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Introduction

We use the term interpretive inquiry to refer to traditions in sociological and social science methods more broadly which insist that human beings must make sense out of the situations they confront by defining them, granting them meaning, and thereby deciding what is going on, and what to do next based on those interpretations. In this sense, interpretation is at the very heart of human life. Further, interpretation most often just happens to us rather than our consciously exercising control or mastery over it. As pragmatist philosophy informed us, only situations of rupture – strangeness or irritation, absolute newness or unknown problems – transform such ongoing routine interpretation into a more seriously reflexive process. This holds true in everyday life as well as in sociological research.

However, despite making such a general claim, we must also assume that sociological interpretation is, by definition, a different process from interpretation in everyday life due to its specific disciplinary means and modes of reflection. Although there is no, in principle, difference between everyday life experimentation (the way we try to figure out what works in a situation) and analysis of what is going on, sociological (and other scientific/academic) analysis creates an artificial setting which allows us to pose questions about everyday routine action. Normal meaning making has to be suspended in order to pursue sociological analysis. According to Alfred Schütz, academic life and research life take different stances toward their objects of inquiry, adopting different systems of relevance when doing research (see Schütz, 1973b).

Interpretation, as we use it here, points to the basic procedure through which we approach and analyse data, some piece of reality *out there* that we consider in the process of our research-based questions and arguments. Interpretation begins from the moment we have to define a document in the world in order to transform it into data for us, for a particular project. Later we have to define procedures which help us make statements about such documents. Such procedures, including for example line by line sequential analysis of a given text, or collective brainstorming, or whatever,

are pursued to stimulate ideas about what is going on in the data at hand (as a document of a real world event) and to ground analysis, by giving it *some* particular explanatory powers – and not others.

This view of qualitative, or as we prefer here interpretive, research is anchored in *social science traditions of hermeneutics*, considered, at least in German contexts, *the arts and methodologies of interpretation*. Included in such arts of interpretation are those approaches in qualitative inquiry which do not simply assume that you directly perceive the content of a given document or scene in which you are participating. Rather you must stop and reflect upon your own thinking and analysis during the process of inquiry, including the micro-situation of analysing a piece of data, in order not to simply impose your own pre-given assumptions upon it. This is what Hitzler and Honer (1997) called the basic purpose of social science hermeneutics.

Some approaches in such a hermeneutics are quite close to classical perspectives from philosophy or humanities-based traditions of past centuries. They might aim at using a text as a document of some individual's mind, in the sense of deriving from a text or interview what some author really intended in producing it. Or one might adapt a variation of "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Ricoeur, 1970) as in Marxist or psychoanalytic traditions, assuming that some given document (an interview, a group discussion) is a product of a deeper, hidden *underlying structure.*

In contrast, other approaches, such as those used in German traditions of the sociology of knowledge, in Foucauldian discourse research, or in Straussian grounded theory, can instead be considered hermeneutics of the given (Keller, 2015). They begin from the document and its performance in order to understand a social phenomenon. Again, *interpretation* here is used in the sense of accounting for the basic capacity and concrete procedures we must use in order to analyse data. It does not refer to the process of *big meaning making* by producing a formal theoretical diagnosis for a comprehensive, completed research project. In fact, this is how Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) discussed interpretation in Michel Foucault's work, thereby addressing the world famous concepts such as bio-power or governmentality with which Foucault theorised his findings. We agree that interpretive research needs such conceptual elements to account for its results. Such Interpretation (with a capital I) makes cases interesting, resonates with other cases and creates awareness for broader audiences.

But big I Interpretation is not our primary concern here. Rather, our concern is interpretation with a small i as present in the procedures Anselm Strauss described in his book on qualitative methods for social scientists (Strauss, 1987). Here, for example, line-by-line analysis was used in order to analyse an ill woman's account of her suffering and pain in taking a shower. It was used to provoke both creativity and adequacy in conceptual category building.[1]

In this chapter, we situate the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD), developed by Reiner Keller, in the history and contemporary field of social research methodologies. SKAD is a research agenda and methodology[2] which includes a conception of its object – both reflection *about* the methodology and reflexive awareness of analysing discourses by using particular discourses (those of sociology and SKAD), and concrete research methods (see Keller, Chapter 2, this volume, on SKAD). Its objects include discourses and dispositifs, the discursive construction of realities, social relations of knowledge and knowing and the politics of knowledge and knowing. SKAD methods include strategies for *data collection* (including textual data and artefacts produced in the field of research itself – sometimes referred to as *natural* data, in contrast to data produced by more obvious interventions of researchers, such as interviewing, group discussion, participation and observation in the field), *data documentation* (including archiving, recording, writing field-notes and memos) and *data analysis* (including sequential interpretation, coding and/or categorising) as well as more comprehensive accounting for *what's going on* by theorising and more conceptual diagnoses.

