghosts of his stories still haunt me. The brokenness he lived rattles my soul. His long-hand letters told of trauma, of oppression, of racism and hatred, of the us versus them brewed up in those walls. Walls meant to confine him from us and protect us from him.

And yet, in Bodø, Norway, there the prison sat, unassuming, in the middle of a neighborhood surrounded by families. There it sat, full of the broken, or so I assumed. But ultimately, the *unbrokenness* I encountered in (and in-between) my Qualitative Camp experiences … it broke me, and in doing so, made me whole.

I attended my first Qualitative Camp state-side, on the gulf coast of Port Aransas, Texas. I can still almost hear echoes of Texas twang as we sang along to Johnny Cash songs, almost smell the whisps of smoke as they billowed off the campfire, and almost feel the rocking of the boat where we learned how to take field notes, to observe, and to simply be in a space. At that very first Qualitative Camp is where my breaking began and where my constructed version of separate selves began to shatter.

Shattering of Self/ves
Who am I here,
In this place?
At this time?
For this purpose?
Who am I here,
A sister of an inmate?
A student?
A scholar?
Who am I here?
Whose am I here?
I am my own.
Each piece, each bit, each self.
All the selves are who I am here.

As a first-year doctoral student, I was clueless. Sitting in that auditorium, listening to the Norwegian students talk about their theses, I felt paralyzed, like the ice of the Arctic was running through my veins. Here were these students, brilliantly narrating their work, throwing around words like ontology, epistemology, phenomenology, and hermeneutics,

and I had absolutely no clue what they were talking about. I felt small, insignificant, and wholly lost. And perhaps, that was the point. A shattering of sorts, learning to channel what you don't know into something more. During that week, day after day, I sat dutifully taking notes, transcribing every word spoken from the stage even as I struggled to process the keystrokes as they appeared on my computer screen. In addition to hearing from the Norwegian students, Larry Browning had invited past graduates from The University of Texas at Austin to share their qualitative work. Ideally, he wanted us to hear about their processes, including every messy step that the scholars encountered, so that we could learn from their triumphs and tribulations. There were some artful nuggets shared from the stage that lingered … that *still* linger.

Be a person, not a researcher
The respondents are the experts
Don't take yourself too seriously
Look to your own life for research ideas, then dig in
Is this how I want to spend my time when everyone else is sleeping?

One scholar's words, in particular, struck a chord deep in my soul. Susan Szmania took the stage to talk about her dissertation on victim-offender mediation. My thoughts immediately came into sharp focus: Offenders meant prison, and prison, well, prison was a sphere that I hadn't considered in the scholarly realm. Prison was the place where I visited my brother, coins in my hand to purchase the coveted vending machine snacks. It was where we were allowed exactly two hugs, one at the start and one at the end of the visit. It was the place where we could pay for a single photo, taken in front of inmate-painted eagle artwork, a photo that preserved Ben in his prison greens.

But as Susan spoke, a crack began to form and I took my first step toward brokenness, a shattering of this artificial barrier that I'd erected between my selves—scholarly and personal. In that moment, I had an embodied reaction—relief and trepidation washed over me. I realized I deeply wanted to understand my brother's world, from a communicative perspective. That realization was equally freeing and fear-filled—believing my selves could be entwined, enmeshed was a scary reality. Could I

be that vulnerable? This initial fissure in perspective revealed a path forward, a path that moved me to study something *close to home* (and to my heart) but also took me even *further away*—over the ocean and north of the Arctic circle to study the experiences of folks I termed involuntary members, otherwise known as prisoners.

Breaking Inflexible Belief
There is a breaking that happens
When you suspend belief
When you release your understandings
of what you THINK you know
A confronting
A shattering
A remaking
An undoing
A relearning
An embracing of the unknowable

In our Qualitative Camp in Port Aransas, Texas, Frank Lindberg spoke eloquently about Heideggerian Legacy. He explained how we are all situated within our own blind angles: "We are thrown into the world as existences. We are all inauthentic. We don't think." Frank continued with what he called Heidegger's main problem, "How do we become aware of the blind angle when we are blindfolded?" The answer, in Frank's estimation, "if we as researchers are able to search the *spontaneous breaks*, or to discuss something that will reveal that you are what you are (i.e., researcher, consumer, etc.), [these practices] may provide us with new knowledge."

Find a way to realize when you are blindfolded.
Search for the spontaneous breaks.

My time in Norway—leading up to and including *Henningsvær* Qualitative Camp—revealed and removed several blindfolds from my eyes. When I arrived in Norway in the summer of 2009, I brought with me several unquestionable truths. Americanisms pervaded my

understanding of the prison system and the people confined within it. Simply put, I'd been taught to believe that prison was full of involuntary members (i.e., broken people), that inmates and those formerly incarcerated were treated as second class citizens—almost subhuman, that prisons should be shrouded, hidden away from the public eye, and that they should be surrounded by tall fences, flanked by guard towers with armed lookouts ready to protect the public from the people housed inside.

But Norwegians' worldviews were markedly different from the ones I'd been raised in. As I alluded to in my opening lines, the prison in Bodø was cozied up in a small neighborhood community. At first glance, I almost thought the building was an elementary school. Simply encountering this building served as a spontaneous break and revealed a blind angle in my scholarly understanding of prison and of membership.

Jan swung the car into a parking spot, and I startled. "We're here?" I stared up at the building in front of me, quizzically, still trying to force my brain to process what I was seeing with my eyes. This unassuming building that resembled a school in every possible way, was a prison? How could that be? We exited the car, and I paused momentarily trying to empty my backpack of all my belongings because surely they wouldn't be allowed inside. But Jan hustled me along. "You're fine, they won't check." Now my insides were screaming, I'm sorry, what? They aren't even going to check my bag before we enter the PRISON, but it's a PRISON. But I stayed quiet, trusting Jan knew what he was talking about.

We entered the building and walked up to a plated glass window, finally something familiar. They asked for our identification, and I slide my driver's license over to the correctional officer who explained they would be hanging on to it for the duration of my visit. And that was it. We signed in and entered the building, backpack and all. In my field notes from the day, I went on and on about this experience. I could have carried anything into that prison, including a weapon that day.

Find a way to realize when you are blindfolded.
Search for the spontaneous breaks.

Let me pause for a moment and just say that one more time. My field notes focused on how I could have brought in a *knife* or a *gun* into the

prison and no one would have known. Who thinks like that? Well, apparently someone raised in the US who is completely jaded by our ineffective prison system. And so continued my breaking—a breaking of my (previously) inflexible beliefs.

The library in the prison was warm and inviting, the perfect place to conduct intervies. Someone had set out coffee and cookies on the table in front of us. When our first interviewee, an inmate dressed in plain clothes, arrived, Jan offered to pour him a cup. This might seem to some a small gesture, an honoring of humanity from one to another. To me, it was cataclysmic. Up to that point in my life, I'd only and always seen inmates treated with disdain. Movies, the media, and my lived experience with my brother had shown me that the incarcerated were always treated as less than, insufficient, and not worthy. But here, a cup of coffee flipped that script and again continued to break my inflexible beliefs.

Find a way to realize when you are blindfolded.
Search for the spontaneous breaks.

My time in the Norwegian prison continued to surprise me, and each interviewee—correctional officers and incarcerated individuals alike—helped remove layer after layer of blindfolds from my eyes. My beliefs flexed and broke with respect to the inevitability of life sentences and capital punishment (i.e., Norway doesn't practice either), furlough (i.e., Norwegian prisons allow inmates to leave prison and see their family for short periods of time with a promise to return), and conjugal visits (which are encouraged in Norway to keep family bonds strong during incarceration). The "buts" kept rising up in my mind (buts implanted in my world view since I was a young child), and yet, I released them, and instead focused on listening to and learning from each interviewee. I left prison that day feeling lighter than ever before. Hope lightens the load of life. Seeing that there was another way of doing prison—another way for people to serve time and concurrently grow—was transformative and heartening.

Perhaps even more transformative was what this experience did to my (previously) inflexible beliefs. In the same way that Susan's words broke the boundaries I'd crafted around my selves, Frank's words taught me

how to look for the spontaneous breaks and identify my own blind spots. My process of becoming broken was not yet complete, however. My time at Qualitative Camp in *Henningsvær* rattled the rigid standards I'd erected around my methodological approach.

Rupturing from Rigidity
But is it RIGHT?
I mean, am I doing the steps the way they are supposed to be done?
Have I checked each box?
Have I met the minimum criteria?
Have I achieved the standards?
Have I met the(ir) expectations?
But really…who are "they"?
and why do they get to decide how MY research is done?

Methodology, a word anchored with the weightiness of procedure, of recipe, and of expectation. There is always another book to read that tells me what I must do in order to properly conduct research. But what if we loosened our hold on the how tos? During Qualitative Camp, Bjorn Olsen implored us to "Look at the research process as a living instead of linear system."

Living not linear.
Wild, untamable.

Larry Browning picked up on this thread, "Qualitative research should be artistic and individualistic. It should have enough of the style of the author to make it come to life. The distinctness of the stories is the most important thing." Larry went so far as to explain that when he teaches research methods, he often will skip the first half of the textbooks, intentionally omitting prescriptions like "write down the color of everyone's shirt." Those kinds of edicts, he explained.

Put qualitative researchers in a box of things they must look for. In many instances, the things that are the most interesting are the things that are not evident. If you begin to put yourself in a scheduled pattern

of "what to look for" you will most certainly miss many important observations. Textbooks create standardization but not interest!

Rupturing from rigidity
Freedom from forced
Parting from prescription
Standardization is not what I seek
Rather stories that speak to my soul

We are trained (indoctrinated?) as doctoral students that we have one job: to learn how to be scholars. This dogged pursuit of perfection is fatiguing. I spent my years at UT striving. Striving to earn As, to publish papers, to do all of the things that PhD students are expected to do before they go off into the world and land the perfect R1 job (i.e., research 1 institution). Working in the professoriate at an R1 institution was ostensibly the only option.

The University of Texas at Austin has long had an introductory doctoral seminar called 081. The purpose of the class is to help orient students to the life of the mind. We had one session where we were encouraged to submit anonymous questions and faculty in the school would answer them honestly. One brave soul asked: "What options do I have after finishing my PhD if I don't want to work in academia?" The response by a senior faculty member: "Leave. I'm not sure why the hell you are even here if that's what you are thinking about. This place isn't for you." There was no room for margin.

And yet, at Qualitative Camp the confining rigidity that marked much of my experience in my doctoral studies was absent, uninvited. In fact, there were times in Port Aransas where I recall begging Larry to give us more information on *the right way to do grounded theory.* Begging. I look back on that memory now and simply laugh. But Larry knew better. He answered my questions, sometimes in maddening ways, which left me wanting. Many of my queries felt unanswered, but by offering only loosely structured scaffolding, Larry gave me a great gift—he engendered a passion within me to figure it out for myself.

One of the defining exercises during Qualitative Camp was "the boat experience." In Port Aransas we stepped on to a rinky-dink flat boat,

designed for a small fishing operation, whereas in Norway we boarded an impressive Coastal Steamer that took us from *Bodø* to *Svolvær* in the *Lofoten* Islands. Despite the differences in grandeur, the boats offered the same lessons.

You need only to be still
to see
with your eyes and your soul
to feel
with your body and your heart
to hear
with your ears and your sixth sense
to know
with your mind and your gut

We were given so little instruction about what we were to do on the boat: observe, notice, attend to your senses—just be, be with, and be in, each moment. On the boat, I experienced a reckoning with my own rigid expectations. Ones that had been hammered into me throughout my educational experience—learn the formula, execute the steps properly, and succeed. But as the waves lapped against the boat, they washed away the weight of expectation, and I continued my voyage toward becoming broken, holding my preconceptions and structural expectations at bay both literally and metaphorically.

More than a decade later, when I teach doctoral students how to "do" qualitative research, I borrow from my time at Qualitative Camp. I offer immersive experiences—though sadly not on a boat off the coast of the gulf or in the shadows of granite mountains. Ohio is a bit too landlocked for such adventures. Boat or no boat, I encourage the stillness, inviting the deep breathes that I associate with the waves of the ocean. And when students ask questions, in lieu of "right" answers, I often pose more. Beckoning them to invite their own ruptures with rigidity.

Becoming Unbroken
In the process of being broken,
I was shattered.

No longer whole,
and yet wholly altered
Complete
Unbroken

Many of my friends have written about one of the quintessential experiences of Qualitative Camp: jumping into the Arctic in the dead of night, unable to see the waters below before we took the plunge. It was a crystalizing moment, a cleansing of sorts, a rebirth. And while I certainly agree that the Arctic plunge was an important moment in our collective learning, it was not *my moment.* My moment occurred hours earlier atop *Festvågtinden* Mountain. It was there, with the sunbeams forcing their way through the rain clouds as the sky threatened to open up and wash us down the mountain, that I became unbroken.

Festvågtinden Mountain, as imposing as it was majestic, seemed to rise directly out of the ocean. An impressive 1640 feet (500 meter) ascent stood between us and the summit. It is the kind of mountain that continuously takes your breath away—because of its beauty and the toll it takes on your lungs as you climb. In my pre-Norway life, I'd never been a hiker. And yet, as I looked up at the mountain before us, I was enthralled and eager to get started. It didn't take long until we reached a wide-open boulder field and lost the path. Some folks stood paralyzed and unsure which way to go whereas others carved their own way through the boulders and up the side of the mountain. As I watched, I couldn't help but feel like this whole experience was a metaphor for my journey to this very moment in my life. I had lived through two Qualitative Camps, at home and abroad. Each camp experience, as well as my time living and researching in Norway that summer, had chipped away at the rigid structures I'd build around my selves, around my previously inflexible beliefs, and around my methodological approach. Chiseled and broken I stood gazing up at the boulder field, and I knew exactly what I needed to do.

When the path disappears, make your own.

Alongside my husband Steve and my new Russian friend I'd met that week at camp *Nadezda*, I climbed, putting one foot in front of the other. We hustled up the mountain pausing momentarily to catch our breath and question the sky. Would it wait to pour until we were snuggled up by

a fire, sipping on *fiskesuppe* (Norwegian fish soup) back in the quaint fishing community of *Henningsvær*? Through the drizzle and fog, we pressed on. We'd nearly reached the summit when *Nadezda*, ever the adventurer, squealed with delight and made her way over to a rock that appeared to be hanging off the edge of a cliff. After realizing it was an optical illusion, I joined her and Steve snapped a photo of the two of us, pretending to hang off the side of the mountain.

Optical illusions
The eyes can deceive
Individual senses might mislead
But together,
Senses can break you
In the best possible way
Together senses can
Shake your assumptions,
Shatter your preconceived notions,
Rattle your rigidity
Together senses can break you
And lead you to being unbroken

A few more meters, and we reached the summit. As we stood, taking in the 360-degree views of the islands, watching mountain climbers hanging from the cliffs nearby, I felt fully present, whole, and intact. Qualitative Camp had broken me—while simultaneously carrying me and prodding me along the path to *unbrokenness*. There was a momentary separation in the clouds and the sunbeams burst through in a way I'd never seen before and perhaps might never see again. That view is permanently etched in my memory; it acts as an anchor when I feel like I've lost my way. Those moments of the mountain reminding me of the beauty of being broken so that I can be unbroken.

More than a decade has passed since my time in Port Aransas and *Henningsvær* Qualitative Camps—15 and 13 years respectively. And yet, my senses can immediately bring me back to the small fishing boat where I pushed for answers that rarely came and to the beach where we sang Johnny Cash songs while roasting s'mores around the fire. It seems as if it

was only yesterday that I settled in to an uncomfortable yet awe-inspiring seat on the coastal steamer, gazed out from the peak of *Festvågtinden* Mountain over all of *Henningsvær*, and jumped into the frigid Arctic waters.

Qualitative Camp gave me the tools I didn't know I needed, tools that broke me. My experiences helped to reshape my understanding of who I am (and who I could be) as a scholar and as someone who was also so much more, including the sister of a prison inmate. Consequently, from those moments, I embraced studying prison and the experiences of incarcerated individuals (i.e., involuntary members), a topic that was desperately close to my heart. At the same time, I found ways to be honest about the unique contributions that I brought to the knowledge construction process, honoring my place in it all. Norway, and its glorious people particularly in the Bodø prison, shattered my understanding of what "prison" is, what it should be, and what it's designed to do in, for, and through, people. Living for a brief season in the land of the midnight sun not only disrupted my circadian rhythms, but also rid me of some inflexible beliefs—revealing that there is always another way. And finally, Qualitative Camp shook off the unnecessary and artificial scaffolding that I'd build around the research process. Denied of the answers I so desperately sought, I realized that I need to discover them for myself. The gift of not knowing—of not being told—was the greatest of them all.

Reflections on Becoming (Un)Broken
In the before,
I didn't know, didn't realize, the brokenness that lay WITHIN.
Housed within Me, not in "Them"
In the time since the breaking
Of bodies into the artic sea
And lungs into the mountain air
SOME blind angles have been revealed
An unveiling of sorts
And yet,
Although I am
Unbroken
Pieces still remain
Waiting in the dark
For the carving tool to come

To reveal that which needs to be
Shattered
Broken
Ruptured
That which remains
And then—in the aftermath of the wreckage
I will be unbroken, once again

Part III

Peer Learning

8

Observing Cultural Differences: Dismantling Ethnocentrism in a Multicultural Environment

Ashley K. Barrett

As a young female American researcher in Northern Norway, I was in a foreign place. I had spent 20 h crammed into multiple planes, traversing the world to reach a peculiar city projected onto a peninsula in the Norwegian Sea.

I traveled to Northern Norway in the summers of 2011 and 2014 with specific goals in mind that carried hefty consequences if unaccomplished. I was there to collect qualitative research that would serve as the meat for two book chapters I had committed to write for two book projects co-sponsored by my home university and the Bodo graduate business school. Specifically, my chapters would investigate Norwegian workers' social constructions of meaningful work and workplace identity. How do Norwegians talk about what makes their work meaningful to them? Through communication, how do they jointly create and share interpretations about their work's meaning? How central is their work to their overall life satisfaction?

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Given that 2011 was my second year in my doctoral program, I began conducting these interviews as a raw, inexperienced, and frankly frightened doctoral student who was unexpectedly given an irresistible opportunity to travel across the world and peer deep into my and others' hidden assumptions about life. I set off to explore a remote Scandinavian location where people were robustly proud of their culture, heritage, and the ethical foundations on which their economic, governmental, educational, and social systems were balanced. But as the reality of my interviews set in, I quickly realized that my presence as an interviewer became a salient artifact, a reservoir of meaning that interviewees drew upon in a contrasting way to make sense of their own identities and workplace identity. It was clear that I, and my culture, was perceived to be different from them and theirs.

In fact, from the moments I first arrived in Northern Norway, I was quickly and acutely greeted by these perceived and felt cultural differences. Most evidently, it didn't take long to notice that people took their time and carried an inherent suspicion of social climbers and social hierarchies. Upon arrival to the modest and sparkling clean Bodo airport, I was graciously greeted by Jan—an animated Northern Norwegian professor and one of our hosts for the trip. He had made plans for us to first visit his home in a traditional Norwegian neighborhood before delivering us to our new homes for the summer. As Jan hurled my luggage into the back of his small navy hatchback SUV and slammed the rear door shut, I remember him casually saying, "yea, all the houses look alike here, just different colors." I thought, how odd. But he was right. As we twisted and turned down the curvy roads, passing roundabout after roundabout, red, white, blue, green, and yellow houses passed by my window—some with slopping roofs made of grass others with stone, but all had strikingly similar aesthetics. They were not ornate or packed with pretentiousness. There were no flags, political signs, or extravagant landscaping dressing the front yards. The houses were practical, simple, and yet beautiful. As my stay in the region lengthened, natives took turns explaining to me how the "Law of Jante" was a deeply embedded aspect of their culture and surmounted to something akin to a biblical commandment: "thou shalt not think highly of thyself." In a way, their conviction to explain

this ideology of equality to me felt like a purposeful and continued effort to inform me that I was different from their region's inhabitants.

As I conducted my interviews, this clearly drawn disparity between myself and my interviewees seemed to follow me around. Ann—a governmental employee who worked in the thriving tourism industry in Northern Norway—serves as vivid example. It shouldn't come as a surprise that the land of the Northern Lights attracts crowds of nature-obsessed fans, but if you need more evidence, remember that Northern Norway is home to the Lofoten Islands—a string of well-preserved islands draped across the turbulent waters of the Norwegian Sea and flush with rare wildlife including sea eagles, moose, otters, seals, orcas, and red foxes, in addition to a large variety of fish. Ann praised the staggering beauty of the Lofoten Islands, but she called Bodo home. Here, she worked on several governmental tourism initiatives that strategized how to brand Northern Norway, developed principals for sustainable tourism, and worked to strengthen the competitiveness of individual tourism companies. It was hard not to adore Ann. Her rosy cheeks and energetic brown eyes perfectly framed by square black glasses were always inviting, honest, and kind. When I asked her what made her work meaningful, I was surprised that my home culture played a prominent role in her answer. In a discussion about her value of workplace flexibility, she explained, "we have less focus on face time as compared to Americans. If we have a task, we do the task, finish it, and then we can go. It seems like some of those in the US like more being in the vicinity of their bosses … coming in before the boss, leaving after. And what actually is supposed to be done seems to be less important than just being available."

Another interviewee, Dorthe, was truly a force to be reckoned with. She was blond-haired and blue-eyed, yet had the mouth of a crass sailor. Although her dress was a little disheveled—her deep blue button-up shirt and khaki pants were intermittently wrinkled and her hair repeatedly fell in her face—her thoughts were organized and she was pleasantly abrupt. She worked for a private construction company, and while her clothing and word choices were masculine, there were feminine undertones to her personality. She was innocent, vulnerable, sensitive, caring, and attractive. At her request, we had decided to forgo the sterile university setting, and instead met in a coffee shop across town. I arrived early to nervously

comb over my questions and double- and triple-check that my audio recorder was setup correctly. She was 5 min late. Having singled me just as I looked up from my table, she briskly walked over, sat down, and extended her hand. As I shook it and introduced myself, I was startled by her confidence. We exchanged a few pleasantries, and then I stumbled through a few words in my explanation of my study and its intended goals. She smiled and graciously pretended not to notice. However, I could tell she wanted me to get to the point. As I eventually and very lucidly learned, she "wasn't about the bullshit."

Looking down to my interview guide, I first asked her if she could describe a less than ideal work experience she had encountered in the past—either in her current or in any preceding jobs. Her eyes widened and rolled as she shook her head from side to side. I could hear her laugh underneath a louder sigh. She gladly began firing off about an overbearing boss she combatted in a past job. Peppered within her colorful recount of this rocky relationship were stories of self-resilience, brashness, and well, not taking bullshit. She expounded, "at first, when the CEO hired me, he said 'Dorthe, you have too much on your plate. You are only capable of working 80%.' I said that's OK, I can work 80%. But then I had to travel all over Norway in addition to my 80% work, and they wouldn't give me extra money for the extra traveling hours …. I said no way. And so I left … I just told them, 'fuck off, I'm leaving … I don't like the way you're running your company' … I went in there and said, 'you're going against Norwegian law and reaching low in how you treat people, and I don't accept it.'"

At this point, I'm sure my brow was furrowed. I had so many questions, but for some reason I could not articulate a single one. Dorthe intuitively took note of the pause. (Was she the communication scholar or was I?) Providing needed context for the "outsider" sitting in front of her, she then started to describe how Norwegian law protected workers against unjust treatment like unpaid overtime and excessive working hours. Moreover, Norwegian legislation safeguarded workers' psychological safety, in addition to their physical safety, by mandating that all employees are treated with integrity and dignity, are allowed to communicate and establish social relationships with coworkers, and are both personally and professionally developed as a result of their working

atmosphere and role (see Barrett & Dailey, 2018). "Unlike what may happen in America," Dorthe continued, "these laws don't sit in a book somewhere collecting dust. We are made aware of them. I and others I've known aren't shy to insist on them." I was bewildered with her courage, unfailing systemic beliefs, and diehard conviction for those beliefs. I could never imagine standing up to a superior in that magnitude. As my affinity for her grew, my disdain for the American working culture simultaneously burgeoned. It was as if my ability to like was finite and a newfound appreciation in one area required a deflation in another. Throughout Ann, Dorthe, and others' interviews, I found it fascinating that I, unwittingly, was a living, breathing, moving, prototype of what they, as workers, did not want their working culture to become.

This revelation might have been debilitating for some researchers—an intersection they did not expect or feared to encounter. However, I anticipated—and even welcomed—it, all because of Qualitative Camp.

Qualitative Camp was an academic conference I attended before I was "set free" to conduct my interviews in the wild. Situated in Kjerringøy, Norway—a remote fishing village—Qualitative Camp was a perfect mixture of both business and pleasure. We lodged in a series of bright red wooded cabins lined one after the other up and down an aged wooden dock that overlooked the Norwegian Sea. The cabins—almost barn-like in that they were outfitted white shudders and doors and triangle roofs—were decorated with decks that served as an ideal location to breathe in and consume the quaint but hypnotizing scenery. Standing on that deck each evening, I would watch the colors in the sky dramatically shift into vibrant pinks, as other shades of orange, yellow, and green danced around and were mirrored in the still water banks in front of our cabins that extended out into the vast ocean. The sun would then turn a deep reddish orange, and dip behind a distant white-topped mountain, as if to play a game of cat and mouse. Yet during the Summer Solstice—a period of 2 months from May to July each year—the sun only hid, never entirely escaping. I was in the land of the midnight sun. Kjerringøy was undoubtedly a trove of aesthetic pleasures.

Yet Qualitative Camp was first and foremost a week-long conference, aimed to educate. Doctoral students traveled from around the world—the US, the Netherlands, Brussels, France, and Sweden, to name a

few—to present research to diverse crowds during the day. Our professors offered lectures and lessons in hermeneutics, ripple effects, and narratology. We routinely enlightened our worldly perspectives through rich, yet casual conversations set around conference rooms, but also fire pits, and even sailboats. These scholarly interactions were usually made complete by a few rounds of spontaneous guitar picking and heavily accented singing. Somehow our relentless faculty leaders always found a way to push our boundaries, spiritually, intellectually, and artistically. Perhaps the three are intertwined.

This multi-pronged educational experience taught me many lessons—and not just in writing styles, presentation tactics, and research epistemologies. Most importantly, I learned to appreciate people's cultural differences rather than inherently assume my outlook was right because it was familiar. Reflecting on this multi-faceted, intensely challenging but rewarding experience, it would be easy to look through rose-colored glasses. It would be easy to claim my tolerance for different cultural orientations and workplace values effortlessly surfaced early and metamorphed into a consistent adage, guiding my behaviors and experiences throughout the week. However, that would not be an accurate or realistic statement. In fact, it would disgrace my complex Qualitative Camp experience with superficial notions. Contrarily, I experienced what is coined "culture shock" in the academic literature upon first arriving at Qualitative camp. Culture shock is defined as the (sometimes debilitating) anxiety a person encounters when moving into a completely new environment, which is significantly different from their previous, normalized environment (Oberg, 1960). To reduce culture shock, we must actively attempt to reduce uncertainty, to start building familiarity. We must attempt to break down the barriers creating confusion and awkward situations, and instead view these situations as ripe for collaboration and learning (Glinkowska, 2016). We break down these barriers through openly communicating with each other; through not being afraid to second-guess assumptions that are so imprinted into our minds and behaviors that we may fail to understand their power unless through reflection.

My first 2 days at camp consisted of interactions that supported groups and social categorizations. Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Social Categorization Theory (SCT) inform us that human interaction ranges

on a spectrum from being purely individualistic on one hand to purely inter-group on the other. When social—or in this case cultural—categories become salient, people default to acting as representations of their groups. Their personal, individualizing qualities fade, taking a backseat to group characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As Tajfel and Wilkes (1963) argue, making "us and them" distinctions salient changes the way people see each other and communicate. When cultural distinctions become apparent—a natural occurrence in diverse educational settings such as Qualitative Camp—people perceptually enhance the similarities within groups ("we're the same") and dramatize differences across groups ("we're different from them"). This can create competitive inter-group behavior, yet it is born from a desire for positive self-concept and identity. As evidenced in Ann and Dorthe's quotes above, cultural groups become even more psychologically real when defined in comparison to other groups. As Hornsey (2008) notes, group members are "motivated to think and act in ways that achieve or maintain positive distinctiveness between one's own group and relevant outgroups" (p. 207). Thus, a social identity—generated through communicative juxtapositions that secure a positive uniqueness—"not only describes what it means to be a group member, but also prescribes what kinds of attitudes, emotions, and behaviors are appropriate in a given context" (Hornsey, 2008, p. 209).

When I first arrived at camp, these "us versus them" discourses were hyperactive.

Take my Dutch research partner, Tara, for example. Tara was late, often. She was usually the last person to join our lectures each morning, trickling in through the back door, always with a smile across her face. Although all the Americans had at times *skål'ed* one too many aquavit shots the night before, we were consistently there on time or minutes early the following mornings. We were sometimes red-eyed, un-showered, or entirely dependent upon coffee, but always present and punctual. This is perhaps partially responsible for what made Tara's perpetual tardiness aggravating for the American group. A few of us, always underneath our breath, started calling her Tardy Tara after a few days. We were bewildered by the fact that Tardy Tara never paraded even the slightest physiological symptoms of stress when she strolled into class late. She was never flushed; in fact, her complexion was spotless. She had perfect,

blemish-free porcelain skin adorned by a few engaging freckles that fell under each eye branding her with a stamp of innocence. There was never a single bead of sweat trickling down her face or even a glossy shine to it. When she spoke, her words were clearly pronounced, never distorted by dry mouth. She was never irritable, fatigued, or withdrawn. When walking in, she didn't look to the ground and scurry to her seat, non-verbally communicating shame or remorse. Quite contrarily, she walked in with her head held high, waiving to acquaintances in the room or studying the presentation slides as she shuffled her way through the tables lining the room.