A very short history of classical interpretive inquiry

We cannot provide a comprehensive account of the complex history of methods in sociology (much less the social sciences more broadly) here. Such a task is vast and complex, considering the heterogeneity of developments in different countries and language regions around the world. We therefore focus only on French, German and US-based traditions. There was, in fact, considerable exchange between German and US philosophy and social science at the turn of the twentieth century, most often via US scholars travelling to Germany to study.[3]

Ethnography, the name under which most early qualitative inquiry was pursued, has a long history, extending back centuries. It was deeply stimulated and shaped by European colonialism and linked to emerging interest in *Others* from the sixteenth century onwards, including Western travellers' historical accounts of non-Western locales and their peoples (e.g. Pratt, 1992).

Within Europe, processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and enlightenment as well as the expansion of the public sphere were based on the capacity to read and discuss texts. These were also accompanied not only by statistical studies of populations and their qualities (e.g. Engels, [1845] 2009) but also by inquiries into folk life and reports on ordinary (poor and marginalised) people's situations and miseries as well. French writers of the nineteenth century such as Honoré de Balzac, Emile Zola and Gustave Flaubert were especially interested in researching real life situations of people and describing them in their novels. These can be viewed as pre- or proto-sociological projects in micro and macro-perspectives (e.g. Zola's

novel *Germinal* about coal mine workers in Northern France, published in 1885; see Zola, 2004). Documenting workers' living conditions as well as accounting for vanishing rural and feudal ways of life in the processes of modernisation were part and parcel of art and fiction in this era, as well as being taken up in more journalistic and scholarly modes of reportage.

Although such realism was most prominent in France, similar projects of social reporting were undertaken by artists and scholars in other European countries as well. American sociologists in the pragmatist tradition drew on such ideas starting in the early twentieth century, adapting them to their interests in urban life and the effects of immigration on the US as well as on immigrants (e.g. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, 1918). Their courses included sociological works by Georg Simmel and Max Weber, both of whom pointed to the importance of meaning-making for individual and collective action. Further inflected with additional focus on communication processes and interaction, much of this early US sociological work emerged from the University of Chicago and became known as Chicago School. It included early sociological manuals on field research (Palmer, 1928) and the core organising idea of the Thomas-theorem (Thomas, [1923] 1978; Thomas and Thomas, [1928] 1970). This proto-constructivist "theorem" asserted in the 1920s that if situations are believed to be or interpreted as real, they are real in their consequences. Such early sociological work raised important civic issues of concern to democracy including how marginalities, ethnicity and race and class differences "matter" when racial and ethnic segregation were very much the norm if not the law.

Another historically emerging interest is notable here. Changing ways of both living and thinking became topics of interest in academia due to thousands of years of contact and relations between societies, influenced by early colonialism, and given the long history of philosophy as well as the philosophy of enlightenment. Today we call this area of study "systems and practices of knowledge, representation and meaning making" (see Keller, [2005] 2010, 2011, [2005] 2019). French scholars initiated general inquiries into ideologies as consistent systems of categories in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These were later transformed into the Marxist analysis of base and superstructure (Marx and Engels, [1846] 2011), and in the 1920s, reframed by Karl Mannheim (1936, [1922–24] 1980; [1925–24] 1986) as his standpoint theory of milieu-driven ideologies in competition. Mannheim was one of the classic founders of the sociology of knowledge, pointing to the situated experiences and mental representations generated by members of particular social categories and groups (for example, those of conservative milieus, specific generations, men versus women, village versus urban people, etc.).[4]

Moreover, Mannheim (1952) developed a particular method which he called "the documentary method of interpretation" for data analysis linked to his research interests. Here the core idea was to analyse a given piece of

data as a document representing the expression of a particular standpoint, or describing a larger cultural frame and situation. This analytic strategy later became a basic approach in Harold Garfinkel's ([1967] 1984) *Studies in Ethnomethodology* in the US (Coulon, 1995: 32), in Pierre Bourdieu's ([1979] 2010) sociology of habitus in France, and in Ralf Bohnsack's (2014) "documentary method approach" in Germany.