As Americans, the unconcerned behaviors we saw married to her temporal transgressions were confounding. How was she not embarrassed when her tardiness stole the attention of others in the room? Did she not consider her overdue presence to be rude or to insinuate she was somehow lesser than? However, a glance into the literature on chronemics—or the study of how time is communicated, valued, and used—will quickly reveal that, because time is socially constructed, perceptions of temporal norms and standards vary across cultures. As Dawna Ballard's work routinely demonstrates (Ballard, 2007; Ballard & Seibold, 2006), the culturally diverse workplace is one context in which these diverging time perceptions can become evident, potentially ending in conflict. For example, Western civilizations such as the US formalize the duration and sequencing of events by strictly prearranging them and scheduling them in relation to an external calendar or clock. However, many nonwestern civilizations temporally locate activities and events in a spontaneous manner and have fewer specific boundaries, if any, regarding when something must occur or how much time will be allocated to complete it (Ballard & Seibold, 2006). These conflicting ideologies in how we approach and treat time at work are often hidden, but they carry significant meaning. Ballard (2015) claims these ideologies and constructions of time provide the criteria for how we measure activity, productivity, and a person's virtue.

Not surprisingly then, I was not ecstatic to find out that Tara and I had been paired together to complete an assignment during our time at Qualitative Camp. For me, up unto this point, Tara's habitual tardiness had outcasted her into a far-away land where questionable virtue lurked.

The goal of the assignment was to observe a collection of people boarded on a ferry transporting people from *Festvåg* to *Misten* and back. It was necessary to take this ferry to access Kjerringøy, which was just a short, scenic drive from Misten. Through careful observation alone, we were asked to construct a narrative about the ferry goers' lives. Who were they? Why were they there? Why this ferry on this day? What plot were they currently traversing? What other primary life characters accompanied them on the boat and what was the extent of these relationships? My first thought was that ferries have strict timetables, so completing this assignment was going to be a nightmare. Or would it be? If Tardy Tara missed the ferry, I would be forced to do this assignment solo, and that would mean having to navigate and negotiate fewer intercultural barriers in communication and critical thinking. The assignment would then be my own. I wouldn't tell on her for missing the boat and ergo the assignment. I had perfected this skill of not whistleblowing on derelict, indifferent student group members during my informative undergraduate years in college. We could even meet after I had completed the observations to do some of the analysis and make sure we were on the same page before submitting the assignment. This would be the equivalent of meeting the night before a presentation to inattentively throw it all together into one slide deck and pretend all presentation members are on the same page. I could do the research on my own. I could even polish it on my own. My mind started to find solace in the idea of solitude rather than be disquieted by Tardy Tara's undoubted future tardiness.

Although I had already devised this plan, it had to remain imprisoned in my head for the time being. After all, I couldn't openly admit to others, Tara especially, that I had entertained amusing visions of me merrily floating out to sea on the ferry, gazing back to shore only to find Tara trotting up to the dock. In my visions, Tara was always red-faced and in a frantic state. Her tardiness for once had tangible consequences. The ferry waits for no one.

So, with this plan concealed in my thoughts, Tara and I moved forward and separately browsed the ferry timetable PDF documents I found online. Through an email chain, we collectively decided we would take the 11 a.m. ferry departing from Misten on Tuesday. At that time, we could not pre-reserve a ticket, instead having to purchase it on site when

we arrived. The timetables on the Torghatten Nord—the seagoing public transportation company—website were introduced alongside an all-capitalized sentence exclaiming, "SHOW UP 10 MINUTES BEFORE DEPARTURE." Unlikely for Tara, I surmised. Looking back now, I realize how cynical I was of her. Yet, I had never had a conversation with Tara that lasted more than 5 min.

Days later, when Tuesday arrived, my iPhone alarm jolted me out of my slumber at 8 a.m. I always use the "circuit" ringtone when I set an iPhone alarm. Imagine a noise that reminds you of going round and round relentlessly and gets increasingly faster with each second you dare not turn off the alarm. Does this particular sound choice startle me awake? Yes. Does it perhaps also pierce my nervous system and cause undue amounts of stress to course through my body? Perhaps. But wakeability trumps comfortability when it comes to coercing myself to rouse at a mandated time. After getting out of bed at 8:15 a.m., I proceeded into my Westernized highly scheduled daily routine. By no surprise to myself, I reached the ferry station at 10:40 a.m.

As anticipated, I did not see Tara there when I arrived. Upholding a social norm of politeness, I went ahead and purchased her a ticket. It wasn't that expensive anyway. Yet as each minute passed, I drowned into a reassurance that my concealed plan would in fact become reality. At 10:56 a.m. this projected reality was shattered. Tara's curly blond locks and bright smile came bouncing around the corner from the parking lot. As she approached me—I was sitting on the curb next to the dock—I saw that she was as fresh-faced as ever. I also noticed for the very first time how tall she was. She practically towered over me. I informed her I had purchased her a ferry ticket, and the strangest thing happened. She reached down and wrapped her lengthy arms around my neck. I suddenly felt very small, both physically and psychologically. Had I been ridiculously narrow-minded about Tara and her virtue as a person? Up close and personal, she seemed so pleasant—her facial expressions communicated she would offer me all the time in the world.

From that point forward, Tara and I started talking. I learned about her Norwegian husband back home who surprisingly developed a food allergy to shellfish, tuna, and salmon during his adulthood. These hovering allergic reactions nearly chopped his food options in half, and given

Norwegian delicacies, positioned him as an unsatisfactory plate sharer. Although Tara was raised in Amsterdam, her mother was French and her father was German, which generated quite an unpredictable blend of conflict management styles in their household growing up. I learned how tolerant she was. She described how 30% of Amsterdam's inhabitants are foreigners, making it a very strong expat community. However, unlike other expats, those in Amsterdam often do not learn Dutch and make few if any Dutch friends—even if they live in the region for years. These protected bubbles of English-speaking communities didn't bother her however, or other Dutch people from her perspective. The Dutch have a long history of welcoming strangers into their country. Although it is a small country, the Netherlands have a limited internal market and thus were worldwide maritime traders dating back to the sixteenth century. They are still primary players in the global economy today. This open economic system has translated into an openness of thought regarding religion, sexual orientation, and cultural background. Finally and relatedly, Tara explained how extremes were largely absent in the Dutch society—be they political, economic, social, or legal.

As personal and professional disclosures were exchanged and reciprocated, I started to theorize how this combined notion of practiced tolerance and nonexistent extremes had impacted Tara's social constructions of time and timing. When I became acquainted with her story and who she was on an interpersonal level, I finally stopped stereotyping and judging her. Like a ton of bricks, it hit me that I actually admired her in several ways and appreciated her outlook. It was perhaps much healthier and smarter than my own. Throughout that afternoon, Tara and I successfully completed the assignment and our combined insights and lenses crafted a narrative that was much richer, detailed, and comprehensive than I ever could have generated on my own. When the ferry docked, I was angsty, ready to de-board, and sequentially jump into the next task on the itemized schedule hiding in my iPhone. However, Tara suggested that I pause and allow our research subjects to depart before us, thus generating added information to analyze and apply to our narrative. Why couldn't I see that was an important observation? This piece of information could be crucial to our narrative as the behaviors attached to beginnings and endings often carry enhanced meaning.

For the rest of my stay in Qualitative Camp, Tara and I were not only friendly, we were almost inseparable. We had successfully made the transition from walking stereotypes to sidekicks. She even made me late to morning lectures a few times. In these events, I realized her tardiness wasn't a product of laziness. Rather, Tara was often late because she dedicated a few extra minutes after everyone had left the breakfast room to chatting with the serving staff. She knew their names, their origins, and their favorite family member.

It is easy for Americans to be fooled into naively believing that people spanning this great earth praise the US culture for reverberating liberty and justice for all from sea to shining sea. However, Qualitative Camp taught me not to be ethnocentric, and quite oppositely, to open my eyes to newer, healthier conceptualizations of life. Throughout my time and research in Norway, I found it fascinating that our working culture was not only well understood by Norwegians, but cleverly used to fuel their engines of resistance that protected their way of life; to paint a clear picture of a hierarchical, power-hungry counterpoint to Norway's egalitarian society where workplace equality is not only highly valued, but demanded. Simultaneously, my time with "Tardy Tara" revealed that I carried my own constructed stereotypes regarding other culture's orientations toward work and time that bred frustration and judgment. Yet, we should appreciate these differences, learn from one another, and value our ability to do so in a culturally diverse environment.

This chapter was designed to highlight beautiful cultural idiosyncrasies, and the maze we must often crisscross in order to see and appreciate them in a multi-cultural environment. My experiences at Qualitative Camp trained and prepared me to be a conscientious interviewer throughout the rest of my time in Norway that summer and when I returned years later. My presence as an American, and the associated Americanized notions of work, predisposed my interviewees to offer "us versus them" distinctions, thus creating a form of response bias triggered by the interviewer. Yet after having accumulated lessons of tolerance and insight at Qualitative Camp, I not only welcomed these statements, I theorized how they could constructively inform both my research and my personal viewpoints of a healthy workplace and life. Everyone should be so lucky to be gifted with an experience akin to Qualitative Camp. In addition to

cultivating tolerance, it opens our eyes to a broader set of cultural norms. Taking from Tyler Cohen, "real cultural diversity results from the interchange of ideas, products, and influences, not from the insular development of a single national style." When we insulate ourselves and hide behind stereotypes, we welcome failure not only as academics, but as humans, colleagues, geographic neighbors, and friends.

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9

What's going on here, or Welcome on board of No Escape

Nadezda Nazarova

As you name the boat, so shall it float.
(The Adventures of Captain Vrungel)

Every day, at 12.30 sharp, a giant coastal steamer, *Hurtigruten*, the pride of Norway, enters the Port of Bodø. There are 15 vessels that day and night carry people in and out of northern waters, from harbor to harbor, along the Norwegian coast, which includes the islands, containing 62 thousand miles (100,915 km) of coastline. Some travelers may jump off early in Trondheim, Norway, or even ports below, in the south of the Kingdom. In contrast, others will travel the whole way "up" to Northern Norway, over the Arctic Circle, to the connecting border with Russia. Some ships are old and look like fishing boats. But others are luxurious. If you are lucky or pragmatic enough, you may end up in a hot tub/jacuzzi on the top deck with a glass of wine, with your face lit up by the northern lights. So lucky I was supposed to be on the 10th of August 2009 when I stepped on the *Kong Harald* board (King Harald). This

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name was borrowed for the ship from the real King of Norway, who was both a standing King and an experienced sailor himself. Hence, somehow, besides the promise of the company booklets and the onboard postcards celebrating the world's most beautiful voyage, I also had the King's word stamped on top of it all.

Built in 1993 in a German shipyard, the *Kong Harald* was one of the oldest expedition vessels in the company's fleet. It had everything a person leaving for a journey could be dreaming about. Up to 590 passengers could compete for 498 of its beds or an Arctic-inspired gourmet meal in one of the three restaurants. They could get in line for ice cream in the Cloudberry bar or a cake in the Cloudberry bakery—both Arctic-inspired. The unlucky ones could sweat out their bad back in the sauna or the gym. Two additional jacuzzies on the upper deck were rarely crowded—possibly because people got lost by temptations up to the open deck, or maybe because one needed something more substantial than ice cream in the bar. All of this occurs at a gunpoint of dozens of cameras of Chinese tourists, who seem to have accepted that winter is coming and, just to be safe, never take off their winter coats.

As part of a graduate course that included Qcamp, I was prepared and committed to spending several hours with hundreds of tourists on the coastal steamer. After two years of the master's program in Bodø and several years earlier, back to Russia, I had been missing the demanding Norwegian north. I call it demanding because it takes some effort to consciously pack a pair of wool socks and a bikini going for the same journey. Is where you are going so uncertain? After almost three years of office work, I was eager to learn new things.

As an export specialist for the biggest shipping company in the world at that time, I had been anticipating and sending off hundreds of ships from north to south and from west to east, and I finally was ready to launch my journey. I gave up my job, my apartment in one of the best districts in the cultural capital of Russia, St Petersburg City, and my handsome boyfriend to move to the north of Norway to become a full-time researcher. My decision came as a surprise or a shock for many—not least for the boyfriend. Even though I had quickly gotten a three-year PhD research fellow's position, I was still struggling with my proposal. The Qualitative Camp was the second course in three months since I

started the program, and I needed to develop good research questions over the next semester. But first, I needed to get some answers. I was waiting for clear instructions on doing good qualitative research and completing it in two years instead of three. Namely, to make a good research question, I needed to (1) understand my philosophical position or better get it explained to me (note that "Research philosophy" was not the first section in the proposal template); (2) find a wow case (Russia, Arctic, oil-and-gas—here I win with a perfect topic); (3) elaborate a ready-to-use interview guide (that would produce all necessary answers, no doubt); (4) publish several articles in high-ranked journals; and (5) save the world. Of course.

The Qcamp was mandatory for PhD candidates at that time, and thus nobody asked me whether I wanted to take it or not. However, the location itself was enough for a desperate nature-lover like me to be looking forward to being grounded in something new and relevant. Maybe I misinterpreted the meaning of "coastal ferry" with "cruise liner" as the entrance to the ship was not holiday-looking at all. It was fancy on the top, brutal on the bottom. So, instead of a red carpet and champagne, there was a several-meter-long narrow gangway over the sea to the ship. I first thought that maybe the entrance was a pick-up point since there was little upswing between the shore and the boat that opened between a small door hole in the vessel's body. But as I entered, I heard a clatter and turned my head to see a truck rolling on the board some 20 meters away on a similar passageway. I gripped the railings that turned out to be the only visible advantage of the entrance for passengers over the hole for cargo. A check-in girl registered all newcomers and gave out key cards that must be turned in should you decide to leave the ship for a sightseeing escapade. Even though she was working efficiently, the limited space of the entrance hall soon became crowded with people waiting for their keys. The entrance was so small, and the gangway was so narrow that I felt that loading operations' noise and smell could press or blow me aside if I did not move up and push forward in the line. So, I had to move—either up or out.

The elevator pit and the cabin were glass-enclosed and fully transparent. Several minutes in the reception area showed me that it would take me less time to crawl upstairs to my room than to see an empty elevator

coming and regain position in line with those standing there with the hope of catching the lift. But even if the ride was open, I did not know which deck the seminar room was on. The check-in lady remained unreachable for any questions; she was standing behind the reception desk swamped by troops of newcomers. So, I decided to leave my suitcase in the luggage room and use the stairs instead. The conference room we were to meet in was hidden behind the elevator doors and seemed unproportionally small for such a big vessel.

Stepping on the deep blue runner rug of my deck's floor was becalming because it absorbed the sound of the noisy entrance hall that occupied a part of deck three. Soft light reflected from golden metal perils and glass walls covering the inspiring pictures of ships, landscapes, and northern lights. My confusion with feeling like a hunk of expected cargo instead of a welcome guest began to withdraw. My excitement was returning and increasing with each step I took upstairs. I was more and more determined to revisit the scenes from the epic movie *Titanic*: well-dressed people, women in floor-length dresses, men tuxedoed, impassioned in sophisticated small talk, with soft music in the background. I even searched in my vision for the sight of the classic movie scene of beautiful lives before the fatal contingency. With steps three, two, and one, I was in the dining area filled with many people. They were everywhere: at the tables, on the sofas, at the information desk, in the cafeteria, in the souvenir shop, sitting on the floor, lying on the floor, inside or outside on the deck. There was not a single corner that stood empty. Nor was there excellent music or beautiful dresses. One and all wore tourist pants and fleece jackets; some had even their bubble coats on. They were making buzzing noises and doing nothing, so I decided to try to search one more deck up that turned out to be a sleeping deck. Embarrassed with my interruption, I decided to get in line for the information about the ship.

The seminar room we occupied for the Qcamp lectures was so small that chairs and tables were crowded into such a tight place that seats near the window were coveted after coffee breaks. Even though it was crowded, I felt being invited to an exceptional party. Ultra-white tablecloths, product-branded writing blocks, and pens, fruits, and water on the tables, smiles on faces, and a sea view from the window set the scene for a guy in a crisp white-and-bright uniform, telling us an exciting and inspiring

story of how from a postal vessel the *Hurtigruten* became the Norwegian coastal steamer and won its popularity among Chinese and German tourists. However, following the safety rules, or maybe also because he had also seen the Titanic a hundred times, he was obligated to give us a safety lecture: Exit signs (one to the left, two to the right), life-jackets and lifeboats available for everybody "just in case." The recent dramatic accident with *Viking Sky* in the Norwegian Sea in Winter 2019 caused me to now realize that it was too naïve to be relaxed.

I expected my confusion about how to do a qualitative research project to be drastically reduced as soon as we stepped on the board of the coast liner, and it did. I knew where we were going and how to escape. I finally opened a snow-white blank tablet and a new pen and was ready to write down the essence of doing qualitative research. That pleasant feeling of mastering unknowns/highly improbable (Taleb, 2010) lasted for just a moment until I heard what we were supposed to do.

"What's going on here?" became my main question and the essence of sensemaking for the coming days or even years. We were told to observe and describe what was going on there, on that bloody ship! No instructions, no guidelines, no tips. Just study anything YOU think deserves attention. The confusion continued to grow aggressively. When I realized that no more text or details on the assignment would be provided, I attempted to ask yet then-unknown American professor about what was known or given, and I failed to get an answer. I switched from a hierarchy-based Russian approach to a simple Scandinavian title-free format when I suddenly realized that formalities should have been followed again. Otherwise, there is no way to get an answer even about known unknowns. The diligent mathematician in me awoke with a start and desperately counted the "Exit" signs. The signs were there, but we were in the middle of nowhere. So, "welcome on board of 'No escape'!" I thought.

I refused to understand why we spent so much time and effort describing obvious and irrelevant things. Who cares why that big bald man in a t-shirt with a skull motif drinks something pink from a tiny fancy glass instead of a solid mug of Norwegian beer? This exemplified the thoughts that swirled in my head during our discussions on the coast liner. Why? Why should I use so many words to describe something so simple and banal that I do not care about? I have a mathematical background. I like

numbers! I like systems! I want to study the management of big projects in the Russian Arctic. I think I was repeating this line like a mantra during the Qcamp. However, Hindus do believe in what they murmur day and night, did I?

Hurtigruten, the name of the ship, literally means "fast route," but in fact, it is not that fast. With an average speed of 15 knots, over 100 nautical miles between Bodø and our destination in *Svolvær,* on the island chain off the coast of Norway, *it* promised to take us several hours to get ashore. Maybe I should not have overlooked that the course program did not have a single photograph. Still, the course schedule was screaming out with such keywords as "hike," "sauna," and "fishing tour." These "references" sounded familiar as they were the key ones ex-Qcamp students spoke of when passionately describing this mandatory course on one of the most beautiful islands in the world. But all these motivating activities were planned for day three. This meant that I had to understand what was going on and their priority to survive the first two days. No matter what.

Surprisingly, while I was scuttling through the ship, asking myself "to be or not to be?"—that was the question—it was time to get back to the classroom and report on the fulfilled mission of observation or failed mission, as I thought, it instead was in my case. I did not make a single note as the cocktail slurping hulk I had observed managed to rescue my attention from getting lost. At the same time, I searched for distinctions between the dozens of upper deck tourists taking hundreds of pictures of the sun, the sea, and the air. Imagine my surprise when one by one, my classmates were providing total value to words like "a family of four had lost their camera and had been searching for it while trying not to lose their children" or "to stay warm while taking pictures outside, tourists wrapped themselves with blankets that made them look like Michelin Man." I admired how passionately the Americans described every case like their duty had been done. Some of them even reported the same things—"Oh, you saw it as well? In the lobby?"—"Yes, exactly." However, despite how emerged others were while studying people's looks, actions, and emotions, none of them accounted for the Exit signs. At least 25. I stopped counting then.

I was surprised by the faculty's role in that what's-going-on-here game. They listened carefully, asked follow-up questions, and made hypotheses and jokes. I can't say they were engaged equally as the student researchers squad. Still, each observation was supported by the faculty's "Oh, really? That's interesting," "Have never thought about it," or "Exactly," or sometimes even … having fun? "What do you think made him/her behave like this?"—asked the American professor with curiosity and a big smile, and it seemed like he was interested in hearing an answer. How can we know this? We may only guess, and if so, what's the point? Is there a place for finding solutions that may be somehow supported? Otherwise, how can we make others interested in somebody's guesses? I was slow to realize that the whole thing was not about providing answers but being so persuasively curious that others would also get curious about what you are doing, why, and how. Not everything can be measured, but you still can see, hear, smell, and feel. You can enjoy the process of doing research. Really? Isn't it just the work that needs to be done?

The first person that turned my researcher's universe upside down was a classmate that I had just met named Kerk. He is a very clever guy I got to know during the course and regularly on Facebook. His name reminds me of our work nowadays: his name is a synonym for church or a term meaning "peace". He initiated the following conversation:

Kerk: *Tell me about your project, Nadja! What are you studying?*

Me: *Well, I am studying the management of big projects in the Russian High North,*

(I proudly said and was waiting for a true wow. Instead, he seemed to be truly confused).

Kerk: *Ok, but what is this? It is probably a fascinating topic, but I am not sure I understand what you are precisely studying.*

(I was almost paralyzed by his "probably"—what might be unclear about "management of big projects in the Russian High North"?) And I managed to reply only something like:

Me: *Well, this is hard to explain… What is your topic?*

Kerk: *Oh, with pleasure. I am studying the rationalities behind the adoption of cyberinfrastructure for e-Science in the Early 21st Century in the U.S.*

I certainly also looked confused. However, my confusion inspired him to find better words to explain. He became a model for curiosity about qualitative research.

The onshore part of the course was to be held in a small traditional fishing village, *Henningsvær*, that occupied several islands connected by bridges. At the very moment of Kerk's and my exchange of research topics, our bus pulled aside to wait for the cars going from one side to another on a narrow, one-way bridge, which is typical for this area. The bridge was initially designed in the 1980s for fishing boats to go under and not that many cars to go over the bridge. Kerk virtuously used one simple—road—infrastructure to explain his complex research topic. The cyberinfrastructure is like a four-lane road, but for data. I did not know how the building of wider bridges with higher speed capacity next to them and connecting to the existing bridges could impact the life and economy of the community. Still tired and hungry within an hour of midnight, I quickly realized the rationale and the metaphor behind considering a broader bridge in the early stages of construction. He looked satisfied as Kerk had just passed the Russian grandmother test for research topic clarity, but I didn't pass the same test. I also had some hard stuff in my topic—ships, ports, pipelines, oil-and-gas, transportation -with no simple metaphor for it all though.

The next day Kerk started his presentation by thanking me for helping him understand how to communicate his research to everybody better. And everybody understood, and I was already feeling almost like an expert. At least, I was able to follow Kerk's logic, and that was a kind of pleasant feeling to be a part of the community. In the break following his presentation, I approached Kerk to share my sudden excitement about his excellent topic and that I got everything except one thing.

Me: *Excellent! But… sincerely… why spend so much time on the method chapter? Why should I bother trying to convince others about my research method in detail?—I confessed. With a kind of Buddha smile, he replied.*

Kerk: *But Nadja… the methodological chapter is not for you; it is for other people. You have to make other people believe in what you are doing in your research—those others who care, of course.*

Me: *But what if I do not see this particular part of the research process as enjoyable?*

Kerk: *Well… maybe you are not a researcher then?*

What? I have made all this long trip and suffered through all these embarrassing exercises to realize that I am NOT A RESEARCHER? At that moment, I felt a burning desire to prove that he was so … wrong … But what if he wasn't? … Then I understood that there probably was something I did not understand. But what was that something? Or is it multiple of some things?

Later in the same day, as I learned about tools and procedures for collecting qualitative data, which I was eager to learn about before the course; I was, at the moment, instead, thinking about how to make others believe in what you are doing when tools are not available? When they are disallowed from being used at all? This confusion proved to be relevant later in my research career. For example, when working on my article on risk management in a Russian oil-producing company in the High North, only one interview was allowed to be recorded—only one out of 17 interviews. The respondents trusted me and were very open as they knew my parents and elder brother when our family had earlier lived in that small Russian town far above the Arctic Circle. They trusted me, but they did not trust the system. And definitely, they did not trust my qualitative method and what I could use it for. One of them used a joke: "How can I know that because of your article, I will not get *mine* (i.e., an article from the Russian Constitution and a prosecution that might follow)?" So, how to make others believe in this trust when documents or articles you use to build your argument are not available to these others as the electronic library system in Russia is very young, and electronic access to the literature is still minimal. Beyond that, some documents from even the 1980s were written in Soviet Russian language, which is so radically different from the Western academic writing style.

There are many more challenges to face when collecting qualitative data in a country that perceives all this questioning, surveying, and analysis of words as an attempt to be controlled and therefore bears the risks of punishment. So, maybe qualitative research method teachers should pay more attention to national/cultural differences when doing qualitative

research? Somehow, I started to ask myself the right questions even when I was not yet ready for the answers. Implicitly, I realized that there might be no ready-to-use tools and instructions. Instead, one probably has to develop qualities that allow for finding the right questions for qualitative research.

It was noon on Wednesday. The break was over, and we were midway through the course. Once again, it was time for students' presentations. Again, furthermore topics varied from peculiarities of public budgeting reforms to the preparedness of Norwegian police for terror attacks that in 2009 sounded ridiculous. The faculty presentations also covered a broad range of philosophical topics. Even though the real meaning of the term hermeneutics was still to be explored and amplified, at that moment, the main challenge was to practice the implied openness and emptiness of mind required by the grounded theory approach. Pretend that you do not have any prior knowledge and should, instead, open your mind and build a new understanding through research. It would take me several years to become less normative and begin seeing between black and white, between right and wrong, to strive not for an answer but for a new question to be raised. The focus on apprehending uncertainty and not the worldview that has been in your head for years was the real challenge of the Qualitative Camp. Many years later, together with my colleagues from post-Soviet countries, we would use the concept of the so-called *reflexivity trap* to describe the challenges that non-Anglo-Saxon doctoral students face and have to deal with when doing PhD studies in an Anglo-Saxon context (Iermolenko et al., 2021). This trap happens when individuals' "possible future institutional embeddedness, the current exercise of individual agency and choice of particular actions are trapped by their past embeddedness, individual agency, and related actions" (ibid., p. 8). Often this trap is supplemented by the feelings of depression, frustration, and low confidence when individuals are pushed toward the critical edge of their limitations and can experience reflexivity shock that gives them a chance to leave the "vicious circle" of reflexivity limitations (Aleksandrov et al., 2018). But at that moment, standing in front of the whole class and the Norwegian-American faculty, I still was trapped.

I do not remember a single comment from the camp faculty regarding my presentation on "The management of big projects in the Russian

High North." Despite "this is a fascinating topic," I was paralyzed by the flood of questions I had failed to ask myself so far. Why did you choose this topic? How will you collect data, and whom will you talk to? What is your research question? None of the commentaries directly asked me Kerk's question, but I did for myself. For whom was my method description written?

Suddenly, I did not feel a part of the community but rather in "the ring of fire." This line from Johnny Cash's famous song that, much to my great regret, I got to know only the day before, perfectly fitted the picture. An American student with an angel-like face and voice and a Texas-American professor in pure, non-understandable dialect for a Russian student performed this song several times in a row. I admitted that it *burns, burns, burns*. Another student's story about doing research in prisons may have been more welcome/understandable to the audience than mine on the logistics of challenging staffing and big staffing freight transportation. Why were so few questions about the prison story and so many questions to mine—the management of big projects in the Russian High North? May be because Russians are so challenging to understand and not that good at explaining things? Then does one need a particular qualitative method to understand Russians? Or maybe I am simply not a researcher? Oh, *it burns, burns, burns* so much. At that moment, I wished to master this qualitative method somehow—as though this method was the only barrier that stood between defending Russia's Arctic Strategy and opening it to the rest of the world.

Fortunately, it was time for refreshment; the body, but not for the mind. We were suggested to use our free time to continue practicing the "what's going on here" skill. But lunch was well behind while the dinner was not yet on the horizon. Even with a coffee break, I already felt exhausted from learning how to swim (think/talk/listen/write) for half a day straight. I was not surprised but rather bewildered not to find a single person doing the "what's going on here exercise" outside as we were told. I was pretty sure what was going on there—half of the class was chasing sea eagles on a sea rafting excursion while the other half was taking naps in their rooms. But I tried to stay focused on the mission. My attention was hopping from a gull that had just discovered a crab to two men haggling over a loading pier and arguing about the proper water level.

Hesitating between *tidlig* (too early) and *accurate* (exactly), they agreed on *en øl* (a beer).

In this desperate state of mind, left even by the crab, the two Norwegian classmates discovered me. My saviors, *Sondre* and *Karl*, invited me to go on a fishing trip. This exceptional offer came on so unexpectedly that I took a pill to ward against seasickness that I might have far away from the shore. At the same time, while one myth was busted, as against all prescriptions and moderate waves, I was feeling exceptionally well, the rumors about Norwegian cod that jumps on a hook from the deep turned true. My Norwegian fishing friends taught me how to cut an excellent fish filet in less than a minute: "One just needs a good knife, a right and sharp one." Watching how virtuously they split flesh from bones, I wondered what knife I needed to carve a filet out of my incomprehensible research project? How do I sharpen the method being used? It seems to be so much easier when one has a clear goal he wants to achieve, doesn't it?

On the way to the top of the *Festvågtinden*, a 541 meter-high nearby mountain that emerges right from the sea waters, making every meter-step that I take count, I realized that there still might be something beyond the clear goal. As with many tourist attractions, the starting point is usually well described, and as a rule, people depart altogether. However, if not properly organized or trained, goers tend to get distributed along the route. They are supposed to get to the very top, but everybody must go on their path. When it started to rain, and heavy grey clouds saturated and challenged the clarity of the goal, several people withdrew themselves from the race and walked back to the camp. At the same time, the vanishing plan and lack of proper shoes and clothes did not make others, including myself, stop the ascent. What made me continue when I would barely see anything at the end? Was it curiosity about what was going on there on the top?

I still love going to the mountains. After more than ten years in Bodø, I have climbed my favorite ones many times, and many remain on my bucket list, though I firmly believe that there are enough mountains to mount a new one every day in Northern Norway. However, I have returned to *that* same mountain so many times since that qualitative hike and have repeated the effort so many times in my head. True, on the climbing day of camp, I became inquisitive about what was at the end, on

the top, where everybody wanted to be. But why did I continue when the top was not visible anymore, and the rain forced me to slide down? Does it mean that I, in fact, *am*?

One may hope to see a rainbow when singing in the rain. That August day, there was no rainbow for us at the top. Instead, a spectacular shadow play show performed by the sun and the clouds threw a cloak of secrecy around the mountains. No precise shapes and contrasting colors; instead, softened silhouettes. All toned down. It seemed that too much light could destroy the light show planned by nature. Instead of allowing the sun to discharge all its light energy in the blink of an eye, the light operator artfully directed sun rays and beams into a target—a rock, a valley, or a fjord—through solid leaden clouds that introduced magical formations of the fairy Lofoten coast not all at once, but one-by-one. A hundred and fifty shades of grey showcased different heights of the mountains and the distances between them. I was amazed at how easily a minor change in quantity or direction of light affected the whole picture. No camera would be good enough to capture all qualities of, by default, a bad weather day. While taking photos of the same things simultaneously on the same mountain, we agreed to share our *findings* on return to the qualitative research seminar, and they proved to be very different.

The final day of camp was rainy, and the first direct ray of the sun fought its way through heavy clouds of doubt at the concluding session. At one moment, I was listening with half an ear about the book project being proposed by camp leaders based on narratives from the High North. I felt that I had a more serious mission than to write simple stories with a character, which was how I interpreted a narrative myself at that moment. Let other students write about a young fisherman, a mayor who saves a town, or an ecological activist who is up to the challenge. But wait a minute, if an imprisoned man can be a character, a Russian captain prowling the Arctic oceans on the great Northern Sea Route should also get a story. And he did! It took him several years to tell it and write it down (Nazarova, 2014), but that story helped me see the Russian Arctic's power, not in the size of the oil-and-gas project but in the strength of mind of people living and working in those conditions.

Suddenly, the topic of the Russian Arctic could be considered a bit more US (faculty) friendly. I was still not sure I was ready to be a part of

the world's cohort of qualitative researchers. And still, the invitation to join the announced book project could lead me, if not to the Nobel Prize, then at least to another continent, which turned out to be a perfect motivation for stepping into the qualitative brink. The human perspective would later help me understand what was going on in the mainstream Supply Chain Management (SCM) literature. The method enabled me to think beyond the table of boxes and arrows and to realize that the hard work of getting something from point A to point B in the conditions where the only road may melt away any given day soon is not only done *for* people but definitely *by* people (Nazarova, 2013, 2014). And some of them might be Russian sea captains.

Then, the formal part of the Qualitative Camp was over. From that moment, it was time to have fun officially, and there was something for everybody—beer, sauna, and sea swimming. I, too, had fun until, to complete a ritual, I found myself standing on the edge of a pier, ready to jump into the near-freezing waters of the High North. Instead of sliding easily into the water, we had to jump from the quay. I was accustomed to plunging into fresh mountain lakes and rivers when hiking in the mountains, so the temperature was not a problem, but the height was. Several times in my life, I had been the one who initiated a hike to an extraordinary place—to sit on the edge of a sharp cliff or to step across a rock protruding between the two walls almost 1000 meters above the sea. Yet, for the sea submersion, in the end, I was the only one crying and waiting for others who were kicking up their legs and dancing on the victorious side of that famous stone. I could not step into the dark and unknown water from 10 meters. I had never dived even from the high board in the swimming pool in the daylight. No way I could do it at night.

Meanwhile, my newly made fearless friends were stepping around me, standing in line in front of me, and then disappearing in the dark. The girl with an angel-like voice who sang about burning in a ring of fire hesitated for a couple of minutes. Her concern was not with jumping down into the sea but rather how to get back up on shore. Somebody, who was there not to dive but just to watch, showed her with a torch how to swim out to the point where the guys were ready to help her out from the water. She made the jump. That's it. I was the last one left on edge. I was not crying but shaking. Before the torchlight, it was just the

darkness; now, I saw the depth of every meter. The water in Norway is so crystal clear that my height sickness increased down to the very bottom of the sea. I was paralyzed, and it burns, burns, burns … Be curious and be brave! Jump down and swim! There is nothing to count here. But to feel, smell, listen, and experience; learn, master, and share your qualities with the world—this is what the Qualitative Camp is about!

I jumped, and I survived. The guys helped me out even though I did not look like and did not sound like an angel. The water temperature turned out to be, mildly speaking, refreshing for the body and my vocabulary. Thank God, none of them could understand the Russian language. My mates were waiting for me in spite of that it was undoubtedly cold to stay outside. It was time to exchange feelings and emotions. It was time for a new hermeneutics circle; I decided to go for a stronger one this time. Deserved. The Kerk's curse was over.

The arc of my story is this. A Russian cartoon named The Adventures of Captain Vrungel is based on the eponymously named book (Nekrasov, 1981). The characters set out for a deep-sea trip, and they call their boat Victory ("POBEDA" in Russian). As the boat pushes off, they merrily sing, "As you name the boat, so shall it float." In line with that, the two first letters of the name immediately fall off the arch board, without the crew noticing it, and turn the ship's name and the voyage itself into Disaster (the Russian equivalent of "BEDA").

Funny as the cartoon is, this is what happens when we predefine things and, as a result, lock ourselves into a particular way of thinking and acting. Starting from getting on the "No escape" board, it took me a PhD and "permanent head damage", as academics joke, to understand which research camp I am in. I am still able to count the Exit signs in case of emergency. At the same time, I have finally become wordy enough that my paper built on a ten-day expedition in the Arctic got rejected. Following one of the reviewers, all it had to do with accounting was that it combined 16 people, 32 dogs, and 5 snowmobiles. Applying a particular theory may require a researcher to start seeing things differently and become a different person herself. In other words, a researcher needs to capture all forms of relatedness behind different situations and be "more sensitive and better capable of seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling" (Mol, 2000, p. 265).

True, acquiring new qualities might be time-consuming. One may need to climb the mountain many times before they get trained to differentiate the nuances of the route, the weather, and the changing colors of curiosity. Alternatively, sometimes it may be enough to force yourself to make a single dive into the ocean in hopes of being taken out by those who have jumped before you, and who knows where it is better to get back on shore. When in training, observing the qualities of others who can make a perfect filet out of an average dead fish might be the inspiration for sharpening your knife. And while listening to Johnny Cash's songs ten times in a row may be a real challenge, sharing words, voices, and chords while singing him in unison with principals may indeed lead you to a resonance in quality exchanges. Sharing observations and doubts on the ship between the two ports, sharing confusion on the bus while standing in the traffic, sharing pictures to see the same top from different angles and in different tones, sharing fears while standing on the edge of a cliff, and sharing of emotions and plans when everyone gets back onshore may turn out to be qualities that are crucial when, one day, you will be investigating the archives of the Soviet journals written in the language that collapsed when I was only seven years old. Others may show themselves by studying various context-related challenges of the Arctic oil production or researching the developments and harmonization in the Russian higher education system. Some you will need to gain right away when holding the bar of a dog sled for the first time in your life (Hoarau-Heemstra & Nazarova, 2020). These acquired, trained, developed, or missing qualities will be necessary to answer the what's-going-on-here question and transform a rescue operation into a royal adventure.

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10

How Natural Is "Natural" in Field Research?

The Gift of Taking Nothing for Granted

Astrid Marie Holand

I guess I have a pretty visual memory. When I'm looking back at the 2012 Q-camp, this is literally what I do: I recollect a selected bunch of snapshots stored in my brain, and inspect them. The most characteristic Q-camp picture to me is the assembly of fellow PhD students, from different continents, various disciplines, and a multitude of viewpoints, sitting in a large circle, sharing impressions, thoughts, and ideas. Attentively listening to one another. Reciprocally.

It was one of those afternoons, just past mid-course. Soft sunlight floating in through large windows. We were discussing the pros and cons of the interview as a qualitative research craft, when an intriguing question arose: What does it actually *mean* that something comes *naturally*?

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"Naturally" Occurring Data Perceived as What?

The starting point was this claim: A very high number of doctoral students in many disciplines use interviews as their primary and only way of collecting data. Many fail to analyze their data properly or reflect on this way of data collecting, and instead present parts of interviews as their findings.[1] And so, to suggest that the researcher use a wider scope of information than mere interview data, some concepts from David Silverman's textbooks on qualitative research were introduced.

To define a dichotomy with an opposite pole to the researchers own *manufactured data*, Silverman uses the term "found data" or

> the more commonly used description 'naturally occurring data' to denote material that appears to arise without a researcher intervening directly or providing some 'stimulus' to a group of respondents. (Silverman, 2007, p. 50 cf. Silverman, 2010, p. 131)

Surely, this may be a fruitful division. Silverman, too, is critical toward an uncritical use of interviews in collecting data. Thus, it is a good idea to begin a research project by looking at the wide range of additional data available, all the way from previous textual imprints to metadata—data about how data emerges. While this appeared obvious to the audience, something else wasn't: the content and meaning of the term "naturally occurring data".

Observably, "naturally" was the problematic word. The audience did not automatically (naturally?) get the "right" (natural?) thoughts and connotations coming to mind when this pivotal concept was introduced. Instead, their faces turned into question marks. Discussions about what is natural (or normal? or instinctive?) behavior, natural appearance, and natural freshness arose, resulting in multiple meanings and confusion. Questions like *For how long is it natural?, Can a different researcher's interpretations be regarded a natural occurrence?*, and so on clearly illustrated the conceptual problem. Does the word *natural* imply that something is

[1] Lecture by Niina Koivunen, University of Vaasa on *Naturally occurring data,* Nordic Qualitative Management Camp, June 2012.

spontaneous? Authentic? Pure? Plausible? Autonomous? Internalized? Mainstream? Common knowledge? Tacit? This could lead to a whole bunch of new questions, like are we talking 'natural law' here, or what? Does 'natural' in the life sciences and the social sciences mean the same? Et cetera. It also became clear that course participants from different continents and disciplines had different perceptions of what was natural—in even more ways. And it still got more complicated than this.

The Gift

If I could ask professor Larry Browning to play one more song on his guitar, it would be *It ain't necessarily so*, because that's what I learnt from him. Laid back in his chair, he invited us to share some thoughts on our PhD project plans, as to what types of informants we were planning to interview, and what we expected the outcome to be.[2] When the whole circle had spoken, he had made obvious, by showing, not telling, that we, the PhD students, had differing expectations. Not only of what was natural, but also of what data could be assumed to emerge from an interview situation. As it appeared, we also had differing expectations concerning how trusting and trustworthy informants would turn out to be. We Norwegians seemed to be more on the gullible side. That is probably natural, coming from a country commonly described by a high level of trust among citizens as well as between citizens and state (Holand, 2019, 2020a, 2021, in press).

But, wait, Browning said next, *what makes you think that they would tell* ***you*** *all this?* For sure, how natural would it be for informants to share their inner thoughts with a random researcher? That would clearly depend on *their* experiences concerning trust, wouldn't it? It may well be said that it is human to perceive situations differently, depending on whether a person thinks that it pays off to trust others, or not. Which again would be smart to consider in preparing for an interview. Even more laid back in his chair, Browning then shared his own experience from an encounter

[2] Workshop by Larry Browning, University of Austin, Nordic Qualitative Management Camp, June 2012.

with informants from a religious group. They were willingly answering his questions, but only half-way through the interview he realized—in his own words—that he was being *had*. The informants were lying, or possibly telling him what they thought would serve them better.

Smiling and murmuring, *now, who would have thought*…, the wide-eyed audience nodded to each other: No wonder that textbooks warn against treating what people say in interviews as pictures of the inside of their heads, instead of just an account they give outsiders in an interview situation (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2007, 2010). This sure adds some extras to the more general advice that knowledge of the interviewee's pre-understanding matters for the outcome of both the interview data and the researcher's analysis. Suddenly, the words of British sociologist Anthony Giddens seemed so much more down-to-earth: The condition of "entry" to meaningful social reality is getting to know what actors already know, and what they have to know to "go on" in the daily activities of their social life (Giddens, 1986, p. 284). That is, it all seemed to depend on one's contextual standpoint, and understanding of the other's.

Once you really understand what *that* implies, you get *the gift of taking nothing for granted or certain.* That surely is a treasure in qualitative research work. It taught me to always look for the little extras, and the possible blind spots, in everything I do. For instance, this gift could help you avoid the mistake of taking a model for "reality itself". The British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead called this "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (Whitehead, 1929, p. 11). More generally, it is "the fallacy involved whenever thinkers forget the degree of abstraction involved in thought and draw unwarranted conclusions about concrete actuality" (Daly & Cobb Jr., 1994, p. 36). For a long time scholars, for instance within modelling economics, have been accused of doing this. Back in the 1800s, British economist and editor of *The Economist* Walter Bagehot wrote of one of the founders of classical liberal economic theory, David Ricardo: "He thought that he was considering actual human nature in its actual circumstances, when he was really considering a fictitious nature in fictitious circumstances" (Bagehot, 1953, p. 157).

There will always be a more-or-less hidden discrepancy between what something is and how it is seen, textbooks remind us: "Each interpretive

paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions that are asked and the interpretations that are brought to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 12–13). "Various paradigms, perspectives and concepts, as well as research and other political interests, all bring out certain types of interpretation possibilities, at the same time as they suppress others, often under the guise of what is neutral, rational, right and correct" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 9).

During fieldwork for my PhD thesis, I took advantage of *the gift of taking nothing for granted or certain*, and I'll return to that later. For the time being, you see, I was more concerned with the initial making of data. Underline *making*, and Silverman's notion "appears to arise" since that was my main point: *Your 'naturally occurring' data was made by someone, all right, it just wasn't you.*

"Naturally Occurring" Data Versus Data Perceived as (Results of) Actions and Choices

Just think about it for a second—what is data? How does data material appear? Let's take some time to contemplate this, starting from my standpoint at Q-camp. First of all, different types of "naturally occurring data" are likely to be understood and interpreted in equally different ways. Maybe they are not even perceived as "equally naturally" occurring. Like, material produced on purpose (although by others than the researcher), tacit knowledge and metadata belong to different categories. The process or types of activity behind these different kinds of data material are very different, even operating on different levels. To call something "natural" may weaken the awareness of *how* this data occurred before you collected it—just like any other naturally occurring wild flower in a summer field.

My first approach was pragmatic, based on my so far experiences as a journalist and historian. Both groups of professionals use interviews in their craftsmanship, and to them, various kinds of "found data" are an inevitable starting point, often found in archives of various kinds: written and oral reports from others who already know the case or a similar one. When preparing for an interview, how can they otherwise enable

themselves to (1) pose the right questions or (2) understand what the interviewee is telling—and equally important: not telling? Collecting some knowledge on the case and situation could also be regarded a token of respect and true interest toward the interviewees. Furthermore, both groups of professionals have an inclination to render the found data as results of some previous action, event, process, or intention. Then, an interesting question is *whose imprints can we expect to find here?*

Let us take statistics as an example. Statistics are often used in quantitative research, but remember that statistical data are often based upon aggregates of questionnaires. Hence, the original questionnaires should be suitable for extracting qualitative information. Interestingly, the categories in a questionnaire result from the choices of its makers, and will change as time goes by. This becomes evident to historians who try to compare census data, for example concerning finer details on occupation and working life, and discover that it is hard to find comparable numbers because the categories have been changed over the years.[3] Furthermore, among historians it is regarded a fact that especially when categories in a questionnaire did not quite fit real life, respondents would choose the category perceived as that of better status. For instance in the question of combined occupations. In Northern Norway, a considerable part of the coastal population of the nineteenth century would be both fishermen and farmers—but they are often registered as farmers. Adding the information that the right to vote in those days (partly) depended on land ownership, that division of labor was an ideal and developing agriculture a major national goal at the time, this looks as less of a surprise. Hence, the questions—and even the scopes of questions—are influenced by the pre-understanding of the persons who made the survey, whereas the answers are influenced by the pre-understanding of the respondents. And, of course, all of this limits the amount of information collected. This example also serves to illustrate that some kinds of highly relevant background information do not necessarily occur by itself (naturally).

[3] Norwegian Censuses of 1865, 1875, 1890, 1910, Cf. the North Atlantic Population Project (http://www.nappdata.org/napp/) and Marianne Erikstad "Variability in Coding Occupation in Norwegian Censuses" (http://www2.iisg.nl/esshc/programme.asp?selyear=12&pap=10563)

In the making of any material, makers choose what is important to register, while other pieces of information are left out. This is unavoidable, no one can ever report every detail in the world, we must simply care to remember that this is how it is. Thus, no one can ever claim to present the whole truth and nothing but the truth—when we in fact offer extracts. Any scribe should be aware of the common inclination to leave out from their texts the apparently obvious. This is one part of the explanation why tacit knowledge is often lost as time goes by. Once lost, it is hard to reconstruct, what historians may experience when they encounter reports from ancient times. Selected parts of the once available information are rendered on, where the choice itself is based upon a certain ontology, epistemology, and methodology—which inevitably changes over time.

All kinds of material collected to answer research questions in the social sciences, observation notes, interviews—and as shown, even statistical questionnaires—undergo selection and filtering processes. Precisely therefore it is important to consider the process behind the actual material.

Especially the interview is an interesting setting for producing data. This is an exchange situation, where both information and understanding are traded in a dynamic process. Of course both parties, the interviewer and the interviewee, leave their imprints on the data set. And neither of the participants is exactly the same before and after the interview—so to a certain degree, however marginal, the activity will also leave its imprint on them.

The ideal interview is characterized by mutual openness and exchange. Some scientific ideals, like that of Grounded Theory, emphasize the importance of the researcher's open-mindedness in the quest for new conceptual ideas to grow out from the collected interview data. The GT method aims to put researchers "on the conceptual abstract level" (Glaser, 2012). Creativity, understood as an ability to spot new patterns and seek new expressions, is important in this methodology.

Conceptualizing the world certainly grants the researcher some amount of power. But, of course, placing oneself on a conceptual abstract level is possible only to a certain extent. How can we erase every trace of pre-understanding? How can we carry out an interview without using

language and thereby previously existing concepts? Aren't our choices of words a set of "naturally occurring data" in themselves? Furthermore, interviews are likely to contain narratives. Narratives are culturally styled, and their meanings negotiable. Narratives give us schemes for understanding the actions of others (Browning & Morris, 2012, pp. 23–27, 47). Certainly, narratives are used strategically. Alas, informants-to-be would tell me so themselves.

"Otherwise Occurring Data"

Next, I went on to discuss some more philosophical aspects concerning the making and processing of data material. Scholars of many disciplines utilize qualitative data, so now I drew on methodology and experience from various fields, in search of a common multiple. I divided *data made by the researcher* from *data made by others*—and even suggested a new term for the latter. To avoid the whole range of misconceptions I saw among my Q-camp peers, caused by the word "naturally", I suggested the term *otherwise occurring data.*[4] Using Grounded Theory terminology, one could say that this concept emerged from the debate at Q-camp—where the item sought was an expression for data material made by others than the individual researcher. The term *otherwise occurring data* instantly pointed the focus to where it should be, I thought, when the matter of interest was dividing data made by the researcher from data *not* made by the researcher. Furthermore I thought that this term served to evoke a curiosity concerning *how* and *why* this other data occurred, instead of resting upon the thought that it was just naturally there. The core point was the awareness of the context in which the data "naturally" occurred, in short: *where, when, how, and why did it occur?* And *who* made it occur? An attentive and enquiring attitude may be exactly what opens the gate to a deeper insight into the topic of interest, I thought. The term *otherwise occurring data* was functional in directing the focus to the following

[4] Holand, *Qualitative Research: Aspects of Understanding Action*, VT408E/Qualitative Camp 2012 course paper, unpublished.

question: In *what* wise did this data occur, and what can it (not) tell the researcher?

Basically, data material available to a researcher can be sorted by two fundamental criteria: *who made it* and *what type of material* it is. Sorted by type, data can be divided into three main categories: *observations interviews,* and *imprints*. The imprint category is wide, including all sorts of results or products of reality—ranging from documents, broadcasts, paintings, and graffiti to bomb craters and paths formed by numerous footsteps. Thus, this category should be divided into two sub-groups: *textual/communicative* and *non-textual imprints*. The textual/communicative imprint category includes verbal and non-verbal expressions. Non-textual imprints, on the other hand, are physical remains of a given event or practice. One example is the piece of evidence scrutinized by an investigator at the scene of a crime, another is the ancient pottery carefully disclosed at an archeological site. In both cases, it is obvious that the process of understanding what has happened here implicates a reconstruction of the past. Non-textual imprints also include tacit knowledge, routines, and habits established to fulfill societal functions. Even practices labeled "indigenous knowledge", "traditional knowledge", or "local ecological knowledge" may fit into this box. It is clear that both the researcher *and* others can make observations, interviews, and imprints. Hence, the two categorizations of data can be coupled in a matrix, shown in Fig. 10.1.

At first glance, this looks bluntly self-evident. However, if we dig deeper in, we can use this matrix as a starting point for illustrating how close each type of data material can possibly bring the researcher to the subject of interest. Combined in a second matrix, which also distinguishes first-hand information from second-hand information, it becomes clear that most of the data available to the researcher is second-hand information. When analyzing textual imprints made by others, hearing

Producer	**Product**			
Others	Observations	Interviews	Textual imprints	Non-textual imprints
The researcher	Observations	Interviews	Textual imprints	Non-textual imprints

Fig. 10.1 Basic data typology

about other people's observations or listening to interviews made by others—and even when conducting interviews themselves—researchers are dealing with other people's concepts, understandings, and interpretations of events and practices. Fig. 10.2. illustrates the different kinds of working activity which the different types of data material will imply, from the individual researcher's point of view.

Most commonly, information is processed and interpreted several times, and each interpretation represents a filtering. As we can see here, the only way for researchers to obtain first-hand information is to make their own observations. As for non-textual imprints, when researchers have direct access to the imprints, they can make a first-hand reconstruction of what has been going on. However, even in these cases, they bring their pre-understanding, the "glasses behind their eyes", which enables them to *see something as something* (Gilje & Grimen, 1993, p. 148). Our language and concepts, our beliefs, personal experiences, and contexts are decisive for what we are able to recognize in what we observe.

We should also remember that researchers leave imprints on their surroundings, as part of their work and interaction with others, and sometimes beyond their control. In gathering interview data or other types of material which researchers influence themselves, their own viewpoints and choices are essential, as well as their creativity. Awareness toward one's own imprints is advised for various reasons. As pointed out by the American philosopher and historian Stephen Toulmin, only the true professionals can understand the skill and practice, discipline and method,

Product / Producer	Observation	Interview	Imprint	
			Textual/ communicative	Non-textual
Others	Second-hand interpretation	Second-hand interpretation of a dynamic process of co-interpretation	Second-hand interpretation	First-hand reconstruction
The researcher	First-hand interpretation	Dynamic process of co-interpretation	Meta-data gems ahead. Beware of prejudice and blind spots!	

Fig. 10.2 Relation between researcher and data material

strategy and fantasy necessary for the fulfillment of their activity. Still, they may at the same time become so close to their own activity that its most general features and broadest relations start to escape them (Gilje & Grimen, 1993, p. 11). So, actually, the *wise* matters in any case. When dealing with data both produced and *not* produced by the researchers themselves, an awareness of *what activity* created the data material, and *for what purpose* it was made is equally important.

Encountering the Field

One and a half years after Q-camp I went to Finnmark on a fieldwork trip, to collect historical data on a coastal uprising in 1990. My research objective was innovation and adaptive capacity in coastal communities in Northern Norway in the past 200 years.[5] This is a history where the past meets the present.

Coastal communities' (lack of) ability to modernize was a topic in reports from local state officials to the state throughout the 1800s.[6] The instructions and objectives for these reports, later kept in the archives of Statistics Norway, were surprisingly seldom revised in the long timespan. This gives the reports consistency. It also creates an impression that through all this time, among civil servants and state representatives some ideals stayed the same. What became clear to me was that concerning innovation, state officials and local fishers did not share a common dominant logic (Holand, 2011, 2017). While most fishers seemed to be risk-adverse and in favor of low-cost, incremental innovation, state officials and a few richer and more entrepreneurially oriented businessmen promoted more radical and disruptive innovation, implying major reorganization of established social and economic systems. One major change suggested top-down was that fishermen-farmers should quit multitasking and specialize in one craft, preferably agriculture. Hence the tendency to report in as farmers in censuses, mentioned above.

[5] This work was associated to the collaboration project *Norges kyst og fiskerihistorie.* English version: Kolle et al., 2017, *Fish, coast and communities. A history of Norway,* Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

[6] Referring to Quintennial reports from regional state representatives, *Amtmannens Femaarsberetning*, 1829–1915.

State representatives of nineteenth century Norway lived and worked in the era of economic and political liberalism, which clearly contributed to their dominant logic. Characteristically, reports written in the liberalism era are generally in favor of competition and change—whereas older reports were not. Reports from the first half of the eighteenth century favor incremental and thereby more inclusive and less disruptive innovation. Basically, this way things would stay the same for both those in and those outside power.

Things did not stay the same. While 1800s state's officials long waited in vain for large-scale modernizations like steam trawlers demanding major investments and a whole new infrastructure, local fishers increasingly protested against the risk of being put out of business and the possible risk of overfishing. Meanwhile, fishers gradually built larger and better rowing and sailing boats, and got better fishing gear. Eventually they equipped their wooden boats with small petroleum engines. That was a technological revolution not costing a fortune, and so it was accessible for the many. And in the early 1900s, fishers organized in associations demanding political power over resource management in the fisheries. One could argue that this is the Nordic way of organizing democracy, and a main explanation of the widespread trust significant for Nordic societies (Holand, 2020a, 2020b, 2021, in press). A co-management system in the fisheries sector proved well-functioning, up into our times (Jentoft, 2004). Apart from one global problem surfacing in the post-war era: overfishing. This re-actualized an old question: How many fishers and how many vessels could the coast support—and how large should these vessels be?

In 1990 the game was on again: local fishers protesting against the risk of being put out of business and the now overhanging risk of overfishing. In fisheries-dependent coastal communities, ties between sea and shore had traditionally been strong, and concern for the future was considerable. The archives of Finnmark County Council contain large amounts of testimonies: Despairing letters from local politicians and fisher's associations to the prime minister's and minister of fisheries' offices. And documents stemming from efforts made at the regional level to build a new fisheries policy based on regional resource management. I was particularly interested in these efforts, and had selected informants who could

tell me more. Long story short: My informants had worked strategically in the 1990s, sharing their narrative through all channels known to them, but felt that their efforts to implant a regionalized fisheries policy did not succeed to the extent that they had wished for. The informants also stated that what was happening in 2014 happened because of what had (not) happened in the 1990s. Thus, we came to talk as much about the day and the future as about the past.

By chance, my fieldwork took place during the 2014 coastal uprising, and so the situation seemed to repeat itself before my eyes. Activists worked through both official and unofficial political channels, local and social media, summoning protest meetings and torchlight processions. I got a thick naturally occurring data material from all categories mentioned in Fig. 10.2. I also got a multi-level experience in differentiating what I saw and what my informants saw happening, what was similar and not similar in the two protest movements, and how different perspectives collided in envisioning the past, present, and future. An alternative to regionalization of fish resources was privatization of fish resources. Between 1990 and 2014, political and economic forces at national and international level had strongly promoted privatization. After 25 years of ownership concentration in both fleet and industry, representatives of coastal communities in 2014 protested against further privatization and concentration of fish quota ownership. According to my informants, the key question was *who* the industry should be profitable for—owners, shareholders, stockbrokers, or the local community where the resources are located? What would be the most natural?

There it was again, that word *natural*. Does it imply that something is given by nature and therefore incontestable? Logical? Common sense? Inevitable? Fair? What I did observe, all the way through informant interviews, new reports from 2014, archived material from 1990, and the official reports from the 1800s, was that all sources had one core thing in common: They all brought on narratives of what the natural outcome should be, but this only served to reflect their own dominant logic.

Bringing on the Gift

Obvious enough to risk omittance, the researchers' preparations, attitudes, and context will influence both the interview setting, the following analysis, and what we are able to find as "found data". This I learnt at Q-camp. Like in my Finnmark case, the different kinds of found data from the present—news reports, info posters in shops, and social media posts—as well as the informant interviews would be influenced by the protests going on outside the windows. At that present time, everything was taking place in that specific context.

Generally speaking, *meaning* is the key stone in all data interpretation. If the researcher is able to read meaning *from* written sources, imprints, and what the interviewee tells her, she is likely to think that these are meaningful statements about the world—at least true to the source, from his point of view—and she is likely to *understand* what he is talking about. But then there is the possibility that the researcher might read meaning *into* the data, based on her own pre-understanding. The greater the difference in ontology and cultural background is, the greater the danger of misinterpretation. The more she understands of the source's pre-understanding, the more able she will be to grasp what meaning he himself put into his words.

At the other end of the scale: If the interviewer and the interviewee share more or less the same ontology and cultural background, they may be equally incapable of seeing the story they together create during the interview from the outside—Toulmin's problem once again. There is a danger of blind spots hidden in the fact that the researcher and the informants share a common notion of what is self-evident. This is similar to what anthropologists call "going native", where the researcher sees the case from the inside instead of from the outside. The classical ideal of objectivity is probably out of reach anyway, first of all since interviewers *have to* participate in communicative action. They cannot assume the objectivating standpoint of an observer, because from that standpoint internal interrelations of meaning are entirely inaccessible (Cf. Habermas, 1984 I, p. 116). Precisely this, seeing the interview as a creative *activity*, where a text or a story is *co-constructed*, where truth and meaning are

negotiable, allows us to analyze the interview itself as a narrative process—and thus to add a professional distance. But still, the only pictures from the inside of someone's heads which researchers can recall are from their own.

Secondly, there may be yet another catch in the understanding of what is natural, since scientific interpretation itself can be seen as a political-ideological expression. As shown in Fig. 10.2., most of the time we are interpreting each other's interpretations, and we do so from our own time and place in the world. This is the paradox of the social sciences: the interpretation of a pre-interpreted social world. Not even researchers can escape their situatedness. Thus, the term "naturally occurring" may actually serve as one of the guises mentioned, since even what we choose to call "natural" depends on some kind of pre-understanding. This is easier to discover once you receive the gift of *taking nothing for granted or certain.* New situations will challenge what we perceive as natural, true, and possible.

As for Q-camp, we did not find answers to all questions concerning how natural "natural" is. Like does "natural" in the life sciences and the social sciences mean the same? Et cetera. But they were indeed interesting to elaborate on. Still are, by the way. And there are yet more angles to explore, regarding what comes natural and what cannot be taken for granted. The relay is ongoing. So, please, take part. Please accept the gift of *taking nothing for granted or certain,* and share it around in a humble way.

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Part IV

Sensemaking

11

Moving Qualitative Data from Little Pieces of Colored Glass to an Elegant Stained-Glass Window

Understanding Cyberinfrastructure Emergence

Kerk F. Kee

It was in the early afternoon on August 10, 2009 (Monday), I was standing by the pier at the Bodø harbor (Hurtigrutekaia/Bodø Terminalen), waiting to board the coastal steamer Kong Harald at 2 PM, to leave the harbor at 3 PM on a four-hour ride, to Svolvær/Henningsvær in the Lofoten archipelago. Together with other Q-Camp participants from the University of Texas at Austin, we arrived at the harbor around 1:30 PM to check in and get the tickets. We ate a big lunch prior to getting to the harbor, because we were told that the group would probably not get to the hotel until around 10 PM.

Mixed with much excitement, I was also dealing with a little bit of jetlag. Bodø was, and still is, 7 hours ahead of Austin. My first flight out

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of Austin departed on August 8 (Saturday) at 11:45 AM. After layovers at Washington DC, Copenhagen, and Oslo, I arrived at Bodø on August 9 (Sunday) at 12:15 PM local time (which was 5:15 AM in Austin). I did get some sleep on Sunday night, at Thon Nordlys, a hotel about 10 minutes' walk from the Bodø airport. But the discomfort from the jetlag was amplified because of the weather. It was August, supposedly the summer in Norway. However, the temperature was in the 50s (degree Fahrenheit). Combined with the ocean breeze at the Bodø harbor and in contrast to the hot and humid weather in Texas on Saturday when I boarded the first flight, Norway was cold for me. I wasn't expecting to be wearing a jacket during a summer afternoon.

Standing by the pier, I was waiting for the steamer to take Q-Camp 2009 participants across the water to Lofoten islands, a series of cod fishing islands off the coast of Norway. The buildings at the harbor were painting mostly white, with blue doors, blue windows, and black roofs. From where I stood, I also saw a few red buses in front of the white buildings, and the majestic mountains behind the buildings in the background. It was the early afternoon of the Q-Camp that would soon leave a lasting impact on my journey toward qualitative research. It was the 8th Q-Camp.

The article for this chapter came out of my dissertation under the supervision of my doctoral advisor, Larry Browning, who was also my co-author on the article. The title of the article is 'The Dialectical Tensions of the Funding Infrastructure of Cyberinfrastructure,' published in 2010 in *Computer Supportive Cooperative Work*, the premier international journal in the field of CSCW, which is also the title of the scholarly journal. The core argument of the article is that tensions, more specifically dialectical tensions, are productive forces in organizational communication. The study traces the emergence of a large-scale and multi-dimensional innovation called 'cyberinfrastructure' in the US scientific community, and how dialectical tensions served as the necessary forces that gave rise to this complex socio-technical system.

In this chapter, I reflected on my experience doing the data analysis and writing the article, organizing my story into three main sections. First, I provide a summary of the article, including some key points on the theory, methodology, and findings of the article. Second, I share the

challenges I faced while working on the article. Third, I explained how the experience of Q-Camp 2009 gave me an important insight to overcome the challenge I faced in writing the article.

A Summary of the Article

Cyberinfrastructure (CI) was coined in 2003 as a new term to describe a collection of socio-technical components that emerged to provide software, hardware, supercomputing/computational power, and human experts to process big data for scientific discoveries (Atkins et al., 2003). This term is primarily used in the US to describe the infrastructure required for big data science, while the same concept is often referred to as e-science and/or e-research (and sometimes e-research infrastructure) in the UK and elsewhere in EU to emphasize the science/research enabled by such an infrastructure (Meyer & Schroeder, 2015). While the idea appears similar to what a desktop computer has been doing for data analysis in science over the last few decades, what is new with CI is that the scale of data is exponentially bigger than what a commercial desktop computer (or a cluster of a few desktop computers) can handle (Kee, 2017).

The data volume for CI analysis is big because the data set is the result of real time data streaming in from remote instruments, and/or it is the aggregation of dispersed datasets from independent/semi-independent projects that would have been traditionally considered as complete datasets in themselves. Due to its size and complexity, the big data sets processed by CI hold the potentials for ground-breaking discoveries in science, hidden solutions for societal problems, and so on. Furthermore, because of the complexity of the data sets and the problems the data sets can address, CI enabled science also often require a large (and often dispersed, multi-institutional) team of experts from various disciplinary backgrounds. The complexity involved in developing, adopting, and implementing CI is compounded by various socio-technical challenges involved in ushering the large-scale enterprise.

CI development in the US was initiated systematically by a project called TeraGrid, launched in 2001 and funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). It was a unique partnership of 11 supercomputing

centers who were competitors prior to this partnership. As TeraGrid was a complex partnership, and it represented a radically different computing model for big data in science, CI emergence was full of challenges. For this article out of my dissertation and co-authored with my advisor, I conducted 68 in-depth qualitative interviews with stakeholders across 17 US states between 2007 and 2009, to capture the organizational phenomenon. The article documented five dialectical tensions across three different levels of institutions, individuals, and ideologies in CI's funding infrastructure. As the study took a communication approach, we defined the funding infrastructure of cyberinfrastructure from a uniquely organizational communication perspective, and the funding infrastructure is conceptualized as:

> the communication arrangements of institutions, individuals, and ideologies that must be coordinated in order for cyberinfrastructure to be brought into existence. These communication arrangements include salient motivations of and financial compensations for individuals who engage in them. They also comprise explicit policies about funding, as well as implicit ideologies about science embedded in funding, as held by institutions involved in these communication arrangements. (p. 283)

I will elaborate on the five dialectical tensions here. The first tension manifests itself at the institutional level—funding either science or technology. This tension refers to how the primary funder of CI, the NSF, was initially set up to directly fund science, not technology. Although technology is necessary for conducting breakthrough science, and science and technology are often seen as intertwined, the NSF has an explicit mandate to ensure that the funding (allocated by Congress, based on tax payers' money) goes to support scientific discovery, not technology development for technology' sake alone. The tension manifests itself in that both scientific discovery and technology development have to be carried out in the same CI projects if supported by the NSF, however, the priority (on selecting projects to fund and how the money will be spent when funded) is on the science, not the technology. Therefore, technology was assumed to be able to get developed with little to no direct funding support.

The second tension also exists at the institutional level—juggling priorities of both NSF and local states, home universities, and federal agencies. Through the analysis of the data, it became clear that CI projects are often funded by a variety of sources, including the NSF, local states, home universities, and other federal agencies. As explained in tension 1, NSF funding at the time of the study struggled with staying true to its original mission to fund science (hence the name, National Science Foundation), yet trying to support CI technology development to the extent reasonable within the scope of the original mission. This means some CI projects may have to creatively find funding from other sources, either concurrently and/or sequentially, to enable, and sustain CI development beyond a single funding allocation. However, different sources provide funding with certain associated priorities, either explicitly or implicitly communicated through the allocation of the money. Thus, stakeholders and participants in CI projects often have to strike a balance between what different funding sources would like the funding recipients to do with the money and the outcomes expected.

The third tension lies at the individual level—providing either unrewarded service to cyberinfrastructure community or building an individual tenure case. This tension manifests itself primarily on individual scientists. They come from different domains, such as physics, chemistry, biology, and so on. As discussed in tension 1, there is a difference between conducting science versus developing technologies when it comes to funding allocation by the NSF. Within traditional academia in the US, the same difference exists, especially when it comes to hiring, tenure, and/or promotion purposes for professors and faculty scientists. For example, a junior professor working toward tenure and senior professorship may be risking his/her tenure and promotion by participating in CI projects, because most traditional criteria dictate that tenure and/or promotion is given to a scientist whose primary work and contribution to his/her field is in doing science. Developing technologies for CI is not part of the criteria, thus rendering such activities as simply unrewarded service to the CI community.

However, without CI, the junior professors will not be able to do the kind of science they would like to do—with big data, via simulations, addressing grant challenges that traditional small data sets are unable to

tackle. While the vision is compelling and the goal ambitious, those who over spent their time on CI development, who thus have limited traditional scientific publications (evidence of one's scientific contributions and achievements) often put their tenure and promotion cases at risk. Once a tenure case is denied, a junior professor would often leave academia, and/or 'downgrade' their scientific career to becoming a teaching faculty and/or CI development staff. While I personally do not agree with the assumptions implied, I use the word 'downgrade' intentionally because in traditional academia in the US, doing science is assumed to be at the top of the academic hierarchy. It was the decision of the pioneering scientists to do both science and technology, perhaps sometimes at the expense of their science and ultimately their career, that brought CI into reality.

The fourth tension also exist at the individual level, but in the case of technology developers—spending time both on virtual organizations and at a local supercomputer center. While technology developers receive their paychecks from their university-based supercomputer centers, the university where they hold a full time position, many are on multiple projects, and many of these projects are multi-institutional in nature. In other words, CI developers often have to juggle between the demands from their local supercomputer centers/universities and their multi-institutional projects, which are often referred to as 'virtual organizations' in the community. It became a challenge because the fragmented percentage times may add up to 100% on paper (for HR purposes) but their work does not neatly add up to 40 hours per week in practice, which is assumed to be the full time work expectation in the US. This means technology developers often are over-worked, and their attention on a particular project is often distracted by other concurrent projects. They have to answer to multiple 'supervisors' concurrently, although only their local supervisor has authority over their monthly paychecks. It was the efforts of the dedicated developers who were willing to work over time, perhaps at the expense of their personal health and family life, which brought CI into existence.

The fifth and final tension exists at the ideological level—building cyberinfrastructure either for one's theory/methodology or for a competitor's theory/methodology. This tension is again hidden because on the

surface, technology appears to be a neutral mechanism for conducting science. However, the ways in which big data sets can be processed to generate scientific discoveries are many. Because there are different ways to process big data, and the different ways are often tied to specific theories and/or particular methodologies, CI development became an unexpected ground for ideological tensions by different groups of scientists who subscribed to different competing theories/methods. It is the opportunities to advance one's or one group's theory/method that attracted early CI stakeholders to advance the movement.

The Challenges I Faced while Writing the Article

During the qualitative research process, I faced three particular challenges. First, the data set was relatively big for a qualitative study, with 68 interviews with 65 participants (8 interviews in 2007, 41 interviews in 2008, and 16 interviews in 2009). The length of the interviews averaged about an hour each (ranging from 15 minutes to 2 hours and 16 minutes), yielding about 485,000 words in the total transcripts. Second, participants came from different stakeholder groups, such as domain scientists as lead users, computational technologists as developers, center administrators as CI project facilitators, NSF program officers as funders of CI, and policy analysts and social scientists working in the cyberinfrastructure community. Their varying perspectives and motivations made generating a coherent narrative difficult. Finally, there was a paradox that while the community was full of conflicting tensions, large-scale funding continued pouring into the infrastructure. The mystery that begged a deeper explanation was how a community full of tensions could move a national infrastructure forward so successfully.

The timing of working on this article was 2009-2010. I was a fourth year PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin. At that time, I was living by myself in a graduate student apartment on Lake Austin Boulevard, about 20 minutes bus ride from campus. Because I didn't have a roommate, I often stayed up late, way after midnight, to work on

my dissertation. During the day, I conducted most of the interviews via the telephone at my apartment. Therefore, the graduate student apartment was where most if not all of the work for my dissertation was done.

It was before Q-Camp, on May 4, 2009 at 10:26 PM central time, I received an email from Matt Bietz, who was at that time a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Washington, Seattle. He sent an announcement to a list of previous participants of a CI research workshop in 2008 he co-organized, and the announcement was about a special issue in the journal, *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, he was guest-editing with Charlotte Lee, David Ribes, Marina Kirotka, and Helena Karasti. The special issue was on 'supporting scientific collaboration through cyberinfrastructure and e-science.' The topic of cyberinfrastructure in this call was related to the dissertation I was working on, so I was excited to receive the call.

Excitement aside, at that moment, I also had a little bit of an emotional conflict. On one hand, working on the dissertation was supposed to be my sole priority. However, the special issue was also an opportunity that made a lot of sense to pursue. I emailed Larry right away, asking him for his advice. Instead of choosing one over another, Larry's advice was to pursue both simultaneously. Then there was another consideration. In the US scholarly community, it is quite common to include multiple committee members as co-authors of an article published out of a dissertation. Because the timing was pre-mature to include committee members other than my advisor (I got the email call for submissions in May 2009, while my dissertation officially completed in August 2010), I needed to make sure the focus of the article manuscript was distinct from my dissertation (on rationalities behind CI adoption). Upon a careful reflection of the data analysis to date at that time, I shared with Larry that I kept noticing references to funding for building CI as a national enterprise, while interviewing participants about CI development, adoption, and implementation. The focus on studying the funding infrastructure of CI stood out as a potential opportunity for the article in the same dataset.

I took Larry's advice to pursue both the dissertation and the article concurrently. In fact, I got excited about his advice, and looking back, I am even gladder that he offered that advice. At that time of my life, my focus was solely on my research and career in academia. I stumbled upon

'cyberinfrastructure' as my dissertation topic, and I was hooked from Day 1. During graduate school, I heard the comment that at some point during the dissertation process, I will find myself hating the dissertation research topic, which is normal, as many doctoral students experienced that. While I believe it is very normal during the dissertation process, developing a conflicting feeling of hate toward my dissertation topic actually never happened to me.

I was passionate about investigating this complex phenomenon, and understanding how one can promote the adoption of CI, as its diffusion could revolutionize science, similar to how desktop computers and the Internet transformed how science is done. I stayed up many nights because the topic was personally meaningful to me—I graduated as a mechanical engineering major as an undergraduate student but decided to pursue graduate studies in organizational communication. The case of cyberinfrastructure was a compelling case for me. I wanted to understand how organizational communication functions in the scientific and engineering enterprise. I could not imagine a more exciting topic for me to study in my dissertation.

Because of this background, I was also drawn to the organizational complexity of cyberinfrastructure. As funding kept emerging throughout the 68 interviews I conducted, I couldn't help but wanted to pursue this topic for the CSCW article. The opportunity to write an article right away on CI, before the completion of my dissertation, further added to the excitement. It felt like there has to be an explanation to this—how can a messy enterprise full of tensions, breakdowns, and challenges attract so much funding? How did the funding sustain such a messy enterprise?

An Insight from Q-Camp 2009

Facing with the complexity, a particular experience at Q-Camp 2009 struck. There was an observation exercise on a Coastal Steamer from Bodø to Svolvær/Henningsvær, and there were also lectures and discussions about the observation exercise while on the steamer. I recalled sitting through a lecture about qualitative data analysis and manuscript writing after some coffee and snack on the steamer, and my notes

recorded: "*Writing up an article is like making a stained glass window (or bricolage)—it is okay to deconstruct (break the colored glass into pieces) and reconstruct (re-assemble the piece to make a stained glass window) to give the best story (a beautiful piece of art)" (Monday, August 10, 2009).* Not only was the stained-glass window a metaphor for Q-Camp 2009 itself, with 21 participants with 8 nationalities represented (i.e., USA, Norway, Iceland, Pakistan, Russia, China, Malaysia, and Trinidad and Tobago), it was a powerful metaphor for how to piece qualitative data excerpts together to create a meaningful narrative.

With this insight, I started going through the transcripts with a new perspective, one that encouraged me to break excerpts into pieces, and find a new way to assemble them in a meaningful way. Relying on grounded theory analysis, I delved deeper into the codes, and started to notice that many of the same codes related to tensions and funding contained excerpts from diverse range of stakeholders in the data set. In other words, while their professional backgrounds are different, domain scientists as users, computational technologists as developers, center administrators as facilitators, program officers as funders, policy analysts/social scientists involved in the CI community all reported similar observations of the same sources of tensions in CI funding.

What emerged as a powerful perspective didn't stop at how a diverse range of CI stakeholders recognized the key sources of tensions. As individual pieces of stained glass, these excerpts were loosely related to each other, as there wasn't a structure before. Conducting qualitative research in many ways is a journey of serendipitous events. While I faced a challenge in my dissertation analysis in my fourth year in the doctoral program, yet I was very passionate about the topic I was pursuing, I had to figure out a way to overcome the challenge and resolve the situation for a productive outcome. It was in the midst of the struggle then that I recalled that in my first year as a doctoral student, I had attended a talk held at UT Austin given by Linda Putnam, professor of organizational communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She came to UT as part of a visiting scholar series in organizational communication and gave a lecture on dialectics (Putnam, 2004). The theoretical conceptualization of dialectics is that some tensional forces exist to bind two polar opposites together in one entity (Fairhurst, 2001). The insight was that

certain phenomenon could only exist in dialectics and/or dialectical tensions (Gibbs, 2009). If the tensions are resolved, then what hold the phenomenon together falls apart.

What occurred to me next was the realization that perhaps the tensions and struggles in the CI enterprise were not necessarily negative. There was simply the reality of the CI movement. The tensions and struggles exist because on the surface, they appear to be multiple demands placed on CI stakeholders concurrently. These demands also appeared to require CI stakeholders to play multiple roles, what may be interpreted at first glance as an unfair or unreasonable situation. However, upon deeper considerations, it was also quite impossible to imagine a complex phenomenon such as CI could emerge without any tensions. Therefore, with the metaphor of the stained glass window, I began pairing existing codes (from open coding) into an 'either-or' and/or 'both-and' fashion (through axial coding), similar to how an artist begin to match up colors and shapes of colored glass pieces for a rough sketch of the art.

Once I applied the theoretical concept of dialectical tensions as the structure for the CSCW article, the pieces of stained glass came together to form a macro view that actually made sense (via to selective coding). The insight at that point became that "funding infrastructure as the communication arrangements of institutions, individuals, and ideologies that must be coordinated in order for cyberinfrastructure to be brought into existence. These communication arrangements include salient motivations of and financial compensations for individuals who engage in them. They also comprise explicit policies about funding, as well as implicit ideologies about science embedded in funding, as held by institutions involved in these communication arrangements" (p. 283).

The analysis of tensions was an emotional one. It was emotional because I realized that the men and women who ushered in the vision of CI sacrificed a lot in their professional and personal lives. First, I learned that many were drawn to CI by accidents, but they were excited about what CI could become, and how the world will be better when CI is mature. Second, in order to become a part of the CI enterprise, many of the scientist and technologists compromised their professional careers, as described earlier in tensions 3 and 4. It is a subtle yet powerful realization—developing CI as the technology to do breakthrough science is not

directly doing breakthrough science, therefore, regarded as unrewarded service in traditional academia. In other words, the scientists who were involved in CI development invested time and energy in technology development with time and energy that they could have, and arguably should have, been invested in publishing articles about their science, with or without CI as part of their work. However, if the men and women of early CI development focused solely and selfishly on their individual careers in order to eliminate the tensions they experienced, CI would not have emerged.

The theoretical concept of dialectics and dialectical tensions was true, and it can be applied to the case of cyberinfrastructure. What appeared to be messy, conflicting, struggling, and tensional are not necessarily negative forces that should be resolved. Instead, these are necessary forces to give birth to CI and subsequently hold the enterprise of CI together. The insight was a breakthrough. It gave me a drastically different perspective to analyze my data. Coupled with the metaphor of a stained glass window for the qualitative writing process, the article came together in a clear and productive way. Larry and I concluded in the article, "the arc of a bridge whose opposing forces give it strength and the hollow body of an acoustic guitar whose frame holds it apart are both examples of parts that give strength to the structure" (Kee & Browning, 2010, p. 285).

It is difficult to identify a blind spot, as a blind spot is by definition is blind to the perceiver, at least at the moment of initial perceiving. However, with the help with a mirror in the right position, a blind spot can be revealed and a new insight emerged. The blind spot that was not in my view was how tensions can be productive forces. Without this perspective, I kept plugging through the data analysis while feeling confused and lost. I was drowning in data because the superficial view of conflicting tensions did not and/or was insufficient to explain why funding continue pouring in and a messy enterprise keeps emerging. My participation of Q-Camp in August 2009 and the recollection of Putnam's lecture couldn't have been more timely in shaping the analysis into a published article.

The writing of the article was a powerful experience. It taught me to recognize that there are always two sides of the same coin, in that there are always (at least) two versions of any phenomenon under

investigation. While one version (or the easy version) of the story may be negative, if I take the time to flip the coin over and/or look underneath a coin in its original position, I may be able to, or I can always find the positive side of every seemingly negative experience. The search for an alternative story is a conscious choice.

Another important lesson that I learned was to be okay to feel stuck, and to trust the qualitative analysis and writing process. Feeling stuck isn't always a bad thing. It simply means an alternative perspective was needed to generate a breakthrough. Because I simply started writing the dialectical perspective, and during the writing process, the insights became more clear to me, which guided the subsequent data-(re)analysis. I have learned to begin writing as soon as possible, and allow the writing process to help me piece the excerpts together into a coherent story, and a sensible explanation of a seemingly contradictory phenomenon.

The stained glass metaphor from Q-Camp 2009 was a powerful lesson. Qualitative Camp has made an impact on me as a researcher, as the learning points from camp helped me develop my own research after camp. This experience also taught me to be not afraid of messy data. The metaphor of a stained-glass window is a perfect one.

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12

Walking out of the Shadow

Observations at Qualitative Camp during my PhD Journey

Songming Feng

Prior to the Qualitative Camp: Walking into the Shadow

I entered a PhD program in August 2014 in the research unit called "Media, Management and Transformation Center" at the Jönköping International Business School of Jönköping University in Sweden. My initial proposed research topic for the dissertation was content marketing, native advertising, or branded content, which is a new format of marketing communications in the digital age. The Center liked my proposal, which fit its core research themes, and it was a contributing reason

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for their selecting me. In the first year in the PhD program, I read literatures in media management and organization studies, partially because of the doctorate courses I took and partially because the Center focuses on such domains.

From the beginning of the PhD program, I chose to take a qualitative approach without any hesitation because I love words and culture, and was very dreadful of numbers. Statistics or number crunching is not something I am good at or enjoy doing. My gut feeling told me that I would do better in qualitative research, which has a strong humanistic orientation and flair. I got to understand that qualitative methods have these five characteristics based on the literature (Ger et al., 2019; Hirschman, 1986; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

1. Immersion-in-reality as the researcher has closeness to the phenomenon and reality;
2. The researcher is a human instrument putting intellectual efforts in the research process;
3. The researcher starts from a context as a particular case to build theories and makes it work for him or her;
4. As an alternative route of discovery, qualitative approach is full of creativity;
5. The researcher has the opportunity of developing grounded theories.

However, despite these five assets, I had the suspicion that this approach was inferior to the quantitative method, as it may not be counted as science in terms of its content and form. Also, the qualitative approach sounds very tricky in terms of how to do it. How to do qualitative research in marketing is not only a challenge for me, but also for students on the Bachelor and Master levels in my business school. In some marketing courses I taught, it was often very hard to explain and impart the tenets, logics, and techniques of doing qualitative research to students even though it seemed to be easy upfront.

In July 2015, at the end of my first year in the PhD study, I was reading some academic materials. I bumped into a qualitative method book entitled "Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing" edited by Russell Belk (2006). The editor and the contributors belong to the

academic paradigm called "Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)".[1] I was caught up by the cultural and humanistic approach in dealing with marketing phenomena in this community. By tracing the grapevine, I saw some role model type of research projects and scholars, and was amazed and inspired by their ways of thinking, interpretive approaches, research topics, and writings. In my heart, I said, "I'd like to do such research and write such stuff in the future." After the summer, I started to take doctorate courses in this paradigm and read more and more in this field. I did not realize that I was stepping into an unfamiliar, tough, and risky landscape.

To begin with, this paradigm is hard to read and to write into, especially for non-Anglo-Saxon researchers. The more I read about CCT, the more I was at a loss as for how it can help tackle the original research topic for my dissertation. The chunk of studies in this paradigm focus on consumers or consumption, concerning such issues as consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, the sociocultural patterning of consumption, and so on (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The paradigm is too hard for me to grapple with, as it is philosophical and the language for writing CCT pieces is highly rhetorical (Bajde & Gopaldas, 2019). What's worse, this paradigm was not within the expertise areas of my two supervisors, nor was there any faculty in my institution savvy about it. There is another fact—CCT was initiated and dominated by American and European scholars. As a junior researcher coming from China, I realized later it was so foreign and difficult a circle to break into. The reason lies in its Euro-American centric orientation (Cronin & Fitchett, 2022). Actually, people in this circle are quite open or welcoming. Published studies are mostly about the cultures of the Anglo-Saxon world, literally phenomena in the US and Europe. In the two CCT external doctorate courses I took, I was

[1] Here is a description of this research paradigm on its official website: Adopting the constructivist ontology and the interpretivist epistemology, the interdisciplinary research field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) emerged in the 1980s, "oriented around developing a better understanding of why consumers do what they do and why consumer culture takes the forms that it does. Theorists focus on understanding the interrelationships between various material, economic, symbolic, institutional, and social relationships, and their effects on consumers, the marketplace, other institutions, and society. Researchers typically draw from and build on theories rooted in sociology, anthropology, media studies and communications, history, literary criticism and semiotics, gender and queer theory, cultural studies, and marketing" ("CCT website,", 2019).

the only Asian student. When you look at published positivist research articles in marketing, you can see a lot of Chinese authors bearing the last names of "Li," "Chen," "Wang," and so on. But in the CCT literature, Chinese names are scarce.

When I realized all these pitfalls of CCT, it was too late. It was the second year in my PhD study, when I was supposed to submit the research proposal for the dissertation. This paradigm could not solve the original topic of content marketing, which is very advertising related and managerial in nature. So, there was a misfit between my originally chosen research topic and this academic paradigm. I could not find the nexus. I literally abandoned the original topic and chose to stay with the CCT paradigm and I selected another research context and topic appropriate for CCT.

The new context is called "The Kingdom of Crystal" ("*Glasriket*" in Swedish), an industrial region and a tourist destination located in southern Sweden, where glass factories have been making consumer glass products with a craft mode for more than one hundred years. I roughly knew this context had elements of culture, tourism, design, marketing, and so on, compatible with CCT. The process was backward—I kind of selected it first, and then managed to get something of out of it anyway for a dissertation. This approach gave me a hard time as I grappled with carving out a theoretically plausible research purpose. Such a selection fundamentally disrupted and changed everything: theories, concepts, research questions, and so on, a huge departure from the original topic. The change was so huge that my supervisors were not able to shift their mindset and at some point, they still talked about content marketing with me even though I already dug into the new context. I started a detour in my PhD journey, which brought struggles, frustrations, and learnings in the following years. My act of shifting gears almost crippled my PhD.

May 2016, the Qualitative Camp: Moments of Enlightenment in the Shadow

The Autumn of 2016 was the expected time point when I was supposed to submit the research proposal. It was already the Spring, and I just selected the new research context of *Glasriket* and the theoretical concept of storytelling. Before the Qualitative Camp course, according to the requirement, I submitted a seven-page brief proposal about the research topic. I took the course as an opportunity of testing the research proposal and getting some feedback and help from the faculty members. At this point, I had not mastered the trick of dovetailing a research topic with paradigms, theories, purpose, and context to formulate a research project. I kind of treated the Camp as a savior.

My memory of the Camp is correlated to the physical environment of Norway, the town of *Bodø*, and the *Lofoten* Islands. On May 29, 2016, with all the anxieties, uncertainties and hope, I departed Jönköping, Sweden and flew to Norway. I was not sure of many things. I was nervous and uncertain about the future of the dissertation project. I thought that the Camp might help me in some ways. I landed in the coastal town of Bodø on a Sunday afternoon. This is the city where the hosting university, the Bodø Graduate School of Business at Nord University, is located. The town is famous for fishing, the Northern lights, mid-night sun, and its coastal line. It was definitely a break away from the normal life at my home university. For the first night, I lived in a small hotel in downtown Bodø. After checking in, I strolled on the street, passing the neighborhoods of residential houses, a shopping center which was closed on a Sunday, and the harbor. The scenery was so beautiful but empty with few people outside. I walked around, enjoyed the cool breeze and the summer sunshine, and savored a little bit loneliness. The architectural styles of the buildings were different from those in Sweden. Everything felt foreign to me. An analogy sank in me: my embracing of the whole thing of research in the PhD program was similar to my encountering with the new Nordic environment, whether it was Sweden or Norway. Everything was intriguing but foreign to me. The scenes I saw on the street of Bodø reminded me other episodes of my life in Europe doing the PhD that hinted to me

of the mismatch: the course about marketing and experience at Gothenburg University in Sweden, the course about CCT theories in Odense, Denmark, time with doctorate students from the US and other European countries, those professors who are Anglo-Saxon, various research topics and contexts discussed by them, and the continental philosophers and thinkers in the CCT canon of reading. The pressure of all these cultural features spoke to me. I could hear a silent voice saying to me: "no, it is wrong for you pick CCT." I was an outsider and drifter, an Asian novice wanting to pick up a paradigm using a cultural approach to do research in a European setting.

At 2:00 pm on the next day, I boarded a coastal steamer that departed the Bodø harbor for the Lofoten Islands, where the Camp would kick off. Once on the boat, we were implicitly induced into and were immersed in an experiential trip to consume tourist offerings as well as educational offerings. We were asked to do a mini ethnographic observation about what was going at the ship for three hours. On that night, we arrived at the Lofoten Islands and stayed in a hotel, which consisted of small red cottages. In the hotel, during the daytime, I saw that the sea water and the sky were so blue. The mountains in the backdrop were dark black with deep blued rocks, which are probably unique to the arctic region, as I had never seen mountains in such a color. In the lectures, we were introduced to grounded theories, narratives, storytelling, field note taking, field observation, and qualitative data gathering and analysis.

There were around twenty doctorate students, and around seven faculty members. We had our dinner each night in the restaurant in the hotel. We were probably the only guests, and each dinner was especially cooked by the same chef. In the end of each dinner, faculty members would perform something. One night, professor Øystein Jensen from a Norwegian university sang a Norwegian favorite song, while playing the guitar himself to accompany his singing. One key sentence served as the theme of the song, repeated by Øystein, and it struck me—"go to town…go to town…" I saw the imagery evoked by the song—a lonely Norwegian man saying to himself that he needed to go to the downtown to hook up with people. The melody and tone were a little bit sad as they conveyed a sense of loneliness. In Nordic countries, in winter or

weekends, everywhere was empty. I found myself in the same status spiritually as the lonely man in the song.

Most of the faculty members were from the Bodø Graduate School of Business, and a few of them were from Sweden and the US. In a lecture, we were guided to micro-analyze their published journal articles, which convinced me that "it is doable," "it can be fantastic scholarly undertaking," "it can be brilliant thoughts." Dr. Larry Browning, Professor of Organizational Communication from an American university, was a tall man with a typical Southern accent in the US. He was the narrative guy and grounded theory guy. He coached us on how to do narratives and field observation. Norway has benefited from the oil-and-gas industry. He and other faculty members in the Camp completed a few book projects using narratives to reflect on the social reality shaped by the oil-and-gas economy in Norway (e.g., Sørnes et al., 2014). They did interviews to write stories about the Arctic High North region in Norway. With an ethnographic approach, the narratives reveal how petroleum and development have impacted the regional economy and culture. After the course, I listened to Dr. Browning's podcasts about narratives. The way in which he talks makes the content very easy to grasp and interesting. In the podcasts, he also mentions his biography as a researcher, including a stint as a professor at the US Air Force Academy. His style of talking shows that he is really into research and the areas of his expertise, and that it is a very natural thing for him to do research for life. I was inspired by the faculty members, who were trustable, exemplary, and fun. The way in which they talked and carried out academic work demonstrated a spirit of being calm, dedicated, and humorous. I could tell that they enjoyed the academic life. Their personalities as a human being and happy and accomplished scholars helped alleviate my stress and uncertainties.

In addition to faculty members, I enjoyed the close-knit socializing with a small group of fellow students. We did not just talk about formal, research related topics. On one afternoon, we were set free to do some leisure activities. I biked with several students on that sunny afternoon on the Lofoten Islands, exploring a local town and the magnificent sceneries in the arctic. While biking, we discussed about how we, as doctorate students, could carry out our study and life. One female PhD student from Norway, Anne, told me that as a mother she set a principle that she never

worked after office hours. This strategy forced her to be super-efficient and concentrated in the office during the daytime. Before hearing her strategy, I had thought PhDs should have no life and should work around the clock. All the attendees were in the early stage of doing a PhD, working on developing the research proposals for their dissertations. In one session during which faculty members critiqued the submitted research proposal from each attendee, I could see that no one was having an easy life, and each one had lots of problems to fix. I got some emotional support from these like-minded fellows, who shared their perspectives about their PhD life. The interpersonal interaction and collegiate spirits boosted my mood and confidence.

The Summer and Autumn of 2016: Facing off inside the Shadow

When I returned back to Jönköping, Sweden, I worked on writing the research proposal for the dissertation and submitted it in that August to my supervisors. The proposal was about *Glasrike*t, centering on the concept of storytelling. I had paid two visits to the region, and frankly speaking, there were not much stories or narratives there. The concept of storytelling was something forced onto the context. On October 13, 2016, I had the meeting with my two supervisors to hear their judgment about the research proposal. For the meeting, I dressed myself in a newly bought beige-colored business casual suit to try to boost my spirit a little bit. We three were sitting in the office of the deputy supervisor. It was an embarrassing meeting, filled with the awkwardness in formulating a research project and explaining it. As expected, the proposal was a total flop. It did not hold up as a cohesive story—the research purpose, theories, concepts, research context, method, and so on, did not dovetail with each other and hold together. They might be surprised at how the original topic changed from content marketing to this glass region thing. My main supervisor said "various parts in the literature review run into nowhere" and she furrowed her brows asking "why postmodernism? … why transformation? … why consumer culture theory?" Then she asked,

"what is the purpose? How can this study be applied to other contexts? What broader significance does it have?" I tried to explain. I confess that at that moment I did not know the purpose and had not carved out a clear picture of this project. While mostly listening, my deputy supervisor threw a simple comment: "I am lost by you." Yes, I myself had been lost long before this meeting. Then, my main supervisor asked, "what are the main theoretical concepts?" I said "craftsmanship, materiality, storytelling." The deputy supervisor commented with a sigh: "these are much harder." What he meant was that this new topic entails such theories making it a much harder project than the original topic of content marketing. I hoped they had yelled at me earlier and stopped me from sliding into CCT. But they were nice and gracious people. After the meeting, I had to redo the research proposal to fix the problem. From mid-October to mid-November, I focused on rewriting the research proposal. It was a "make or break" moment. If I did not pass it, my PhD would be in deep trouble. I was angry with myself, and I did not care about anyone or anything. I dropped the "storytelling" concept decisively as it did not fit and instead focused on the concept of "craftsmanship." I wrote it out of the most genuine motivation in my heart and wrote it in an assertive spirit. October and November belong to the autumn season in Sweden which changes to be gloomy, with a lot of rains in my city. I wrote on those dark and rainy nights, accompanied by my lovely dog, who sometimes came to me and used its two front legs to clutch my knees to remind me that it was time to go to bed. The draft submitted in November was approved, a surprising but consoling result to me.

Then, when I applied for doctorate credit hours tied to the Qualitative Camp course at my home institution, I got a little bit trouble with getting the full credit points. The course was designed as being worth 7.5 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits. When I submitted all the application materials for the credit points, the head of research in my school spotted some items in the reading list (e.g., Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which were the same as those listed in another general doctorate course about Qualitative Method I had taken in my home institution. She asked me to explain whether the Camp was significantly different from the one offered at my home school. I provided a one-page long statement explaining that this

course was not generic and included an experience-based track of doing ethnographic field observation. The effort was in vain, and they decided to discount the total number of the credit hours from 7.5 ECTS to 5 ECTS. I never complain about this twist, as the value afforded by this course is far more important than the credit points on the paper. There is an old saying in Chinese "good things are often obtained through overcoming many obstacles."

The Three Years Post the Qualitative Camp: Walking out of the Shadow

Though my research proposal was defended in March 2017, I was still not clear about the purpose of the dissertation. I started going to the field to gather and sense data, and at the same time tapped into various literatures. The field work means the seeing, sensing, touching, hearing, and tasting about the context (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994). I did first-hand participant observation of glass making, glass design, tourism spots, and factory stores as retailing outlets. I attended glass industry meetings and a glass-blowing class. I visited museums, galleries and a trade show. It was a process of doing while fixing and learning by doing.

While having difficulties on the theory/academic front, the front on the research context turned out to be a soothing factor as it was an extremely accessible and friendly research context. I have heard stories from other PhD students about a not-so-nice research context—how difficult it was to obtain access to an organization and how limited the data they could get even though they got the so-called access. The glass companies and key players (designers, marketing managers, craftsmen, and photographers) were very friendly and approachable to me. For some informants, I even built close relationships with them and enjoyed the luxury of calling them anytime for getting answers for extra questions when new questions emerged and research directions were adjusted. I kept a research diary, logging insights and ideas, potential lines of inquiry, directions to explore, flashes of thoughts, unresolved problems, and

helpful thoughts or concepts from the literature. It shows the process by which I came to understand the phenomenon.

The field work stimulated thinking. Insights, findings and epiphanies were emergent. In carrying out the research, I worked to nail down on the purpose and research questions. In the beginning of the dissertation project, I was not sure what exactly to explore about *Glasriket*, which has multiple dimensions to be explored: craft mode of making glass, design, tourist experience, marketing, branding, and so on. Then, my attendance of the 2017 Nordic Utility Glass Conference held at Vaxjö, Sweden enabled a point of departure. In the conference, I met Anders, the son of John Selbing, who served the glass company Orrefors during 1932–1973 as an in-house photographer. Anders gave a presentation about the photography of glass done by his late father. After the conference, we followed up and I visited Anders' home at Linköping, Sweden, where a family archive stores lots of photograph negatives and other textual materials. After some deep contemplation on this dissertation project, I told my supervisors "why not focusing on just one niche thing—the photography at *Glasriket*—as I always love visuals and I had the luxury of accessing ample and special data?" This decision was a watershed moment in my dissertation journey. So, it is a scenario of "the topic found me instead of vice versa."

The research purpose evolved—it started from craftsmanship. Then, it included photographic images representing craftsmanship. Then, after the final seminar in August 2019, I decided to include a pillar theory—authenticity, which can help carve out a clearer theoretical story and bridging the research context to theoretical debates in the realm of marketing. The title of the dissertation became "Craft production in The Kingdom of Crystal (Glasriket) and its visual representation: Constructing authenticity in cultural/marketing production."

While carrying out the research work for my dissertation, I did not totally abandon the old topic of content marketing. I believed what I had accumulated in reading academic literature and industry information under that topic should not be wasted. In the first year, I did a review paper about content marketing and touched upon "business model" under this phenomenon. In 2017 (the 3rd year), I worked with my deputy supervisor, whose core expertise was in advertising and marketing

communication, to develop a journal article. We followed the tricks of doing publication—finding a new and emergent stream of conversation (in this case, native advertising was a quite new topic, and content marketing is similar to native advertising), bringing a new perspective into the conversation (using business model as a conceptual lens to understand the production of native advertising), and submitting to a special issue call (this will save time and mean a bigger chance of being selected). We hit it and our paper got published with a quick turn-around on the *Journal of Interactive Advertising* (Feng & Ots, 2018) in 2018, the 4th year in my PhD. It was my first ever academic journal article. By delivering it, I redeemed myself a little bit for the old topic of content marketing. This is also a turning point in my PhD journey as I tasted the beauty of doing academic work and the result boosted my confidence for doing research.

Meanwhile, everything of my dissertation came along. In June 2020, I successfully defended my dissertation and moved on to a new chapter of my career and life. During the final couple of years, ideas for journal articles emerged naturally. After the defense, I embarked on the new journey of writing several new journal papers with my supervisors.

Stage beyond the Dissertation Defense: Looking Back at the Shadow

My dissertation touches upon *craft practice*, and academic research is also a kind of craft. I got this analogy from the interview with a glass designer, who said that for her designed objects, mostly she did not know what it would look like in the beginning. She usually starts from drawing different sketches to express something. She said, "it is the process that drives the creativity and result." Yes, my dissertation project also repeated this logic—the purpose, research questions, theories, methodological techniques, and findings evolved and emerged during the process. I underwent the iterative process among the three elements in qualitative research: literature, empirical data and my own theorizing (Belk et al., 2012). Work in the field went hand in hand with reading literatures. For

the academic literatures I read repeatedly over the years, my understanding of them improved—I developed better understanding of what theoretical story a journal article really tells, how it cites other materials, how it is being cited, how it uses theories, how it is written, and mostly importantly *how I can use it*. In dealing with empirical data, I learnt how to make use of concepts and vocabularies from extant literatures to view, sense, and interpret the phenomenon under study.

My PhD journey was filled with twists, struggles, uncertainties, fear of failure, self-doubt, anger, and excitement. But the process twisted for better clarity and cohesiveness of the dissertation. I adjusted the research and methods based on practicalities and contingencies. It is a process of intuitive learning; researching the visual image was not what I planned originally, but it became a core focus of the dissertation. I have had missteps, which tortured me when there was the discord or schizophrenia among research context, theory, method, and my output. But it is not the fault of any academic paradigm or other persons, but more about me—whether I know myself, that is, my research interests, my capabilities (what is tenable to me), what the institutional environment can offer, and who I want to be. I gained confidence in myself as an early career researcher and got to know what to do in the future. I experienced moments of epiphany or revelation like flashes of insight. Now, I see the "whys" of everything. All these experiences echo the notes I took during a lecture in the Camp: "So many options …. make a choice, go for it, pick one, argue for it, do it. There is no absolute way."

Back in May 2016 when I participated in the Camp, I kind of expected it to be a savior. In retrospect, this external course did not provide overt and immediate solutions to my impasse at that point on the face value. It has helped me in subtle ways that I can only see at a much later point. As a memorable event in the middle of my PhD journey, it has offered me intellectual stimulation, guidance, confidence, and camaraderie. It is ironic that I forewent "storytelling" as the theory for my dissertation, but the Camp gave me another avenue of writing real stories about my journey.

I have given an autoethnographic account of attending the Camp and mastering qualitative methods through my PhD journey. It shows how I internalized relevant techniques and a process of maturing and becoming

a researcher in non-positivist ways of doing research. This chapter joins autoethnographic accounts of doctoral students that explicitly discussed and reflected on lived experiences of junior researchers learning to do research (e.g., Weatherall, 2018). My experience is not idiosyncratic as it repeated the typical patterns of qualitative research as pointed out by veteran scholars—continuous evolvement in an emergent process (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988); professional and personal activities entangled in a continuous process of inquiring (Marshall, 1999).

The literature on qualitative method normally provides principles and steps laid out as impersonal, formal, and prescriptive rules on the surface, but seldom real lived experiences of how a researcher learnt, adopted, and practiced them. My contribution to the literature on qualitative methods lies in that my account illustrates what lies beneath those principles through the narration of how an early researcher came to master qualitative methods during a period of the doctoral life and how I experienced it as a person.

My autoethnographic account may provide learning to other doctoral students or neophyte researchers trying to master qualitative methods. The following seven tips are tacit and informal, sort of like tricks of trade. First, you'd better align (rather than diverting) your dissertation project with the forte of your supervisors. Second, don't shift gears ("gear" refers to academic domains and core theories) in the middle of the dissertation project process. Third, you need to be conscious that research with qualitative methods is an iterative and formative process. Fourth, don't worry too much about the absence of a clearly defined purpose and research questions in the beginning. Fifth, with a theoretically informed mind, be brave to go to the field to encounter and gather the data to get it started. Sixth, remember that the process can be messy rather than formulaic, rationalist, and masterful. Seventh, be assertive to become your own methodologist and your own theorist as encouraged by Mills (1959).

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13

Finding the Human Story in a Cultural of Secrecy

Tom McVey

I found myself not long ago at the crucible culmination of pushing—and often slogging—through a doctoral program. I needed to officially declare the research plan for my dissertation, and then make it so. My dissertation was a collection of reflective narratives from people working for technology companies on special projects. The analysis looked at communication and work patterns as people interacted and handed work off to others with different perspectives and in different roles. The narratives were a collection of stories about when these interactions occasionally went well, but more often when they did not. The thing about talking to people in the tech sector is they demand a firm and unforgiving expectation of secrecy around all aspects of their work. As such, two challenges stand out in my mind as obstacles I needed to overcome when collecting and writing these stories.

The first challenge is creating a space in which people are both comfortable talking about their relationships and human interactions, and

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reassured that any proprietary and confidential information will remain undocumented and safe. There are time-honored research techniques for doing this that we all learn in our first methods classes: (1) check drafts with participants so that they can call out anything that needs to be redacted; (2) validate that the story rings true and was accurately captured; (3) providing drafts for participants to share with their leadership to confirm that nothing confidential is being disclosed; (4) formalizing documentation that promises confidentiality and codifies the actions above to reassure both the researcher and the participant. A summary sentence for these four features.

Beyond these four guides, an additional aspect to confidentiality that is harder to articulate and teach is how to broach the idea of participating in an interview in the first place, and how to gain agreement to sit with the researcher and document their stories. While this is always true whenever the subject is of a personal, delicate, or sensitive nature, collecting stories from the tech sector—especially with people working on the development of new technology and tools—carries an extra heavy burden. In this area, participants are contractually bound by clear dictates of keeping proprietary information secret, with the severe punishments for violating this being clearly detailed and documented. Therefore, the ultimate challenge when asking for work stories from people in this culture is convincing potential participants to listen long enough to hear and be reassured by the techniques available for protecting sensitive data.

The second challenge I needed to overcome as I set about collecting and documenting narratives for my dissertation was in the writing itself. The goal was to capture the heart of the narrative—the situation, complication, struggle, and resolution of the narrative—even after the central details and context have been removed. I was cautioned as a graduate student to anticipate that my research plan ran the risk of unwilling participants and stories that were reduced to vague generalities without the context of a solid, rich framework; that I would lack enough cohesive stories to be able to provide a satisfactory analysis. This was good advice. At my advisor's direction, I included both an option B and C in my research plan in case my foray into the tech sector did not pan out. I am happy to report that Plan A worked. I was able to get participants from a broad range of roles willing to share a rich collection of stories. I was also

able to filter out the confidential and proprietary details while still retaining stories that both stood up to analysis and captured the attention of my committee members and other readers.

To be fully transparent, I have a background that gave me more access to and an easier time engaging with people in the tech sector than a researcher without these connections would have. That said, I still faced strong trepidation from potential participants as soon as I broached the topic of recording interviews about their work for my academic research which would be included in my published dissertation. My time in Norway helped prepare me for these conversations and the interviews that followed. In this chapter, I will describe my background and the access I had leading up to my dissertation research, share stories about the experiences I had in Norway that also helped prepare me for the challenges of engaging people in the tech sector, and then reflect on how these elements came together and the results that followed.

For most of my adult life, I have had friends working in the tech sector. I moved to Austin, Texas, after finishing my undergraduate degree with a group of several college friends. We had become a tight-knit social group at the Midwestern University we attended, and we all moved to Texas together after we graduated with an assortment of liberal arts degrees and were sorting out what we should do next. About half of us, myself included, began working in public service at various nonprofit and public agencies. The rest of us took jobs in the private sector. Many in the second group took entry-level positions at different tech companies, of which there are many in Austin. Over the years, the friends matriculated their way up the hierarchy in these companies and some moved on to more senior positions in other tech companies. Meanwhile, during the time I spent completing the coursework of my doctoral program, I also worked on campus at one of the organized research units at the University of Texas at Austin. As I maintained friendships with my tech-sector friends, I came to know their various work friends and was increasingly included in their fun adventures and shenanigans. It led to an interesting dynamic in which I was a social insider, while simultaneously a professional outsider, who nonetheless interacted well across multiple overlapping social networks in the tech world. For people immersed in their work-centered social circles, I was someone very different who operated

outside of their hierarchy even at the same time being socially accepted as one of the group.

Speaking in euphemism and carefully constructed phrases that conveyed meaning to a select few was commonplace in my interactions with these groups. There was a continual need to mask details about people, projects, and scope of work from each other while still sharing stories about the job. This masking of deep content went beyond obscuring details from people who worked for other companies and carried over into conversations with people from the same company who were not working in the same area or on the same project. These conversations were often so peppered with project code names, nicknames for key people working on a project, and inside terminology that I have seen others who do not work in the tech sector shake their heads at the seemingly incoherent wave of technobabble they encountered when they went into the kitchen at a party with the simple goal of getting another beer. A common example might be something like, "Did you hear that Thunderball went red this week? It's because the redhead and the tall guy couldn't agree on a deployment strategy and nobody told Marketing! And SPQA say they need a minimum of two more weeks for UAT, but the comms are going out on the old schedule. Nobody is even thinking about what that is going to mean for Goldfinger!" I later learned that these verbal habits became so practiced that they often spoke in this shared semi-code even when no "outsiders" were present. It was certainly an asset to have years of preparation absorbing and practicing these cultural norms before inviting people in these circles to be researched. At the same time, I also ran the risk of violating often-unstated cultural norms simply by suggesting the idea of being interviewed about their work.

As I geared up to start asking people in my tech social circles to participate in my dissertation research—having already discussed the loosely formed idea with a few—a new twist happened in my life. Shortly after I completed the coursework phase of my studies, I applied for and landed a position as a project manager for a large technology company. I had become a full-fledged member of the "inner circle" of tech people. It was in this new role that I confirmed my assumption that the coded shorthand in which people spoke of their work did indeed extend beyond my living room and into the broader professional culture. This new position

took me even deeper into a world I was already familiar with in many ways, and I felt even more strongly that this was the milieu I wanted as the background of the participants and their narratives I would explore for my dissertation. In my new role, I had a broader sphere of access to potential participants, but my invitations for them to participate in an outside study still generated reactions of wanting to be helpful and supportive while also remaining trepidatious about discussing experiences that necessitated speaking in coded language to mask proprietary information. Navigating these waters was made easier by a number of experiences that I had while at qualitative camp in Norway.

A key part of my experience in Norway was being introduced to an unfamiliar environment where I had to immediately learn new cultural norms and establish my place within an unfamiliar community. Qualitative camp in Norway was great for introducing a group of new scholars to qualitative research. Collecting data in an unfamiliar country and culture means there are fewer biases that can affect the researcher's interpretation of events, and it makes many bias-related errors easier to spot. My previous cultural experiences involved growing up in the Midwest and moving to Texas after my undergraduate degree. While I traveled to a few European and Caribbean countries prior to my summer in Norway, it was merely as a tourist moving from one sightseeing spot to the next. My time in Jamaica was largely spent at an all-inclusive resort. I traveled more extensively in Europe, but my experience observing and absorbing other cultures was limited. The summer in Norway cemented for me how easy it is to let bias and assumptions affect one's interpretation of events, and this has remained a note of caution in the back of my mind ever since. My happy hour stories of my time in Norway are peppered with tales of being in and adjusting to an unfamiliar place.

One of these experiences took place during the initial qualitative camp portion of our summer where we were participating in seminars and discussions about using different qualitative methods. This event was designed to prepare us for the summer of research that lay ahead. Our sessions were held at a small hotel and meeting center in the Lofoten Islands on the northern coast of Norway. The owner of the hotel was also the chef, one of the people who checked us in, and the person who joined our impromptu music night jam sessions in the evening. One day a

whaling ship was returning to dock. The crew had a whale on deck and they were doing the initial butchering and preparation. While butchering animals for food was not an unnerving sight for me, given that ranching and hunting is common in Texas and the Midwest, I was struck by this obvious reminder that Norway is a country where whaling is common practice. A fellow American student standing next to me leaned over to the owner and asked with a bit of hesitation in her voice whether we might get to try whale while we were there. The owner nonchalantly asked, "What do you think we've been eating all week? … the meat on last night's pizza? … the meat in yesterday's cream soup? … one of the meats in the sandwiches the day before that?" I couldn't tell if he had a particularly dry wit and was telling her that she had been eating whale with a deadpan delivery that I found amusing, or if he truly didn't see that she was surprised at the thought of eating whale.

Another experience involved my group of fellow American students after we returned to the small dormitory apartments where we lived for the remainder of the summer while we did our research. For the first couple of weeks, we often collaborated to make and share dinners. We sent a couple of students to the grocery store down the street. Along with everything else we were making for dinner they brought back meat (chicken, if memory serves, but it might have been fish) that we planned to cook. Someone opened the package and was immediately detected a foul odor. Convinced that the meat had gone bad, the same two were sent back with the receipt and the meat to get a replacement. They brought back the new package only to have the same results. On their third trip back to the grocery store, the manager talked to them, understood the situation, and explained to these newly arrived Americans that in Norway (and many other countries) meat is packaged in mostly inert gases and the atmosphere inside of a package can be reduced to 3% or less oxygen. It turns out that inert gas packaging extends the shelf life of the meat and protects against discoloration, but it produces a brief odor that quickly dissipates when a package is first opened. The group felt a shared sense of embarrassment and chagrin when we realized our faux pas. It was another early reminder that we were in a different country.

These samples exemplify the multitude of minor disorientating moments that any traveler experiences when they arrive in a new place.

For me, they reinforced lessons about not jumping to conclusions or reflexively filling in blanks with one's own outside experience. As intended, these experiences helped put me in the right mindset for the summer to come, but it also underscored the importance of reflexively observing, learning, and asking questions when faced with the unfamiliar. I put this principle into practice more effectively when interacting with the tech-sector portion of my social circle after I returned from Norway.

In addition to recognizing simple cultural differences and the larger lessons that can be taken from those experiences, there were four experiences that I had in Norway that further cemented the importance of seeking, discussing, and writing about sensitive and protected information. These experiences set more of the stage than I could have realized at the time for my dissertation research with people working in the tech sector.

Historically, I have not always been the most tactful individual in the room when it comes to broaching sensitive topics. I can be the person in the room who is curious about a thing and immediately asks a direct question rather than crafting a more delicate approach. For example, as the American contingent arrived at qualitative camp in the Lofoten Islands, we were told as an aside that there is a sensitive history surrounding the relationship between the peoples of Norway and Sweden. It was suggested that we might want to not start or awkwardly stumble into a conversation about Norway and Sweden. Everyone else nodded sagely and said that they understood. For me, the candle of curiosity was lit. A few days later, after a long day of learning, a large group of us were enjoying a moment of fellowship and camaraderie in a 20+ person hot tub heated by a large wood fire. The hot tub was host to a mix of people from various nationalities. Americans and Norwegians made up the majority, and we also had students from China, Russia, and other European countries. I was emboldened by the conversations of the day and the thought that we are all scholarly adults and reasonable people who are experienced with having open and frank conversations about complex topics. (To be fair, I may have also been emboldened by a bit of aquavit, the drink of choice in Norway.) I was curious, so during a lull in the conversation I spontaneously asked, "I've heard that there is a history of tension between Norway and Sweden. What's that all about?" I don't know how the

question was received, how it would have been answered, or even whether it was clearly heard, because the other American students looked immediately stricken that I had brazenly broached what to them was an utterly forbidden topic. Several of them quickly interjected with different conversational topics and I got a few kicks under the water along with some wide-eyed looks. My take-away from this moment, and it has stayed with me for years, is that I probably had some work to do in mastering the finer social graces of raising and discussing delicate topics. I continued to noodle on this exchange throughout the summer, and it affected how I perceived four key moments that followed during my stay in Norway.

Once the qualitative camp phase was complete and we transitioned to our summer research effort, a small group of us went out regularly in search of different communities with which we could interact and learn more about the people of northern Norway. Our ultimate goal was to find individuals with stories and experiences that would be meaningful additions to our collection of tales from the people of the high north. One of the American students in our group was a quiet young man. He struck me as someone who is serious, thoughtful, and reflective. My instinct was to be more of the extroverted joker of the group and his was the juxtaposition of this persona. I can only remember two occasions when I was able to draw a laugh out of this rather stoic fellow. As we got to know each other, I learned that he came from a strong religious background. I don't know whether or not he was currently religious himself, but I learned that he grew up in a strongly religious household and community where his father was a preacher during his formative years. I was grateful for this knowledge of his experience when a group of us decided to attend Sunday services at one of the larger churches in Bodø. With my recent hot tub experience fresh in my mind, I quickly recognized that I felt out of my depth. My parents rarely took my siblings and me to church, and I was keenly aware of being ignorant about behaviors that other church-goers would take for granted. I took my earlier hot tub lesson to heart and strategically sat next to him when we filed into a pew. My full attention remained locked onto him throughout the service. I mirrored him to the best of my ability: I turned to the pages he did, I tried to say what he did as he said it, I stood and sat when he did, and so

on. I felt like I was on a dance floor trying to learn and do the Texas Two-Step on the fly.

After the service, we went to a room where coffee and biscuits were served. We enjoyed the snacks. We chatted with several people who were curious about the sudden appearance of a group of young American university students in their midst. We stayed to help put away tables and chairs afterwards. We got to meet and chat with the minister and his wife. We spent time simply being in this environment together. Later, after subsequent visits, we got to meet more members of the church. We learned more of the social conventions and the group's idioms and turns of phrase. We became more familiar both in terms of our presence and in our understanding how people in the group interact with each other. Watching, learning, and patiently integrating into a new social group is hardly a revolutionary new idea and, as I write this, I'm concerned that I'm describing something so basic that it will come across as me telling others that water is wet. At the same time, it's important to never assume. All of us have lessons to learn and areas in which we need more personal development. I am reminded of the old slogan that NBC television used to have for their summer rerun season, "If you haven't seen it, it's new to you." This and other experiences in Norway provided a space that opened me up to and reinforced ideas about how to engage with a community: watch, listen, and learn first before immediately engaging people in conversations about my research agenda. Despite this awareness, it still took time to develop expertise in handling delicate situations.

Before our journey to qualitative camp, we were aware that Norway has become one of the wealthiest countries in the world. This is largely due to the vast oil reserves that they started accessing in earnest in the 1960s, and the responsible ways in which Norway limited the rate of oil extraction and then retained and diversified the wealth from oil sales. Oil significantly transformed Norway's infrastructure and their role on the world stage. One of the underlying questions behind our research effort in 2011 was how the rise of oil production since the 1960s has and has not changed the lives and stories of individuals living in the high north. Naturally, I was curious to reach out to people working in the Norwegian oil industry and learn about their perspective. It happened that my fellow students and I were in Norway during the summer of 2011, which means

the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico—considered to be the largest marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry—was in the headlines and an instigator of strong political debate in Norway about the safety and future of oil drilling in the North Sea.

Today, I shake my head a bit at the touch of naiveté I had when I tried to dive into a conversation about the oil industry in Norway and how the growth of the oil production industry had changed the northern culture of Norway. At the time, I felt like I understood the nuances and was prepared to engage in a thoughtful and earnest way. I started by reaching out via one of the email addresses for the office of public relations for BP in Norway. I explained the context for my interest and my reasons for seeking to speak with a BP representative. I thought this would be a perfectly fine approach, and to their credit, BP was prompt in working with me to schedule a phone meeting with one of their public relations staff members. The public relations staffer for BP was understandably cautious and wary about why an American in Norway was calling with questions like these in the wake of the oil spill in the Gulf and the political landscape in Norway. I got a brief list of the enlightened socially conscious programs that BP was engaged in that demonstrated that they were heavily focused on community and economic development and a force for good for the people of Norway. It was the same set of polished pre-approved answers that I would have given had our roles been reversed. Once again, the lesson learned here is not rocket science. I learned that I hadn't done enough research before reaching out. My questions were too vague and open-ended. I hadn't learned enough about their organizational culture or their way of communicating. I hadn't taken the time to establish my bona fides as someone with whom they could engage and feel safe sharing stories while knowing that they would be handled responsibly and respectfully. I doubt that a single summer would have been enough time to accomplish this level of rapport building with a multi-national corporation, but that didn't stop me from trying to tilt at that particular windmill. As the saying goes, we learn by doing.

There is another far more serious and somber example of a time in Norway that drove home the importance of handling sensitive topics with the utmost delicacy. On July 22, 2011, Norway experienced two sequential domestic terror attacks in which 77 people were killed. These

attacks were the deadliest in Norway since World War II and the effect on the communities in which we were living and collecting stories was profound. It felt like it was the only subject of conversation with everyone we interacted for days afterwards. The candlelight march for peace that we joined in Bodø a couple of days after the massacre led to a community gathering of speakers and people expressing their overwhelming sorrow was profound. I was very aware of how delicate this moment was and how disturbed we all were. Many of the conversations that followed fell into similar patterns. Elements included expressions of shock, horror, disbelief, and sadness; questions about whether anyone knew anyone in or affected by the attacks; how everyone was holding up, whether anyone needed anything; and questions of whether and what people thought about the candlelight vigil and community gathering. Conversations then turned to what we had heard in news about the capture, arrest, and prosecution of the attacker. My colleagues and I who were well-versed in academic studies of interpersonal communication could certainly point to a number of academic models that map how these conversational flows go and explain why these conversations flow in the ways that they do. Even so, I was as stricken as the local residents by these events and seeing the aftermath unfold.

These attacks struck the people of Norway in a special way because the idea of terrorist violence perpetuated by a lone bomber or gunman was something far outside of the scope of what Norwegian people had ever needed to consider as an aspect of daily life. My conversations and interactions with others were filled with expressions of shock that this was possible in their home country. Many Norwegians I spent time with talked about how the warm, open, and trusting culture of Norway, particularly in the North, was something special and quintessentially Norwegian. Fear of how this might be diminished in the wake of such violence was pervasive. While I shared in Norway's grief and horror, there was an aspect of my experience which remained that of an outside observer: I was from America where recurring incidents of mass violence were, and continue to be, commonplace. Beyond statistics and quantitative data, this fact was driven home for me by the recurring satirical front page headline that *The Onion* regularly published after each mass shooting: "'*No Way To Prevent This,' Says Only Nation Where This Regularly*

Happens." In a strange way, the knowledge of my unfortunate familiarity with violence of this scale, combined with the social acceptance I had earned through a sincere interest in learning about and respecting the local culture, seemed to open up frank conversations that I might not otherwise have enjoyed. This experience was a building block that later gave me a more nuanced understanding of how to approach the people I knew in the tech sector and leverage my dual status as both insider and outsider to discuss the idea of asking them to participate in my dissertation research.

I spent a good portion of my summer in Norway learning about and adjusting to a new place and culture. I learned the lessons described above, and many more. I could fill a number of seminars (and more than a few happy hours) with tales from that summer. As everything began to coalesce, my paths of getting to know different people and groups led me to an incredible woman who owns and operates an organic farm in northern Norway. I traveled out to her farm with two fellow students to spend a day interviewing her and learning about the farm. One of my companions also hailed from Texas, while the other was a local student attending university in Bodø. The latter was a fortunate addition because it meant we had someone in our party who had a car and could drive us out to the farm and back. During the day, I was able to apply many of the lessons I had learned and I also had the chance to watch my peers in action as we all conducted the interview together.

Our lengthy conversation and subsequent time exploring the farm covered many of the technical details of organic farming. Prior to starting an organic farm, the farmer we interviewed worked in a government agricultural support office providing technical support and guidance for farmers. A fair amount of our conversation was about the technical advice that she would give, how that same technical knowledge informed her decision to run a strictly organic farm in northern Norway, and how she applies those principles in the management of her own farm. I could fill multiple chapters with things we learned that day about the importance of soil composition and how it is measured; how to program the computer system that tracks how much the cattle were eating; when and how to regulate the feed that each animal received; and how to time the cycle of animals between barn and pasture. I watched my two peers absorb

these details, and then turn the conversation back to the stories that they found most compelling. These were stories about how she inherited this farm from her father after his sudden passing, and how she was suddenly faced with a pressing decision to either pursue her idea of running an organic farm on her own or sell the family farm and let that opportunity pass forever. She told us stories about taking on the farm and learning by trial and error some of the more difficult aspects of this new profession. She told us of misadventures learning to drive a tractor over a narrow bridge, dealing with unexpected large rocks when plowing a field, delivering calves in the middle of the night when the birth became unexpectedly complicated, and adapting on the fly when an angry bull got loose and was a terror to others on the farm. She told us about her recent marriage to a man who had been helping her with the farm for years. She told us about her mother who moved in with her to help raise her two daughters while she spent long days that stretched into night running the farm. We were able to draw these stories out by absorbing enough of the technical details and jargon to better understand the full context of her work, while continually steering the conversation back to the more universal human experiences that our interviewee was most excited to share.

The classic stories of perseverance through difficult situations date back to the time of early cave paintings and perhaps before. It is unequivocally human. These are the stories by and large that people both seek and want to share. We sorted out the technical background from the more universal stories, while still using those technical details to fully understand and contextualize the personal journeys. I learned through many edits and rewrites that my chapter became better when I carried that same balance into my writing. I did not know it at the time, but this experience along with the other lessons I took away from my summer in Norway informed how I approached my dissertation and the writing of the technology narratives that it contains.

Looking back, I see ways that my experience in Norway informed my process as I dove into my dissertation. In role-playing games, a character is said to have "leveled up" when they gain enough experience and new abilities that take them to the next stage in their growth as a character. It is fair to say that I "leveled up" a couple of times in Norway when it came to talking to people with whom I was a social insider, but also an outsider.

Echoes of attending church in Norway were in the back of my mind as the snowball method of recruiting participants for my dissertation pushed beyond my established social circle. I had a better sense of how to first learn what I needed in order to establish myself as someone who knew and understood enough about their work and organizational culture to be able to talk to potential participants. I also had a better sense of how to be sensitive and deferential when talking to people about information that was potentially sensitive and proprietary. One of my participants shared his stories from a particularly secret project that his large multinational company ran in partnership with another comparably large company. The product they were building was a big step forward in their field and secrecy was of the essence. By the time we met, the product had successfully launched and was in the public sphere. Even so, I could tell that Quentin (the pseudonym I used) was trepidatious about what parts of the process he should feel OK about sharing, even after establishing that he would have the opportunity to review, validate, vet, and redact anything from the content that he felt should not be disclosed. I also assured Quentin before and during our conversation that I was not interested in the technical details or proprietary information about the project, rather I wanted to learn about the human interactions with his colleagues, his work hand-offs, and most importantly, his stories. It's worth calling out that, to my knowledge, it is unheard of in the qualitative literature that the act of telling a participant what I was not interested in can become a rapport builder. The majority of my participants operate in an environment of secrecy where they only discuss the minimum project details necessary for the conversation at hand and always in a secure space. Articulating soft boundaries for the conversation helped reassure participants that we did not need to delve into those areas they were discouraged from discussing and that were also not at the heart of the research focus that I had going in to the conversations. My recruitment of participants started in my social circle and expanded from there via the snowball method of asking for referrals to others with whom I might be able to meet. The skills I refined in Norway helped me with the nuances of asking for the interview, and my experience interviewing an organic farmer in the high north helped guide my work during the interview itself. I asked Quentin about just enough of the technical details that I

was able to keep up and understand the context of the story. But, I also expressed the most interest and consistently steered the conversation to the human stories that would be examples of those phenomena I was interested in researching. Quentin recounted a great experience where the team members from the other company who were working on this secret project came to the building where Quentin worked. Quentin's space was a multi-building campus. The weather was fantastic and many people were walking between buildings from one meeting to the next while others were working from shady spots outside under the trees between the buildings. The laid-back and casual vibe of the t-shirts and tennis shoes of the employees matched their casual setting. It was a jolt for Quentin when his new colleagues arrived wearing coats, ties, and expensive leather shoes. They hailed from a far more formal and serious professional culture and they stood out as an oddity from the moment they arrived. There was nothing subtle or low-profile about this over-dressed group as they walked through and between the buildings. After the first day, Quentin asked them to all to go casual clothes shopping and to do a better job of blending in to their surroundings. The group went shopping as a group that night and they all came back the next day wearing khaki slacks and short-sleeved Hawaiian-style shirts from Tommy Bahama. The shirts had different prints, but were all the same style and cut. The group still stood out as a collective group, but in an oddly different way. In our interview, I steered Quentin to tell me all about this story and, from there, we dug into the cultural differences between the group and how that affected their interactions and work hand-offs. We got to my main research questions via great stories while de-emphasizing the technical details of the project, which, for my interests, were best treated as background. This also had the effect of relaxing Quentin as it became clear where my interests did and did not lie.

My work with the participants in my dissertation research was made more possible, thanks to the time I had spent learning the cultural norms associated with maintaining secrecy and security through obscurity. There were social risks associated with the possible perception that I was violating these often-unstated cultural norms simply by suggesting the idea of encouraging participants to talk about their work in a way that was

gathering data for research. In my case it worked out well as I tried to handle these situations deftly and as I navigated those cultural norms.

In Norway, my colleagues asked for more details about the angry bull that got loose and the precarious driving of the tractor over a narrow bridge of planks in the roof of a barn. We focused on the stories, which people naturally want to tell, and picked up just enough of the technical details to correctly frame the context of the story. The same was true with Quentin and the Tommy Bahama crew. In both cases, we further strove for this balance in the writing itself. Through these experiences, I found that it was possible to write about narratives that are set in a technical and proprietary setting that emphasizes the stories of human interactions and lessons learned without leaving participants feeling like too much has been disclosed. I learned how to capture the human story—the part that the readers are most interested.

14

Observational Methodology and Ecological Economics

Understanding my Pre-Understanding

Are Severin Ingulfsvann

Introduction

In this autoethnography, I will use the experience from qualitative camp to reflect on how qualitative camp started a process: the process of understanding the role and evolution of my pre-understanding in creating a consistent methodological framework for my thesis. Adams et al. (2022) explains autoethnography by dividing it in auto—ethno and graphy. Auto connects to the reflection of the authors personal experience. Ethno as describing and criticize "cultural beliefs, values, practices and identities" (p. 3) and graphy to the representation of the material. The last one can be a real challenge when writing in a second language.

Ethics; even though the story told is mine, it also involves the other participants and the faculty. Chang (2022) points out that they should be protected. I have chosen to not be specific on who the others were, and after all, I am describing my subjective side. In the work, I have read

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through my thesis, notes from QC, the paper for QC and tried to remember as much as possible about what was going on.

This autoethnography will follow a structure where I start the story before attending Qualitative camp. In this part I contextualize the story, and describe the challenges in the method that will be a theme later. I also explain the idea behind my PhD thesis, and my pre-understanding of what I was about to go into as a researcher. The story then moves to the participation in Qualitative camp, and the discussions that became quite challenging and created a need to examine my own pre-understanding followed by a practical experience of what the pre-understanding really meant. The next section looks at the processes following from Qualitative camp and how I developed my pre-understanding and understanding of what I was doing as researcher, and show how I solved the challenges and found a way to gather and interpret data that was fruitful.

Preparing for Qualitative Camp: "Practicing" the Research Theme

My first memory of Qualitative camp is about the weeks before. Together with four friends from a year at Folkehøgskole,[1] I was at a canoe hike. I have a picture from the hike; I sit in a worn red fleece jacket, a green cap on my head, and a pen in my mouth on a stony shore—reading. Beside me, there is a stack of papers in a cheap, waterproof map case. This was the reading material assigned for qualitative camp. It literally weighed me down, and at the point of the picture I had already carried it in my backpack—already weighing around 50 kg's (with no papers in it), between three lakes. We had planned the hike for at least three years, and the fact that there were just a few days between Qualitative camp and the end of the hike should not be a hindrance for participating in both. As a warm-up for Qualitative camp and the following work with the thesis, this also represented an insight in my own priorities. Carrying a stack of papers

[1] In Norway, and the rest of Scandinavia, we have so called *folkehøgskoler (folk high schools),* these are usually attended by students 19 to 22, they do not have curricula, but they do activities that are close to their heart.

which did not have any useful purpose at a canoe hike was either a syndrome of ambition, or at least trying to be (or pretending to be) a good student.

But surrounded by mosquitoes in the sunset, I tried, reading through excerpts from Whyte's "Street corner Society" and Geertz´ "Notes on the Balinese Cock fight". They were readable in a more storytelling way and showed a different way of presenting research than the drier business and economics literature. I have underlined a sentence in the introduction to street corner society; "There is one thing wrong with such a picture: no human beings are in it". The sentence is important, because it relates to the problem I had decided to use at least three years of life to examine in my PhD.

My PhD was about the change in Norwegian outdoor life—*friluftsliv*[2] . From a frugal activity in accordance with nature to an alienated consumer culture (Ingulfsvann, 2013). Ingebrigtsen and Jakobsen (2007) claimed that the values pushed forward by the economic zone, displaced fundamental values within nature and culture value zones. The point can be boiled down to a critique on how the economic aspects seem to be the most important; people or human beings are understood as consumers, nature as a resource for economic production. No *real* human beings are in it.

The same, although in a different voice, was also put forward in texts within Norwegian *friluftsliv* Ranging from the Deep—Ecology texts by Arne Naess (Naess, [1976] 1999) and Faarlund (1973) philosophical approach to *friluftsliv,* to the early books by the contemporary TV personality Lars Monsen (1998). Their message was the same: the traditional and frugal culture *friluftsliv* had changed. Friluftsliv was seen as a key for a change toward sustainability in the Deep-ecology. But nature had become stage for something else. Instead of being able to be in nature with simple means, more and more specialized equipment was put

[2] Naess and Rothenberg (2001) made a point that the Norwegian word for outdoor life—*friluftsliv*—(literally meaning "free-air-life") could not and should not be translated into outdoor life because there was a distinction in values. Hulmes (2007) has claimed outdoor recreation as a part of consumerism, and Loynes (2007) points out that the British outdoor culture is based on man against nature while the Norwegian idea has been a rich life with limited means as a person in nature (Naess & Rothenberg, 2001). In the references in this note, *friluftsliv* is used in English text and I chose to follow this.

forward as a necessity. According to Faarlund (1973), Naess, [1976] 1999 and Monsen (1998) this took the whole point of *friluftsliv* away. The stress and resource consumption we should avoid becomes partly the point of the activity.

The point of the claims in both ecological economics and *friluftsliv* can be boiled down to a critique on how the economic aspects seem to be the most important; people or human beings are understood as consumers, nature as a resource for economic production. As in Street Corner Society—no *real* human beings are in it. In my mind, it meant we used a lot of resources without achieving what we tried to achieve. It is also about values and how, we as human beings, see our own actions. It is quite a distance between Whyte's corner boys and Scandinavian *friluftsliv* but trying to work out the understanding of people is a common problem. Before continuing to qualitative camp, it is necessary to elaborate on the understanding of people in ecological economics.

I had finished my master in ecological economics the year before attending qualitative camp. For me finding ecological economics was important. I found something I had missed as a business student: a framework for the economy that actually recognizes that we cannot continue an endless consumption on a finite planet, and we as persons are acknowledged to be more than the "economic man". Nyeng (2004) describes ontology as world view and nature of man, what exists and what it means to be a human. It does describe the reality we are a part of, and what makes sense. Pieces were falling in place when we learned about foundations for economics and the critique of conventional economics for being more about models than the real world. Ontology is an important reason for this; the difference between the economic man and "person in community" (Daly & Cobb, 1994) or as Ingebrigtsen and Jakobsen (2009) say, "ecological man", is fundamental. The same holds good with stating that we cannot have infinite growth on a finite planet. To ease a point for the reader, the two "men", the economic and the ecological, are quite different. Note: none of them is real, but they are abstractions to make models in economics work. The economic man does not care about much other than himself, utility from a good is only connected to his/hers experienced utility and nature as a moral object is not a theme, and the ability to take decisions on ethical grounds is missing (Daly & Cobb,

1994). The ecological man, on the other hand, is understood as a person in a community, and the identity is formed by the quality of the relations to others. We have ties and responsibility toward others, future generations, and nature (Daly & Cobb, 1994; Ingebrigtsen & Jakobsen, 2009).

It is in the ontology we find the similarities that make researching *friluftsliv* from an ecological economics point of view interesting, but also problematic, as we shall see later. Both ecological economics and academic texts about *friluftsliv*, like Faarlund (1973), Naess, 1999 have a quite different view of the human being compared to what can be deducted from conventional economics. This relates partly to needs and wants, which in conventional economics are defined as "unlimited", while in ecological economics they are expected to be limited by moral reasons. In the outdoor life culture, we might say that they are purposely restrained by what you can carry, and still have a good day. The view on nature as having mere instrumental value in conventional economics, and inherent value in both ecological economics and outdoor life is also important. I think a traditional work within business would not ask the question if the value zone of economics was about to displace nature and culture, rather how can we replace it even more. This understanding might be a bit provocative; but understanding the train of thought at the time is important. The point I am trying to make is that I had included a synthesis of ecological economics and *friluftsliv* in my world view, my ontology. With this in mind, we shall move over to the days at qualitative camp where I had to question the understanding and world view, how this created challenges for method and research, but turned out to start a fruitful process.

Interlude 1: At Qualitative Camp

A few days after finishing the canoe hike, I met up in the harbor in Bodø and entered the quite luxurious coastal steamer for the trip to Henningsvær, where the venue for QC was that year. The course started immediately with a task at the ship; we should find out "what was going on" on the ship. The task was aimed at observation and interpreting. I remember a short conversation with one of the international PhD students because

we saw that many of the passengers had clothing with the Norwegian flag on. She was wondering if this was normal. I said the only garment I had with a flag was my scout uniform. We then concluded that they were tourists, and, may I ad, seemed to be bored and sedentary—just sitting in chairs and experiencing nature from a passive point in an extremely resource consuming way. Their experience was quite different from how I had spent my past three weeks; only four other people to relate to, shifting between paddling and carrying a canoe, sleeping in a tent and eating quite simple food. These two different ways of spending leisure time is as we shall see important, but before dwelling into that, a few words on what I expected from the course is in demand.

I had sort of an idea that a course in methodology would be quite instrumental, and a fairly straight forward. What we should do, and why? After all; I once attended a short seminar where a professor, mainly working with quantitative data, should give us the recipe for writing a PhD; define research questions, find data, use this and this statistical tool, write up and finish. It was seemingly no discussion on whether all problems could be solved in that way, or even if the implied method would make you avoid problems of interest because they did not fit the frame. Before reading the material—I expected a quite similar experience. I was wrong, but it took some time to realize this.

I think we started to present our own projects on one of the first days at the course. I felt unsecure when I had to present. All the other presentations were (as I saw it) good, the use of English was clear, and they seemed to have everything worked out on the methodological part, able to answer critical comments on foot. I was not there; I did not even have a PowerPoint and I think my presentation was quite bad and naïve. I guess I argued mostly on the differences between ecological economics and conventional economics (as some sort of big bad wolf), linking ecological economics to quite a strict definition on *friluftsliv* and suggesting interviews as method. But then the question from the faculty was, What is *friluftsliv*—are you really sure that is the only valid understanding?

One of the faculty more or less said that people doing *friluftsliv* were tourists—he actually compared the frugal and virtuous *friluftsliv,* with bored rich people on a luxury boat. I was shocked; this was an outrageous, almost an offensive comparison. But then, he also told he had

done research on canoe tourists, people renting a canoe, being advised where to go and how they had experienced a difference between this and their ordinary life. I think he even said I had been a tourist on my canoe hike. In my pre-understanding there was a fundamental line between tourists (as helpless people needing to pay for help to see nature) and the people engaging in real *friluftsliv,* so defined that we should not even translate the word to English (which I of course had several references to. I think there was some discussion over my quite stubborn attitude to actually use *friluftliv* in an English text). I tried some arguments in my head that they might be tourists, but I was not going to do research on tourists, but on people actually doing *real friluftsliv*. Whatever argument I tried out in my head I ended up finding flaws. I could not answer. Having spent quite much time in a political organization I was used to binge good at arguing and winning discussions. But being able to argue in a different language and persuade a faculty who I knew was much better at this, and at least be somewhat polite was not a known situation. At the same time, I was not sure if they saw the differences that ecological economics would demand as I saw it, I also felt it was quite much critique toward the framing and not on the methodological issues.

When I look at my notes over ten years later, I cannot find much of this irritation, but I find a lot of good advice, which is the point of a course. Things should not be completely clear when we start, there should be a learning process throughout a course. Qualitative camp did not give out a predefined route, but rather a map I had to navigate. Being older and knowing better what I do not know, I am able to see that this discussion about *friluftsliv*—was a necessity. It was more helpful than I would be willing to admit at the time. The pre-understanding needed to get a reality check, along two lines, how I understood *friluftsliv,* and also the understanding of human nature. At this point in the story, we leave Q-Camp as a place and start to focus on the learning process it started, and how this guided me through a process that evidently was necessary to finish the PhD thesis. I needed to understand my own pre-understanding and how this affected me as researcher.

Interlude 2: Understanding my Own Pre-Understanding and Role as Researcher

We all have pre-understandings. I had developed my problem statement, as described earlier, from a sort of double critical position, ecological economics versus the conventional and *friluftsliv* versus the consumer society. There is an opposition toward modern consumer culture in both. This led to a pre-understanding where the demarcation line between *friluftsliv* and *not—friluftsliv* was very strict.

Eide and Lindberg (2006) advise that the researcher must be aware of his own pre-understanding and clarify this in the beginning. But still keep in mind that this is a pre-understanding which should be the fundament for developing new understanding, not be a hindrance to understand others. The last is important because if the pre-understanding is locked up tight in one specific understanding it will be difficult to develop new knowledge, thus pre-understandings need to be challenged. Because, even though the frugal foundation of *friluftsliv* was quite clear in texts, is was not necessarily consistent. Monsen (1998) have one chapter on "Values in the wilderness", but also several chapters on different equipment types explaining what you should buy. In the 2nd edition of the book (Monsen, 2004) the chapter on values is removed. There is a tension there, and I also experienced this tension. I had also upgraded the equipment and also continued to do this even as I started reflecting over the problem statement. It has to do with what is customary. When I was 13, I slept outside under a tarpaulin in the woods, according to the producer of the sleeping bag it would be good to -15 C° (5 F°), it was -24 C° (-11 F°). We managed with enough spruce branches under, and bonfire in front. It was really ok, but I still wanted a warmer sleeping bag. I bought one three years later, that could keep me warm in -30 C° (-22 F°), without bonfire and spruces. In one way it was great, it took away the need to cut a lot of branches, and the need to keep the fire going. But it also took away the feeling of mastering, using acquired skills to make life outdoors comfortable. In some way, it became necessary to test out some principles from the frugal tradition to see if it actually was more than a philosophical idea. Had I just adapted an understanding of *friluftsliv*

without really adopting it in my own life? What happened if I actually tried to live my own *friluftsliv* closer to the ideal? I had to test it, at least to see if my point was valid.

Testing some Principles in Practice and Reflecting on What it Could Mean

A clear, but simplified, marker between modern *friluftsliv* and the traditional can be advanced textile materials (often based on not especially nature friendly flour and oil) and fiberglass skis versus cotton and wooden skies. Wooden skis more or less disappeared from the sporting goods stores in the early 1980s. I was still using cotton as an outer layer in the winter, knowing it worked. But being born after the fiberglass skis became the normal, my experience with wooden skies was limited to a test with a couple of old "Kikut" I found at home (and eight days in the army with the infamous "NATO-planks"). I had to buy wooden skis. At a flea—market in Bodø I found a couple of "Toppen" mountain skies, with lignostone edges, the varnish was a bit worn, but they looked ok. I restored them, sanded of the varnish, and re-varnished the, prepared the sole with a mix of wax and tar, and mounted a pair of Voile 3-pin cable. They became beautiful, bright birch wood, with two darker stripes.

About halfway in the assigned time for the thesis I could give them a real test because *friluftsliv* the past years had been more on a theoretical level; it was about time. So with almost the same group as the canoe hike in 2009, I went to Spitsbergen for a real test to see if the frugal approach (we exclude the flight from Norwegian mainland to Longyearbyen) was working in demanding conditions. I remember skepticism from the others toward the idea, worried I would get some problems with skies or clothing. We walked about 100 km with sleds and all necessary equipment; and the wooden skis were in my opinion better than modern fiberglass. I only waxed them in the morning, the others had to put wax on their skies several times a day, and I did not need to use skins to get up hills. But the wooden skis still had good glide. I looked through some of the pictures now, three people with fiberglass, and gore—tex clothing,

the last one, me—on wooden skis and cotton, looking like I am from a different time. I must admit that before we started skiing I bought one new garment, realizing that when the three others had down jackets—the breaks would be too long, even with a woolen sweater… My experience were that it was still possible to have a comfortable hike using traditional equipment. Most of what I used is still not worn out, and in weekly use, while a gore—tex garment usually "dies" after a couple of years. I still use wooden skies from time to time, but the good pair broke.

This experience strengthened part of the pre -understanding. We are probably consuming advanced equipment that does not add much to the experience, maybe even taking some of it away. This was also valid for me.

Having experienced my own double standards and being able to describe the context, I could move forward. Compared to the "recipe" for a PhD briefly described earlier this goes way beyond, but working with a normative and value based framework, understanding myself in the context was a valuable reflection that started with qualitative camp. I knew the value foundation of *friluftsliv* quite well, and could in principle act like the *ecological man,* but still continued the quest for better equipment like an economic man aiming for utility. But I still would not describe myself as the economic man. For the following work with gathering data, this was important because it would not be a good idea to gather data based only on an understanding of *friluftsliv* that might only exist on paper—the understanding needed to be close to the people I should be talking to. Having understood this it was possible to find a way to gather data and analyze this.

From Pre-Understanding to Understanding and New Pre-Understanding. Gathering and Interpreting Data

Eide and Lindberg (2006) focus on the need to connect the ontological, epistemological, and methodological aspects, where the ontology of the researcher and the problem statement lead to the method, instead of letting the method guiding the problem statement. For me this was

valuable. It would be much easier to gather and analyze data if people actually was either the economic or ecological man, but since I was not willing to be the economic man myself, I could not, and should not, reduce other people to it either. People are not models; there is more to it than that. In my project, I was really looking for a connection or a lack of connection between values and action. And I was also a part of the problem, being aware of the values, and having a tendency to ignore them.

This has one clear consequence; and it also connect to the previous discussion with the faculty member on QC about what *friluftsliv* is. Gathering data, it was important to ask the participants about their understanding of their own *friluftsliv*, and their actions in *friluftsliv.* Humans and human actions can according to Lauridsen (1977) be seen in a humanistic or in an empirical light, the latter believe we are born unaffected and develop our consciousness from our experiences. The empirical orientation is positivistic and allows researchers to work only with what is observed and measured. The humanistic orientation on the other hand assigns our actions to our personality and we act with intentions. I was more interested in the subjective and what was subconscious—an understanding of why people do what they do—their intensions. How do we explain to others and ourselves why we act, how do we rationalize it? I know how I rationalize my own choices. This ontological understanding has clear epistemological consequences; the humanistic tradition depends on what is happening in people's minds. The point is not generalizations, but good understanding and drawing wisdom from experiences that tell us something about the research problem. Whether we interpret man as economic or ecological, it is still models—not real people—and arguments that might fit one of them does not necessarily mean that they fit within the model.

Finding a Way: Developing a Model and Gathering Data

The consequence from the paragraph above was that I had to ask people about what they were thinking. I chose a combination of group interviews and individual interviews. Bjerke (2007) and Alvesson (2011) gave me a good frame for understanding interviews in different epistemological positions. Bjerke (2007) use the term dialogues on a position for interviews where the goal is to co—create knowledge. Alvesson (2011) describe romanticism as a position where one should try to come close to the real person; it also means the interviewer should participate; Alvesson also describes localism as an understanding to create morally sound explanations. Defining values and actions related to these are fundamentally about explaining ethical and moral decisions, but it is also quite clear that since real people are neither the economic nor the ecological man—actions can relate to one part of life, while the values are not necessarily connected at the same time. Asking and challenging people you do not know about the consistency between values and actions can be problematic; and I had to find a framework surrounding the interviews that would create trust and understanding.

During a hike with friends, I tested a version of the questionnaire, in—situ, sitting in a tent and discussing the perspectives on the questions, and the frame. The discussion became quite deep and revealed interesting issues. But it would be impossible to recreate the same frame with strangers. After all, there is a difference between sitting in a tent with friends that know each other and feel safe with one another and have had many good conversations and debates before—and complete strangers. Complete strangers will not have the security of being part of a group. But what if I were able to actually interview people in almost the same setting? Then it would be interesting. I had an idea.

In Norway, and the rest of Scandinavia, we have so called *folkehøgskoler*[3] *(folk high schools)*; these are usually attended by students 19 to 22; they do not have curricula, but they do activities that are close to their

[3] See note 1.

heart. At *folkehøgskoler*, they live at the school. *Friluftsliv* are a quite common type of activity, and several schools have specialized themselves on different classes with different variations over the theme. This could create a good frame, especially if they had attended the school in a longer period so they actually knew each other. I attended a folk high school myself when I was 19, but I chose another one for the gathering of data.

I chose to stay there for a couple of days, follow the daily life and familiarize myself with the situation again, while having one or two interviews a day. In the groups, they could challenge each other and reflect on the other arguments. They knew each other—and could ask the others follow up questions from their perspective. I cannot recall every interview in detail, but we sat inside in a circle, with biscuits and coffee, and they answered questions, discussed with each other, and reflected on their experiences, including the values they thought were important. This is co- creating of knowledge; they discussed their ideas, values, and actions and tried to explain how it was consistent or inconsistent. Immediately after the interviews, I sat down and wrote down all impressions, ideas, and reflections as a beginning of the interpretation process.

Interpreting

The co-creation of knowledge in an interview has consequences for the interpretation, because we are not finding data. First, we helped the participants to sort out, and construct their understanding of themselves in answering questions. (I would like to point out that, that is not very different from a questionnaire either; if I answer the question: "How happy are you on a scale from 1-10"; I must think through and interpret the scale; but for some reason, questions like this are seen to be more objective.)

Second, as researcher I sit down, write down what they say, and find out what they meant. I do all the transcribing myself; I think it is important, not because McCracken (1988) says it, but because it is a part of the process, I remember much more of each interview after writing them down, and I start the interpretation when I transcribe, I get a feeling with the material. I begin with creating pre-concepts that I follow up later. In

the transcription process, I realized that *when describing what friluftsliv was*—most collaborators described *friluftsliv* as being in nature in a frugal way. But when they described what they were *doing* and the frame surrounding it, there was a gorge. In the paper I wrote for QC I found a passage that guided the interpretative work that followed; it is my understanding of Alvesson and Sköldbergs *reflexive interpretation*:

> The idea of a reflexive interpretation is that the levels can be combined, but it is not necessary to give the same weight to all levels, but they should at some point be present in a quadri-hermeneutic process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009. p. 283). The practical way of doing this could be to start with raw interpretations close to the empirical material, and focus on the interviews, moving over to a hermeneutic interpretation that lies its emphasizes on the underlying meaning, and try to understand the different actions. Critical interpretation can be used to understand which bindings to ideology and power that constitutes norms and values.

The raw interpretation I started with was the gorge between what *friluftsliv* was described as by the collaborators, and how it was done. The analysis then was divided in two parts focusing on the core of the problem statement—value displacement—from two angles. The first was about focusing on displacement in mind and the second was on displacement in practice. The statements from the collaborators on *what friluftsliv* was, was interpreted toward the normative texts about *friluftsliv*. The words and descriptions used was quite coherent, most of them in line with an idea about a frugal and nature friendly practice. This meant that the *idea* of *friluftsliv* was still relevant, and could indicate that the values was still valid, meaning that there was not much displacement in mind. The interpretation of the collaborators values also create the frame for displacement in practice, meaning that actions connected to *friluftsliv* is not consistence with their own stated values for the activity. Many statements in the material focused on the thrill from new equipment and the possibilities this created. The interpretation is still on a hermeneutical level, trying to find the underlying meaning of what the activity had become. My interpretation was that there was a value displacement in practice. The critical perspective as third level was helpful when I tried to

interpret why this happened. The short interpretation is that the days between doing *friluftsliv* are spent in a civilization where the market forces are highly present also on the equipment for *friluftsliv*. In this civilization, the values from *friluftsliv* are not present in the same way as in nature. They live their life in two contexts, and consumption happens in a context where this is the normal. The three levels I used here gave each a piece of meaning to the puzzle and created coherence. Getting there was a result of starting to question the pre-understanding of *friluftsliv* and the underlying ontological and epistemological considerations.

A Final Reflection

In this autoethnography, I have tried to reflect on what it was as a young student to go into research with a clear pre-understanding, a clear idea about what I was doing research on, and then realize I needed to reexamine this understanding. Developing a suitable method for a thesis is quite complicated; but it may be a necessity to go deeper into ontological and epistemological considerations when the problem and the background for the problem is a bit outside the mainstream. I think that the methodological focus we were offered at Qualitative camp helped to see that there is nothing wrong in working with experiences of the self, and co-created stories, trying to develop theory and findings that might not be generalizable as hard facts, but can be used to increase our understanding of what we do.

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Part V

Epilogue

15

A Grounded Theory of Qcamp

Larry D. Browning

The chapter writers for this book participated in Qcamp during a late May, four-day intensive training session taking place 70 miles above the article circle, off the coast of Bodø, Norway—in the near-total light of the midnight sun. We did qualitative methods by day and played by night. The altered-state environment of total light, play, and island-like isolation is central to the tone and quality of the chapters in this book. These autoethnographies' rootedness in this place and time is distinguishable and interwoven throughout the chapters.

In addition to its time and space distinction, Qcamp membership was heterogeneous; participants varied by skin pigmentation, gender, sexual preference, age, nationality, program positionality, methods knowledge, and writing experience. We were a rich mix. Yet this polyglot of differences functioned to increase the curiosity among the participants rather

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than create distance between them. In the evenings, we sang a lot of songs. We were a 20-person version of "we are the world."

In support of this humanistic theme, we emphasize a concepts in qualitative research, Appreciative Inquiry—what do you like about what you see? This elusive cultural quality occurred effortlessly in this program (Coghlan et al., 2003). How do these different people see the world and how do they implement qualitative methods?

Common appreciation with an emphasis on distinctive, individual voices is evident in the variation visible among these chapters. From the common core of Qcamp, writers applied the method to their own topics and theoretical interests. Whether studying recreational snow-skiing, prison culture, organic dairy farming, software production, or Norwegian island governmental administration, to name a few, chapter writers for this book report the use of Qcamp methods in all kinds of distinguishable ways. Some retained a general practice of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and simply focused on producing a compelling narrative from Qcamp memories. Other chapter writers studiously reexamined detailed notes and documents preserved from their time at Qcamp, including specific lecture statements they reproduce as direct quotes in their chapters. Still others felt liberated from any source of documentation and plumbed into their own personal depth to produce a Qcamp story—essentially answering what do qualitative methods mean to me? The effect of the chapter writers' degrees of freedom in autoethnographic style permits us to cast a wide net over them all to expand the definition of the proper application of qualitative methods. If it is good writing, data-based, captured in a text and is interesting, you have roughly followed the qualitative method. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) remind us thats the method is hyper-circumstantial and can be relatively unrestricted or rule governed. For example, one chapter writer here was obligated to take field notes exclusively from her interviews, and was only permitted to tape-record a single interview. She adapted to this requirement by using both tape- recorded and field note data for her chapter. Other writers had no such restrictions on their data collection. We accepted the varying conditions under which the data were collected and evaluated each chapter submission on the quality presented in the final submission to us.

The Grounded Theory Categories

This summary chapter on Qcamp education allows me to ask: In what ways do the chapters differ despite originating from the very same basic Qcamp strategy? To what extent are they evidence of emergent complexity—where similar origins vary greatly in development despite having a common beginning? To answer to this question, we performed a grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the 13 chapters by ultimately distilling 9 categories that summarize them—especially the major themes within them—and then I grouped them into grounded theory categories accordingly. The core element of grounded theory I appllied focuses on the emergence of theory from the data (here, the units of analysis are the 13 autoethnographic chapters written by participants at Qcamp), while remaining open to expansive possible theoretical meanings and interpretations of data (Treem & Browning, 2017). The nine categories reflect the contents of the chapters yet make am additional interpretation as a result of the grouping. In short, we looked for likenesses among the 13 content chapters and then plant them across the 9 categories listed below. To economize, we limited the assignment of four to six chapters to each category to show the density of the category. Figure one displays the use of the chapters to represent the categories and shows the distribution across the chapters.

My goal in this summary was to make as many categorical ties as possible among the 13 autoethnographies by searching for, and highlighting, the commonalities among them. The result of this nine item-clustering produces a kind of *modularity*, which is precisely the goal of generative grounded theory (Brown, 2015). Modularity demonstrates the interconnections among categories and, in doing so, shows the differences between them (Sinha et al., 2017). The sorting offered below highlights different components of value across autoethnographies by showing how a single chapter might weave and thread across the nine categories. Here's a list of the nine categories that emerged from our 13 autoethnographies: (1) Complication, (2) Emotion, (3) Identification, (4) Ideology, (5) Spirited, (6) Materiality, (7) Transportation, (8) Interrogative, and (9) Reckoning (Fig. 15.1.). I elaborate them below.

Complication
McVey, Peterson, Mudliar, Walters
Emotion
Kee, Barrett, Nazarova, Ingulfsvann
Identification
Feng, Inge, Barrett, McGlynn, Peterson, Waters, Mudliar
Ideology
McVey, Kee, Ingulfsvann, Mudliar, Ahen
Spirited
Nazarova, Feng, Barrett, McVey
Materiality
Ahen, Kee, Mudliar, Feng, Ingulfsvann, McVey
Transportational
McGlynn, Feng, Peterson, Ahen
Interrogative
Holand, Hermanrud, Ahen, Ingulfsvann
Reckoning
Feng, Waters, Hermanrud, Nazarova McVey

Fig. 15.1 Concept—chapter distribution

One: Complication To have as story, you must have Aristotle's complication, which is "the beginning of the story to the point just before the change in the hero's fortunes" (Poetics, Part 18-A): The complication is a set of conditions that lead to the action that precedes and sets apart the narrative resolution, the dénouement, the finale. The conceptual meaning of complication is not to be confused with the familiar *complicated*, which is contemporary term to indicate when an event is too difficult to explain, or when the speaker claims self-complexity and chooses to avoid an explanation. Complication may contain a problem that is only foreshadowed in the beginning, which makes a complication like a cir-

cumstance. There is enough information about it to draw your attention to it. Here are examples of complications among the autoethnographies. Waters in Chap. 2 could not get the interview data he thought was useful. Technically, he had a methodological problem, and he fretted over it because he correctly realized that substandard interview data could only produce a substandard dissertation. He pressed for something better until he captured it. Tom *McVey in* Chap. 13 had the problem of threading the needle to get enough strands of information from secret corporate data into a publicly certified document to qualify as a doctoral dissertation, while keeping enough of the substance of data related to product and pricing out of the dissertation, that the corporate data remained a secret. *McVey*'s main problem was to avoid violating the confidentiality contract he established with each interviewee. In Chapt. 9 Nazarova worried that the face-to-face observational techniques would be of little help in her understanding the logistics of steamer travel in the High North of Norway. Hermanrud in Chap. 4 struggled with his dissertation committee over data and methods, but he finally won them over. The Clifford Geertz's complication of struggling early in his research, but finding his footing because of that same difficulty is thematic across these chapters (Geertz, 2000). The chapters included in this category are organized around a problem, which is fundamental to telling a story (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). The tacit requirement of a complication is to bring interesting features to bear on the topic. The goal is to produce a question in the readers mind: What is this about?

A classic example of complication is Peterson's experience in Chap. 7 while doing interviews in a Norwegian prison. Her data exemplifies the category of complication, even when the circumstances are favorable to her understanding. She reports, "Jan (my Norwegian host) swung the car into a parking spot, and I startled. 'We're here?' I stared up at the building in front of me, quizzically, still trying to force my brain to process what I was seeing with my eyes. This unassuming building that resembled a school in every possible way, was a prison? How could that be? We exited the car, and I paused momentarily trying to empty my backpack of all my belongings because surely they wouldn't be allowed inside. But Jan hustled me along. 'You're fine, they won't check.' Now my insides were screaming, I'm sorry, what? They aren't even going to check my bag before

we enter the PRISON, but it's a PRISON. But I stayed quiet, trusting Jan knew what he was talking about."

Peterson's complication is a convenience. She spent a productive summer in Norway observing the rationality, consideration, and safety of Norwegian prisons. More than the issue of having useable data, her complication was to manage her heart (Hochschild, 2015), her own feelings, in relation to the horror of her own brother an inmate in the American Prison system that she knew all too well. Mudliar's complicationin chapter. is the simplicity of a single question she was asked as an international traveler: "May I see your identification of who you are?" The striking initial experience for her was the absence of a vigilant protective bureaucracy, especially toward her as a person with brown skin. Here is her account of the ease of entering Norway the summer of her fieldwork internship. Mudliar says in Chap. 6: "We were not asked for any IDs or any proof of travel. Not a single piece of proof of ourselves or the purpose of our trip was demanded. I could not help but contrast this to the climate of fear that prevails in the US after 9/11.

Mudliar contrasts the trusting actions of the front-line administrators to the horror Norwegians had recently experienced—the greatest peacetime terrorist attack in the history of Norway. She says, "It had been even less than a year since Norway suffered a devastating terror attack in 2011. Yet, the sense amongst common Norwegians was the determination to not allow that episode to change the essential principles of their society and how they chose to live."

These two examples are of favorable complications in the external environment. But for these researchers, a persistent complication directly in front of them was how to complete proper research. The complications arrayed from confusion about the research purpose, editorial responses to their work, and and how to manage a massive data set. complication in Chap. 11 complication Kee, in Chap. 11, makes explicit the size of the task before him. "First, 485,000 words in the total transcripts. Second, participants came from different stakeholder groups, such as domain scientists as lead users, computational technologists as developers, center administrators as CI project facilitators, NSF program officers as funders of CI, and policy analysts and social scientists working in the cyberinfrastructure community. Their varying perspectives and motivations made generating a coherent narrative difficult." Kee's task was the opposite of

much qualitative research which is troubled by the simplicity and starkness of the data set. In the text example, As mentioned above, Waters, in Chap. 2, struggles with generating enough complication to produce an original contribution in the data set. The answers from his pilot interviews were all too obvious. He pressured his own complication—essentially saying: This interview strategy will not produce a good data set. If garbage-in-garbage -out ever applied to anything, it applies to qualitative data sets. Here is how Waters sets up the problem in Chap. 2. "I had recently completed six months of observations at two start-up incubators. I used the fieldnotes to help me construct an interview guide. I began reaching out to entrepreneurs, mentors, angel investors, and venture capitalists in hopes of gaining unique perspectives." Waters sets the conditions for success, but he disliked the quality of his data. He makes this admission, "I did my first interview. And it was a disaster. Disaster is probably a strong word. I suppose I just thought it would go differently. And a bit longer. The entire exchange clocked in at just over 44 minutes. As I read through the transcript, it was not a bad interview. But it was not necessarily a good one either." But to add to Waters' complication was his expectation for what his dissertation committee would think. "Coming to my dissertation committee with too many mediocre interviews would not get me any closer to graduation."

Waters thought it might be first interview jitters and hoped his second interview would be better, but he laments, "But it wasn't. It was worse. My second interview was only 24 minutes long. This caused me to panic. Beyond the disappointing length, I was also very concerned about the richness of the data. As I compared my transcripts to previous findings in my literature review, I couldn't find any new, groundbreaking 'nuggets' as Dr. Browning would say. Many of the responses might as well have been pasted from a blog on TechCrunch or Richard Branson's autobiography. Others were simply basic, awkward, and uninteresting." The key to Waters' complication was his self-assessment and his willingness to say he was getting obvious answers in his interviews. Yet Waters is consistently flexible and pursues alternatives to solve the weak interview data problem.

Another internal complication arises from the context of the field setting and the need to establish a relationship with people in it. The reason for developing rapport at the beginning of an interview is to relax the situation and develop enough of a sense of trust that interviewees will be

forthcoming in what they say. Nazarova in Chap. 9 acknowledges this complication as she explains the conditions for her interviewing. She experienced a lack of trust her interviewees had in the system She says, "For example, when working on my article on risk management in a Russian oil-producing company in the High North, only one interview was allowed to be recorded—only one out of 17 interviews. The respondents trusted me and were very open as they knew my parents and my elder brother when our family had earlier been living in that small Russian town far above the Arctic Circle. They trusted me, but they did not trust the system." In Nazarova's account she sets up the complication she and the interviewees faced. We can imagine their concern: What can I say? How much should I say? What will become of this data? How will it be used? One of our findings from the category of complication is that they capture an "initial complication." Once a story moves forward, the complication tends to be resolved in the interview. While the initial complication of the story may be problematic, they are resolved by the ending. Part of the story is resolving the research complications.

Two: Emotion Writing is a risk. Writing about the performance of ethnographic methods compounds that risk; adding the dimension of proficiency along with intimate revelation amplifies the exposure. A writer reveals their personal talent when they display it in a public document. The emotions literature on fear and pride is especially applicable to the section on emotions (Nathanson, 1994). We are fearful of getting it wrong yet there is nothing quite comparable to the ethnographer's pride when they get it right. More than one chapter writer speaks with the pride of their accomplishment, especially for taking qualitative bits and fragments and constituting them into a coherent whole. Part of the emotional risk of qualitative research is the loneliness the task generates by the lack of external support and by the lack of specific criteria. Teachers and editors can bestow approval, but there is no statistical program or stock and perfect guide to use as proof of qualitative research excellence. complications emotion Here are examples of emotions in the chapters.

In Chap. 11, Kee sets out to understand emotions as they are sacrificed for a greater cause. He absorbs the emotion of the scientists and technicians he interviews and observes for his dissertation research on

cyberinfrastructure (CI). Kee reflects their emotion because he realizes "that the men and women who ushered in the vision of CI sacrificed a lot in their professional and personal lives. First, I learned that many were drawn to CI by accidents, but they were excited about what CI could become, and how the world will be better when CI matures." Kee details the emotion of the sacrifices he observes by detailing the career paths they gave up to bring CIinto being. Kee says, "In order to become a part of the CI enterprise, many of the scientist and technologists compromised their professional careers. It is a subtle yet powerful realization—developing CI as the technology to do breakthrough science is not directly doing breakthrough science, therefore,(it is) regarded as unrewarded service in traditional academia." Their sacrifice is evident to Kee because he too has the Goal of developing an academic identity. So he marvels at their willingness to sacrifice to establish CI. The scientists who were involved in CI development invested time and energy in technology development with effort that they could have, and arguably should have, been invested in publishing articles about their science, with or without CI as part of their work. However, if the men and women of early CI development focused solely and selfishly on their individual careers in order to eliminate the tensions they experienced, CI would not have emerged. In the summary section of this chapter, I emphasize the concept of resolution. How does the story come together at the end? Kee's account of thos who made CI sacrifices exemplifies this resolution. They got it done—end of story.

In her book, Risk and Blame (1992), Mary Douglas, asserts, the greater the presumption of egalitarianism in a culture the more likely we are to be conscious of differences. For Barrett, in Chap. 8, emotion is not a grand epiphany, but her account for change as a result of observing another Qcamp participant is shocking to her: Note the penetrating tone of Barrett's observation. "I was bewildered with her courage, unfailing systemic beliefs, and diehard conviction for those beliefs. I could never imagine standing up to a superior in that magnitude." But as Barrett observes the assertiveness of a fellow camp participant, she allows herself to reflect on a comparison with the American culture, " Note the emotion in Barrett's passage: "As my affinity for her grew, my disdain for the American working culture simultaneously burgeoned. It was as if my

ability to like was finite and a newfound appreciation in one area required a deflation in another." In this analysis, Barrett quarrels with herself and has a perfect conflict for threading and weaving the disparate streams of autoethnographic cultural analysis. Barrett realizes this about herself. "I found it fascinating that I, unwittingly, was a living, breathing, moving, prototype of what they, as workers, did not want their working culture to become." Common among these examples of emotions in qualitative research is the moment that drives what is written on the page. Acounting for emotion has the effect of triangulating the research by adding another point of reference to it. In a summary example, Nazarova, in Chap. 9, raises the question of existential doubt that every researcher faces. Again, there is no statistic between the writer and the method, She says, "Am I a fit with this method? Her own national culture, while living in the Norwegian culture, comes into play when she asks, "Then does one need a special qualitative method to understand Russians? Or maybe I am simply not a researcher?" In her notes she mimics the words of the Johnny Cash song about the Ring of Fire that circulated around late night Qcamp singing sessions. She reflects the Johnny Cash song, "Oh, it burns, burns, burns so much." But at that flash of burning doubt she makes a wish: "At that very moment I made a wish to somehow master this qualitative method—as though this method was the only barrier that stood between defending Russia's Arctic Strategy and opening it to the rest of the world." Common among the emotions for these chapters are pride, sacrifice, bewilderment, doubt, and pain. The emotions are captured in the strain of the observer to apprehend the data they are seeing.

Three: Identification Autoethnographers ultimately say, "Writing an autoethnographic chapter is evidence of who I am." The statements of "who I am" that demonstrate this category are drawn directly from such self-proclamations of personification in the chapters. Autoethnographic writing in the chapters necessarily take the form of a story because the ideal way to account for experience is through a story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A good story displays enough of the features of a character to distinguish the in-group from the out-group, whether from the personal or institutional perspective (Browning & Morris, 2012). The chapters in this section are flush with identity markers, from

one's American, Asian, African, Swedish, Texan, or Norwegian heritage. Identification can also arise from microstories about one's skill at dodging the politics of research methods with a doctoral dissertation committee. The identity statements among these chapters demonstrate the variation in professional identities of the writers. For example in Chap. 12, Feng's identification arises from practices that are pleasurable to him: "I chose to take a qualitative approach without any hesitation because I love words and culture, and was very dreadful at numbers. Statistics or number crunching is not something I am good at or enjoy doing. My gut feeling told me that I would do better in qualitative research, which has a strong humanistic orientation and flair." Feng's identification is to a methodology because he can envision what it will produce for him. Ahen in Chap. 3 identifies with the method because of the opportunities for advancement with his methodological skill. He explains that three years earlier he had "received grants from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Foundation for Economic Education, University of Turku Foundation, Stiftelsen för Handelsutbildning i Åbo, Matti Koivurinta Foundation and TS Concern's Fund." Ahen accounts for presenting his research at these meetings and getting his worked critiqued at these conferences. He identifies as a qualitative researcher as he continues to learn how to implement the method. Hermanrud in Chap. 4 identifies with the method by declaring what he enjoys doing. "My personal nature is that I love to tell stories, and maybe sometimes, admittedly, I exaggerate to get attention, and present a story in a way to make my point very clear and hopefully of interest." Ahen likens the use of the method as a personal anchor. He reveals, "In light of this, my participation at the Qualitative Camp was like coming home. I found qualitative research to be an approach that fits me well as a storyteller." These examples demonstrate a universal goal—integrating our story in the Ricoeurian (1981) manner. How can I fuse my narrative representation with who I am?

Also included in the chapters are archetypal identifiers of who chapter writers are, where they are from, and what they are endeavoring to accomplish professionally. Autoeethnographic writers are expected to reveal themselves and tackle the implications of their selves in the interpretation. But as stated above, Ricoeur reminds us (1981), this presentation is

always selective—partly to make the story a good story and partly to mold an identity that makes sense with the story. Here are examples from the chapters of these Ricoeurian constructions. Waters identity is wrapped up in displaying his competence, In Chap. 2 he says, "Prior to starting at Texas I was a District Manager for a popular import auto manufacturer. A major part of my duties in this job was to visit franchise car dealerships in my district and work with the parts and service managers to fix operational problems, which involved a lot of question-and-answer steps to really get to the root causes of issues." Waters' identity with his flexibility transferred over to graduate school, "how do I fix problems?"

Barrett in Chap. 8 reports the vulnerability of her identity, "Given that 2011 was my second year in my doctoral program, I began conducting these interviews as a raw, inexperienced, and frankly frightened doctoral student who was unexpectedly given an irresistible opportunity to travel across the world and peer deep into my and others' hidden assumptions about life." But Barrett simply takes the chance for international research as a mechanism for growth for her professional identity.

McGlynn, in Chap. 5, declares to the world, "I'm a highly competitive person. It's not that I'm obsessed with winning; I'm not. I'm obsessed with *not losing*. I feel losses deep into my core where they knot up and refuse to leave for weeks on end. And while research camps aren't exactly a competition, we all felt the desire to create something momentous and worthwhile, in accordance with the unique opportunity we'd received." In addition to his personal identity, McGlynn hints at organizational obligation and he does so in a manner consistent with generating a positive identity. He essentially says, "You have given me this opportunity; I do not want to let you down." This desire to prove one's self is the essence of a positive organizational identity.

Mudliar, in Chap. 6, proceeds through an identity change at Qcamp from isolation to a realization. She presumed she would be different from others above the Arctic Circle. "It was after all, a town in the High North region of Norway, just off the Arctic Circle with a population of approximately 40,000. Why would a place like this have any linkages to India? I reached Høglimyra, the student housing at the University of Nordland, and rang the doorbell to the suite that I was to share with three other students. The door opened and I found myself shaking hands with not

one, not two, but nine students from India, all pursuing their doctoral programs in aquaculture and fisheries!" Mudliar's shock at seeing fellow Indian doctoral students—instead of a kind of isolation—brought a smile to the face of the Indian students. "They were amused at how shocked I seemed to be and I learned that the university in India that they had graduated from regularly sent students to Bodø for higher education owing to an exchange program that the two universities had signed. Information about Norway and Bodø flowed through the cultural filters that I shared with these students. I learned, much to my surprise, that not only were there south Asian students studying in Bodø, but there were also a couple of families from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka that had made Bodø, their home." This surprise identity is striking because it transformed Mudliar's presumption of isolation into the welcoming arms of a community. One of the findings in cooperation research is that integrating people who feels isolation is a special kind of bonding that essentially says, "We are different but we are together in this land that is so radically different from what we know." This example shows the mercurial nature of identity. It can change suddenly for better or worse. The issues related to identification traverse the other categories of this analysis because identification is a consistent concern for individuals in novel settings.

Four: Ideological The ideological chapters encapsulate an identifiable actor who advances a particular value-laden point of view in the chapter. If politics is the application of values to resources, ideology is the master term for value. Ingulfsvann in Chap. 14 is transparent about his ideology. "My Ph.D. was about the change in Norwegian outdoor life—*friluftsliv*—as it transformed from a frugal activity by nature to alienated consumer culture (Ingulfsvann, 2013 and that the values pushed forward by the economic zone have displaced fundamental values within nature and the culture value zones." The significance of this ideological statement is important in Norway because of the country's historical commitment to recreation, frugality, and a simple and elegant style that does not embrace commercialization and flashy change. For McVey, in Chap. 13 his ideology is a capitalist goal to have a technology product that is so distinctive that it requires complete secrecy. Kee's ideology in Chap. 11 is based on the premise that

it is worthwhile for a consortium of major universities to invest a cyberinfrastructure—that there is a cultural good in investing in massive computer power to solve intractable problems. Holand, in Chap. 10, takes a philosophical turn toward ideology when she sets up the definition of the word "natural," an answer to an ontological question. For her, to explore the term 'nature' is to develop an ideological position toward it. Ahen's ideology, in Chap. 3, arises from characterizing himself and especially his research as a savior. His goal is to act as an opponent to counterfeit medicines that are sold on the world's black market. "In my search for answers, I must be discreet, steps ahead in my investigation, but most importantly, I had to understand that if I succeed well enough, lives can be saved because of the awareness about the dangers of counterfeit medicines." The ideological positions embedded in these chapters become especially powerful when they are tied to the day-to-day experiences of collecting ethnographic data. The ideological category presumes that qualitative research is powerful; despite its constant if modest focus on accurate and unbiased representation, it takes a point of view toward the research subject that is value laden. Five: Spirited The Qcamp program is momentous, but the presenting faculty approached the week of training with playful light heartedness. In the evening, male faculty occasionally told jokes and danced on dining room tabletops naked to the waist. We were playful to loosen things up. You can always bring to bear increased seriousness in later stages of any research project, but in learning the Qcamp method, the tone was to avoid being judgmental, to try different things, and be exploratory. Feng in Chap. 12 witnesses: "I was inspired by the faculty members, who were trustable, exemplary, and fun. The way in which they talked and carried out academic work demonstrated a spirit of being calm, dedicated and humorous. I could tell that they enjoyed the academic life. Their personalities as a human being and happy and accomplished scholars helped alleviate my stress and uncertainties." Nazarova, in Chap. 9, offers much the same, if somewhat ambiguous comment, "I was totally surprised by the role the faculty played in that what's-going-on-here game. They were listening carefully, asking follow-up questions, making hypotheses and jokes. I can't say they were engaged equally as the student researchers squad were, but each observation was supported by the faculty's 'Oh, really? That's interesting,' 'Have never thought about it' or 'Exactly,' or sometimes even … 'having fun?'"

Transforming theories of multiplicity into chances to play with meaning (Deleuze et al., 1977; Felix & Guattari, 1987) was accomplished by toying with and teasing out all kinds of interpretations of qualitative camp exercises. Observers may be able to see the main effect of what is going on, but what else is going on? The purpose of qualitative methods is to generate discoveries, something new (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Treem & Browning, 2017). What does generative data collection and interpretation look like? For example, Ingulfsvann in Chap. 14 plays with Norwegian cultural traditions by foregoing the latest sports equipment and instead wearing old-timey wooden skis on the slopes to test the relevance of his thesis. He is spirited and exploratory. Mudliar, in Chap. 6, occasionally took the voice of a vacationer. As creativity experts regularly say, *don't evaluate too early*, let things evolve. These chapters show evidence of spirited evolution. Barrett in Chap. 8 characterizes the sense of play by providing this context: "Situated in Kjerringøy, Norway—a remote fishing village—Qualitative Camp was a perfect mixture of both business and pleasure. We lodged in a series of bright red wooded cabins lined one after the other up and down an aged wooden dock that overlooked the Norwegian Sea. The cabins—almost barn-like in that they were outfitted white shudders and doors and triangle roofs—were decorated with decks that served as an ideal location to breathe in and consume the quaint but hypnotizing scenery. Standing on that deck each evening, I would watch the colors in the sky dramatically shift into vibrant pinks, as other shades of orange, yellow, and green danced around and were mirrored in the still water in front of our cabins that extended out into the vast ocean. The sun would then turn a deep reddish orange and dip behind a distant white-topped mountain, as if to play a game of cat and mouse. Yet during the Summer Solstice—a period of two months from May to July each year—the sun only hid, never entirely escaping. I was in the land of the midnight sun. Kjerringøy was undoubtedly a trove of aesthetic pleasures." Barrett's emersion into the joys of the environment liberated her to write and feel in profound and expansive ways. In this use of the category spirited, we emphasize playfulness and exploration as a means to generate unusual conceptions of qualitative research

Six: Materiality Not to be confused with materialistic—too much focus on things. Instead, materiality refers to the concrete and tangible forms

in these chapters. Included are Feng in Chap. 12 who studies the production of crystal glass in Sweden, Kee's Chap. 11 on cyberinfrastructure, McVey's software secrecy in Chap. 13, Petersen's prison, in Chap. 7, and so on. Most of these chapters have at their center some complete structure or product. To make a conceptual comparison, "cooperation has to be about something" (Browning & Shetler, 2000) and the same holds true of organizational ethnography. A firm, a department, a research grant, a policy, is identifiable in, if not central to, the story. These autoethnographic methodology stories are about something concrete; there is something of substance for concepts to press against. For example, Ahen in Chap. 3 addresses the materiality of medical severity. "The need for medicines is a big problem in tropical regions of the world, especially where malaria infections are widespread. Malaria has stayed with humans for millennia. It comes from the bite of mosquitoes that carry a parasite, known as *Plasmodium falciparum*. It has caused some of the world's biggest armies to fall, killed four popes in the past and today it still has a massive impact on productivity because those it affects cannot go to work or to school. The financial cost to households is even more burdensome for those who can't afford medicines to treat it. Cheap counterfeits then come in." Ahen is conscious of the seriousness of his topic and educates himself about it. "I started writing my dissertation early, but I still needed to learn the nitty-gritties and practical savvy required to advance with data." Ahen's awareness is like a political statement. To frame the importance of the study of illegal prescriptions, he says, "Humans crave life but they do not express it in the way they articulate all other things. Life is not only about keeping a biological system alive, but it includes all the things that go with it: money, power, fame, crime, health, appearance, pleasure, truth, lies (lots of it), ego, freedom, social acceptance, justice and a lot more non-essentials and essentials such as efficacious quality medicines. I study the business and politics of this latter need—the illegal version, to be precise. That means my goal here is to investigate how bad guys employ modern technologies to acquire wealth by exploiting the human conditions or consumers' vulnerability through legal loopholes in the sale of counterfeit pharmaceuticals." McVey in Chap. 13 offers an example of raw materiality that appeared in front of his eyes on Lofoten Island during the week of qualitative camp. "One day a whaling ship was returning to dock. The crew had a whale on deck and they were doing the

initial butchering and preparation. While butchering animals for food was not an unnerving sight for me, given that ranching and hunting is common in Texas and the Midwest, I was struck by this obvious reminder that Norway is a country where whaling is common practice. A fellow American student standing next to me leaned over to the owner and asked with a bit of hesitation in her voice whether we might get to try whale while we were there. The owner nonchalantly asked, 'What do you think we've been eating all week? … the meat on last night's pizza? … the meat in yesterday's cream soup? … one of the meats in the sandwiches the day before that?'" This example shows that materiality can be in front of us, andio our dinner plate, when we hardly keow it.

Mudliar in Chap. 6 addresses materiality by apprehending the structure of governance. She says, "My agenda was to study Norway's local governance system and see how it compared to the Indian local self-governance system for villages. I planned to interview citizens, journalists, elected representatives, and academics researching governance in Norway and travel to Oslo, Trondheim, and Bergen." Her material topic was the form of governmental structure. Feng in Chap. 12 wants to examine glass production in Sweden in a geographical area exotically called "The Kingdom of Crystal" (Glasriket) because it is a geographical area that contains 14 glasswork production facilities, but he is unsure about how to approach the project. "In the beginning of the dissertation project, I was not sure what exactly to explore about *Glasriket*, which has multiple dimensions to be explored: craft mode of making glass, design, tourist experience, marketing, branding, etc." Ingulfsvann in Chap. 14 comments on materiality by proclaiming, "outdoor life has become commercial. … I had also upgraded my equipment continuously even as I started reflecting on the problem statement. It has to do with what is customary." Holand, in Chap. 10, comments on the change in the materiality of Norwegian fishing over time. "Meanwhile, fishers gradually built larger and better rowing sailing boats, and got better fishing gear. Eventually they equipped their wooden boats with small petroleum engines. That was a technological revolution not costing a fortune, and so it was accessible for the many. And in the early 1900s, fishers organized in associations demanding political power over resource management in the fisheries. One could argue that this is the Nordic way of organizing

democracy, and a main explanation of the widespread trust significant for Nordic societies. Apart from one global problem surfacing in the post-war era: Overfishing. This re-actualized the old question: How many fishers and how many vessels could the coast support—and how large should these vessels be?" The value of the materiality category is to add an object—an influential structure outside the human speaker, that is determines the situation. What is the communication in the chapter about? The materiality category helps to answer that question.

Seven: Transportational Qcamp is transportational when it stimulates the out-of-this world experiences showcased in these autoethnographies. We use the term transportational because the idea means being lost in an alternate reality such that it is an immersive experience. Our usage here builds on the persuasion research literature that studies the effects of a transportation narrative when the story is produced by a book or a movie (Green, 2021). As Green (2021) states it, "Narrative transportation shares some similarities with other types of immersive experiences." Qcamp qualifies as one of these "other types" of immersive experience. A transportational narrative means the person becomes so engrossed in an event they are lost in the story.

The Qcamp experience transported the researcher into another world, into an alternate consciousness (Green et al., 2004; Tchernev et al., 2021). We join Irimiás et al. (2021) who expand the concept of narrative transportation beyond entertainment media. They apply transportation theory to travel experiences and we build on their expanded use and apply the transportation narrative to Qcamp. While keeping the kernel of the concept in play, we redirect the focus from persuasion to a human experience that has transportational force. In our use of the term, Qcamp is the source of the change and the writers' response to Qcamp is the evidence of the camp's transportational effects. Qcamp participants are transported into island isolation, under the relentless shine of the midnight sun, under performance demands, yet in a culture of spirited light heartedness. These forces are the ingredients for transportation. Feng, in Chap. 12, accounts for his movement dramatically, "I feel I am returning back to spiritually, seeing the different episodes in a movie in my mind." McGlynn offers a good example of transportation in Chap. 5, he sees

"Ice-capped mountains rise from the horizon. Red and yellow houses line the peripheral. Translucent clouds sparkle a powder blue sky. There's a boat, you can just barely make it out in the distance. I'm standing on a bed of rocks, but my mind is in the clouds. The water is so clear you can see your soul right through it. I feel new parts of me I didn't know existed wanting to spring alive. But, as I'm standing at the edge, I hesitate. Pausing to wonder, 'How will I be different? How will it feel?' Enough pomp and circumstance, the time has come to decide. I'm reminded there are risks to overthinking and rewards for taking chances." McGlynn's transportation is to combine the surreal environment with the risk to take an intellectual chance. To let go and see where the trip takes him. He was driven to perform under conditions of change that represented transformative learning.

Also exemplifying the transportation narrative is Feng who was displaced but felt whole in the beauty and silence of Northern Norwegian nature. In Chap. 12 he provides this story of transportation: "I landed in the coastal town of Bodø on a Sunday afternoon. This is the city where the hosting university, the Bodø Graduate School of Business at Nord University, is located. The town is famous for fishing, the Northern lights, midnight sun, and its coastal line. It was definitely a break away from the normal life at my home university. For the first night, I lived in a small hotel in downtown Bodø. After checking in, I strolled on the street, passing the neighborhoods of residential houses, a shopping center which was closed on a Sunday, and the harbor. The scenery was so beautiful but empty with few people outside. I walked around, enjoyed the cool breeze and the summer sunshine, and savored a little bit loneliness. The architectural styles of the buildings were different than those in Sweden. Everything felt foreign to me. An analogy sank in me: my embracing of the whole thing of research in the PhD program was similar to my encountering with the new Nordic environment, whether it was Sweden or Norway. Everything was intriguing but foreign to me." Feng need not seek out transportation; the difference from his past experience was mind altering enough. But his insight was to treat this difference just like the striking experience of embracing the Nordic environment. Feng reasoned to himself: If you permit yourself to be both intrigued and overwhelmed, you place yourself in position to learn a lot, quickly. Qcamp had such an effect on participants' transformative learning. Fengs' commentary

exemplifies the cognitive process of letting the mind fly. Yet, within his observation of the environment, he ratchets back to the practical question of extended learning effects.

A number of transportation narratives in the 13 chapters involve a mountain climb that takes place during leisure time during Qcamp. Note the way in which Peterson, in Chap. 7, accounts for her hike up a mountain at Qcamp. "Festvågtinden Mountain, as imposing as it was majestic, seemed to rise directly out of the ocean. An impressive 1640 feet (500 meter) ascent stood between us and the summit. It is the kind of mountain that continuously takes your breath away—because of its beauty and the toll it takes on your lungs as you climb." As Peterson climbs and struggles to make her way up the path, she reflects on how she has been transported in place and time by the experience. "In my pre-Norway life, I'd never been a hiker. And yet, as I looked up at the mountain before us, I was enthralled and eager to get started. It didn't take long until we reached a wide-open boulder field and lost the path. Some folks stood paralyzed and unsure which way to go whereas others carved their own way through the boulders and up the side of the mountain. As I watched, I couldn't help but feel like this whole experience was a metaphor for my journey to this very moment in my life." While people at camp stumbled into the transportation narrative, they used it as fuel for their story. Peterson, in her exhaustion, allowed herself to feel the moment of existentialism.

On the same mountain climb on the same rainy day, Ahen reflects on how he was transported by his experience. He says, "One may hope to see a rainbow when singing in the rain. That August day there was no rainbow for us at the top. Instead, an astonishing shadow play performed by the sun and the clouds threw a cloak of secrecy around the mountains. No clear shapes and contrasting colors, instead, softened silhouettes. All toned down. It seemed that too much light could destroy the light show planned by nature. Instead of allowing the sun to discharge all its light energy in the blink of an eye, the light operator artfully directed sun rays and beams into a target—a rock, a valley, or a fjord—through solid clouds that introduced magical formations of the Lofoten coast not all at once, but one-by-one. A hundred and fifty shades of grey showcased different heights of the mountains and distances between them. I was amazed at how easily a minor change in quantity or direction of light affected the

whole picture. No camera would be good enough to capture all qualities of, by default, a bad weather day. That is why, while taking pictures of the same things at the same time on the same mountain, we agreed to share our findings on return to the qualitative research meetings". His attention, despite the rain and beauty of the mountain remained focused on what he could learn about qualitative methods at Qcamp. He asked, "How did we climbers see the rainbow differently?" Finally, we revisit McGlynn in Chap. 5 , who captures the essence of the transportation narrative with this declaration. "It's 3 am, the sun is shining, and I'm living inside a Monet painting. Heck, I feel so good right now, I might *be* Monet. Monet reincarnated, with less skill and more whiskey, but the same unabated appreciation for waterscapes." In summary the distinct qualities of the setting itself enabled narrative transportation. Students came here to change to learn things from books and experience that they did not know before. The essence of the transportation narrative occured when students defined Qcamp as an opportunity to experiment with new pathways.

Eight: Interrogative The interrogative category occurs when chapter writers raise a rhetorical question they necessarily answer for themselves. For example, Ingulfsvann in Chap. 14 raises his question as a simple and straightforward research query: "What is the change taking place in outdoor life?" Ingulfsvann's question is typical of those threaded through the book. Chapter writers are constantly inquisitive, but their query is directed toward their own ethnographic writing.

A good example of the interrogative is Holand's (Chap. 10) observation of her fellow Qcamp participants' response to a faculty lecture on completing research in natural settings. She writes, "Their faces turned into question marks. Discussions about what is natural (or normal? or instinctive?) behaviour, natural appearance and natural freshness arose, resulting in multiple meanings and confusion. Questions like 'For how long is it natural?' and 'Can a different researcher's interpretations be regarded a natural occurrence?' magnify the conceptual problem. Does the word *natural* imply that something is spontaneous? Authentic? Pure? Plausible? Autonomous? Internalized? Mainstream? Common knowledge? Tacit?" Holand asserts that such a range of meanings, while

informative, could lead to still more abstract and conceptual questions. She ponders, "This could lead to a whole bunch of new questions, like are we talking 'natural law' here, or what? Does 'natural' in the life sciences and the social sciences mean the same?" The distinctions these questions raise are not trivial because the goal of Qcamp is, in seminar style, to surface as many questions as it answers.

The litany of questions that Holand's exploration of the concept of natural research typified the interrogative themes of Qcamp. How do people observe? How do they account for what they have observed? Holand discovered the discussion on what is natural especially important because it was a lesson on intercultural understanding. From Holand's observation, "It also became clear that course participants from different continents and disciplines had different perceptions of what was natural—in even more ways." This commentary demonstrates the way in which our understandings are fossilized yet amenable to change when comparative data is directly experienced. Once again Ahen's struggle to account for how the "modern proliferation of counterfeit medicines become a multibillion-dollar business?" To give depth to this question, he is asked in an exercise to represent his question in a simple visual representation. He questions, "[W]hat must I focus on? How do I explain the most important things with a simple image?" But his questioning led him to a moment of clarity. "Then it clicked. Health, the ultimate human condition has several unspoken political and economic undertones but most of all (is) moral status. I started training my mind to build models as a simplified representation of the complex world. I had many such models in my dissertation." The effect of Ahen's questioning, as it has in others, led him to form a larger and more abstract representation of the research problem he was examining. Camp as an experimental fieldwork strategy shows how varied conclusions about the same data occur. These variations often begin with an interrogative.

Nine: Reckoning We employ the category of reckoning in David Halberstam's (1986) sense of the word. Reckoning occurs when a person or institution (in Halberstam's analysis, two nations) is compelled to face an issue caused by the presence of another's actions. For Halberstam's analysis, the reckoning is produced by the sobering effect of the supplier-

supportive, lean-production, quality-oriented Pacific Rim auto manufacturing strategies on the Big Three auto manufacturers in the United States, GM, Ford, and Chrysler. The Pacific Rim superiority forced a reckoning for transformative change in auto manufacturing in the United States. These 13 chapters are replete with Reckonings.

On a local scale, the personal reckonings in these chapters are not as catastrophic as the threat of a nation's loss of an industry, but instead tend to crop up as small failures (Sitkin, 1992). We treat reckonings in these chapters as things that did not work and thus imposed a major disruption for the chapter writers that produced methodological clarifying opportunities—especially when originality and grounded theory generativity were the goals (Brown, 2015). Reckonings usually have a striking malfunction, some internal feature, that crystalizes a cultural point that causes the writer to perform sensemaking (Weick, 2005) on what they see. These reckonings tend to appear as micro-narratives within the larger success stories the chapter writers tell. Rather than forced errors, reckonings have the effect of producing forced successes. For example, take note of Feng's theoretical reckoning in Chap. 12: "This approach gave me a hard time as I grappled with carving out a theoretically plausible research purpose. Such a selection fundamentally disrupted and changed everything: theories, concepts, research questions, etc., a huge departure from my original topic." Feng's facing the issues in his research continued with a dissertation committee member's, doubting Feng's meaning and use of the concept of grounded theory. He laid out the problem. "The paper had to be reviewed by the editor before publishing, and she was very positive. But one comment had an impact on me: 'I don't like grounded theory, but do not mind me.' Why? I did not get any answer, and then it became clear to me. As I do not know all approaches, neither do reviewers and editors." Feng's first response to the mixed feedback upset him, but he realized there are lots of prejudices toward different research strategies. Here is how he met the reckoning. "I was at first angry, but later I came to terms with it." The mental challenges the chapter writers face result in a key part of their stories.

In another reckoning with a dissertation committee, Hermanrud in Chap. 4 learned to adapt to resistant dissertation committee critiques: "Have you developed any taxonomies? Sadly, I was unable to answer. An embarrassing moment. Later I learned that taxonomies are defined as formal systems for classifying multifaceted, complex phenomena. Taxonomies are viewed among researchers as promoting increased clarity in defining and hence comparing processes in organizations." The effect of the challenge from a committee member on taxonomies had a positive effect on Hermanrud's work. He realized that "themes" are recurrent unifying concepts that could have increased the generality of his work," and hh turned the critique into a moment of learning. He says, "This critique had an impact on me. My research should not only be high on accuracy, but should also add something useful for other researchers, something they could use in their work."

Hermanrud learned to traverse reviewers' commentary and adapt to the concepts and words they preferred to accomplish the goal of narrative resolution. The reckoning does double duty as a special kind of complication. McVey's reckoning complication is how to handle the delicacy of studying industrial secrets while writing a dissertation that will be open and completely accessible to public use. But as he goes about data collection, a far graver event happened in Norway that became part of his narrative. The terrorist attack on Norway created a reckoning complication took over the entire meaning of his research project. Because of the event's importance, McVey in Chap. 13 accounts for the event in this way: "There is another far more serious and somber example of a time in Norway that drove home the importance of handling sensitive topics with the utmost delicacy. On July 22, 2011, Norway experienced two sequential domestic terror attacks in which 77 people were killed. These attacks were the deadliest in Norway since World War II and the effect on the communities in which we were living and collecting stories was profound. It felt like it was the only subject of conversation with everyone we interacted with for days afterwards. The candlelight march for peace that we joined in Bodø a couple of days after the massacre led to a community gathering of speakers and people expressing their overwhelming sorrow was profound." McVey reflects on the meaning of being an observer to another culture's grief. He says, "I was very aware of how delicate this

moment was and how disturbed we all were. Many of the conversations that followed fell into similar patterns. Elements included expressions of shock, horror, disbelief, and sadness; questions about whether anyone knew anyone in or affected by the attacks; how everyone was holding up, whether anyone needed anything; and questions of whether and what people thought about the candlelight vigil and community gathering." One lesson in McVey's chapter shows how reckoning can be distributed. Who faces the situation and why? What within the reckoning adds to understanding of why the story matters? The reckoning category allows us to emphasize the failure sequence in heroic theories of narrative Campbell, 2008). Facing failure and overcoming it with effort makes a compelling story (McAdams, 2013).

The Axial Codes as the Case for Transformation

The final step of the grounded theory process is to complete another condensing of the data by organizing the nine categories in a tighter more limited set of codes called *axial codes,* which are simply "more abstract conceptual categories" of the same dataset (Scott, C., & Medaugh, M. 2017, np). The goal of axial coding is theoretical parsimony. We condensed the categories described here by sorting and thematizing the 13 chapters of the book. Their distillation provides support for the transformation thesis stated in the title and in the introductory chapter of the book.

Transformation and depth of meaning in the axial codes are represented in the classic narrative form: There is a character, a predicament, and resolution, which makes up the three axial codes that capture the nine categories that summarize the thirteen chapters of the book. The axial codes contain the key narrative trope of the-person-gets-out-of-a-fix transformation (Propp, 2010; Campbell, 2008). They are elaborated here to show the convenience and portability of the thirteen narratives.

Character

First is the axial category of Character. Character uses three of the nine categories. The first categories are *transportational* (I lost and gained my sense of being at Qcamp), materiality (I am the sole author of two published qualitative research chapters), and *identification* (my chapter represents me as a person; I have something to say). My identity is as a professional/layman, man/woman, Norwegian/American, novice/veteran, achiever/beginner, or foreign/local. Each of these character bifurcations acts as limitless subsets of possibilities for plurality in the nature of a character. Like an onion, the character can be peeled apart in many layers (Lévi-Strauss, 1976; Deleuze et al., 1977).

Predicament

The second axial category is the Predicament in which the characters find themselves. We know in advance fieldwork is going to be demanding; it is often messy and fails to proceed as planned (Weick, 1995). James Clifford's book, *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), exemplifies the conditions in which the chapter writers and their subjects find themselves. The axis of Predicament is represented by three categories including *interrogative* (how do I form a question out of the problem here? What issue is faced and resolved in the chapter?), *emotional* (the act of research writing is evaluative, thus risk laden), and *reckoning* (the- stumbling, doubt, chaos and choice points in these stories are sources of learning (Sitkin, 1992; Keith et al., 2020) and chances for rectification. Camp as a predicament is thematic across the 13 chapters. The angst of the writers is chosen and palpable. They are all versions of Clifford's predicament that is key in all narrative formulations.

Resolution

The third axial code, the Resolution, is useful for understanding narrative because it directs our attention to when the story comes to an end, what moral can be extracted from it, and how future endings for narratives,

short or long, might evolve. What among the nine categories contribute to the axial category of resolution? First is the *reckoning*. Reckonings are forceful and unchosen. They come about from the force of chosen pressures and Second, Resolutions are responses to contexts; thus the category of complication belongs here.

Third, Resolutions are internal when they arise from within the character's *identification*? McVey's chapter exemplifies an identity-driven story. He sought the Norway fellowship; he wanted to make something of it. He is flexible ; he could take his work in many directions; there are always more alternatives. Mcvey's search is spirited and autonomous. When direction is chosen, not forced, Resolution from among attractive alternatives increases in value.

The most important lesson about the axial category of Resolution is how the moral of a story can evolve and change over time. Resolutions often remain unfixed (Dailey & Browning, 2014). Examples of how the moral changes with time are plentiful. The famous American boxer, Muhammad Ali, was known for his endurance and courage to persist in the boxing ring; he could outlast them all. Yet his health struggles in old age showed that he should have left the boxing ring sooner—concluded his athlete story earlier. What in early life was strength proved in later life to be a weakness. From a fictional example, in the beginning of the movie *Titanic*, a family is distraught because they were so unorganized that they missed the sailing date for the Titanic disaster. Such ironies are frequent when sequence intervenes to change the moral of the story.

Because our latitude of acceptance for what counts as a story (Matthews, 2019) and our range of acceptability for story length, we can compress many bits and pieces into micro-narratives, and mini-resolutions. We can embrace the other extreme and extend the tale as though we were sages stretching the story across the universal arc of time. Resolutions are practically and temporally unlimited.

The capacity for compressed/expansive temporal scaling creates a wide umbrella for what counts as a story (Browning & Morris, 2012). We have perceptual and phenomenological control over when we begin and end our narrative accounts. This subjective choice of timing, length, and resolution is ultimately important because it shapes the moral of the narrative.

Summary and Conclusions

This summary chapters allow me to show some of the depth of meaning and changes in ways of thinking that are prominent in the trans formative conditions for writing outlined in our introductory chapter. First, as mentioned, the overt example of transformation i was the setting itself. If narratives are marked by time and space, Qcamp qualifies as an unusual one. Transformation is demonstrated by Qcamp's isolation and uniqueness; it happened in a small fishing village 70 miles north of the Arctic Circle in a four-day intensive course.

While the stories are about four days at Qcamp, the chapters are transformation from the inside-out. The authors tell a story from the perspective only they have, which fits with Ricoeur's (1981) work on hermeneutics. While the chapters are about research experience, especially what worked and did not work, central to the chapters are stories about individual interpretations, selected and constructed from personal memory, with some features masked and others emphasized, to create the narrative. At their core, autoethnography and qualitative methods are phenomenological. They capture a unique experience that only each ethnographer can tell.

The narrative perspective toward phenomenology means that each chapter itself can be told as a brief story . A key for diffusion is to make it convenient for the person who might use it (Rogers, 2003). The chapters have a handle (Ricks, 2005), frequently captured with a single punchline, that can be recalled, picked up individually, and moved to another setting for training and research. These chapters were designed for adopting an idea. A second key for practical use is to make the chapters repeatable. reinforcing narrative (Dailey & Browning, 2014 The repetition sequence here goes from Qcamp-to-research-to-experiences-to-stories, which makes them mimetic repetitions rather than merely retelling a story from another story (Dailey & Browning, 2014).

In addition to transfer and repeatability, the stories demonstrate extended sequence. In Polster's (1987) narrative terminology, the two chapters by these thirteen authors in two different books serve to punctuate the writer's story. There is an identifiable narrative voice narrative in

the chapters. If every person's life is worth a novel (Polster, 1987), the writers of these chapters express who they are by linking the emotions they experienced while completing their research. They mark a start-to-finish sequence in their stories. A character within the story is identifiable via their action.

Finally, the purpose of academic research is to contribute to theory. When represented as and condensed and a glossed (Weick & Browning, 1991), theory provides a shorthand for summarizing findings and allows us to group concepts with what we know about organizational communication in the thirteen chapters when they are represented as a narrative. Qcamp capitalizes on the connection between autoethnography and methodology by emphasizing the vitality of theoretical development in the research process. In the axial codes of our conclusion, the simplest form of a story is evident. A character in a fix takes action.

Finally, be a contribution, grounded theory requires meeting the discovery criteria, which is thesis is overt in the title of Glaser and Strauss' classic book on grounded theory: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Grounded theory emphasizes the *role* of discovery and to the *criteria* of originality in assessing findings. The theoretical goal is to consciously separate the old from the new, the useful from the unserviceable. How is discovery achieved? By taking the conceptual risk the chapter writers have taken. Writing under conditions of risk is evident in severa; places but especially in the emotion category of this book. For example, Emotion evident among these chapters: risk for the pharma researcher, oversight and disregard for the crystal researcher, and inattention to ecological ideology of the downhill skier.

The learning opportunity of the Qcamp model is to make an immediate tie between action and meaning—literally within minutes and hours of each other. Real time practices are compressed into simulations that are both preparation for future use and an immediate sampling of what qualitative research looks and feels like. It serves as training for more considered theoretical analysis on later projects (Bennett Sandler, 1973). These chapters follow the Qcamp model with this simple direction: Read the classics in qualitative research in preparation for Qcamp and then spend four days practicing the method as you compare your style with others. of qualitative methods

The is illuminated bythe famous American golfer, when learning the game, swing hard from the very beginning and give it all the force you've got. You can always adjust and recalibrate form to bring it into a grove, but begin with your full force. The swing-for-the-fences metaphor holds true for field research and qualitative methods. The authors here have made bold claims. Flash forward from six to ten years later, in 2023, and reflect on the experience by autoethnographically telling your tale of Qcamp. That is what this book is abou

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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