Other classical sociologists also expressed interest in questions of knowledge. For example, starting in the 1830s, Auguste Comte ([1830–42] 1989) was interested in human history as the evolution of knowledge systems. Emile Durkheim ([1912] 2008) and Marcel Mauss (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 1963) pursued research on the social origins and histories of systems of representation around the turn of the twentieth century. Ludwik Fleck ([1935] 1981) presented detailed sociological work on the genesis and development of *scientific facts.* Michel Foucault's interests in the "history of systems of thought" (the title of his chair at the Collège de France) and power/knowledge regimes are later manifestations of this as well (Foucault, 1980; Keller, 2017b).

But perhaps closest to current interests in discourse research was Max Weber's analysis of the Protestant ethic which can certainly be considered an early exemplar of discourse research. Weber ([1904/1905] 2002) used documents from religious contexts in order to make his arguments about a particular organisation of everyday life and work which, as he stated, was so congruent with organising capitalism that it precisely accounted for many of the astonishing historical conditions of Western capitalist expansion. In fact, sociology itself was conceived by Weber ([1904] 1949) as "Kulturwissenschaft" (cultural studies) which deal with the meanings human societies and individual beings attribute to the chaos of "the worldly given". C. Wright Mills (1940) referred back to Weber in his significant later argument for an analysis of *social vocabularies* of motives for action (rather than motives per se). Alfred Schütz ([1932] 1967), who was interested in the "methodology of understanding", further developed the concept of a *collective* social stock of knowledge from which acting agents obtain blueprints or repertoires for their actions and interpretations of (and in) the world and for its reality to them (see Schütz and Luckmann, 1973).

In sum, there was extensive and ongoing interest in what we now call the sociology of knowledge and discourse studies in the social sciences and their predecessors.

The interpretive paradigm after World War II

Since the mid-1930s and 1940s, social research in the US has been dominated by quantitative approaches using statistical procedures, and interest in mass media communication including their content analysis. But during the 1950s a new generation of Chicago scholars (including Howard

Becker, Anselm Strauss, Blanche Geer, Erving Goffman, Rue Bucher and many others) began to come to the fore. They actively re-explored and discussed strategies for seriously pursuing qualitative inquiry, including methods for field research and interviewing.

In Europe, after the disasters and closures of social science departments during World War II, French and German sociologies were partially renewed in quite different ways, both influenced by US scholars again travelling to Europe to do research and to help rebuild academia. French and German scholars also went to the US during this era to learn about American sociology. In both France and Germany, the concept of "qualitative methods" was introduced via these exposures in and to the US, mainly with reference to an article on "Some functions of qualitative analysis in social research" by Barton and Lazarsfeld (1955)[5] and qualitative content analysis of mass media and communications research as presented by Bernard Berelson (1952: 114). By the end of the 1950s, scholars in both countries had developed their own fields of qualitative and interpretive research methods in quite different ways (see Keller and Poferl, 2016).

In France, post-World War II academic sociology liberally made use of different approaches to field work. The situation was one where curious intellectuals with no training in sociology or in any academic discipline became interested in the transformation of work life and in the modernisation of French rural societies and pursued research in these areas. French anthropology added to these kinds of methods, and field work and observation became influential approaches. But "qualitative research methods" per se never became an important label or identity marker in France. Rather, as Pierre Bourdieu and some of his colleagues stated in the late 1960s, in France, the opposition between qualitative and quantitative research was considered to have had its historical moment but no longer really mattered (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron, [1968] 1991).

French researchers subsequently elaborated their own individual approaches, based on the distinctive concerns, skills and competencies of the researcher. These were rarely organised into broader schools or traditions of qualitative inquiry. Since the end of the 1990s, a deeper interest in ethnography seems to be the main feature of the French qualitative landscape, which fits well with the rather individualistic French approach to research methodology. This interest includes the strong presence of US sociologist Howard Becker as one inspiration for such work, amongst others from the French tradition. There was also a brief flurry of interest in Anselm Strauss occasioned by the French translation of his *Mirrors and Masks* (Strauss, [1959] 1997), but this seems not to have extended to grounded theory.

In Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, returning critical theorists introduced group discussion, their documentation and textual analysis as one major strategy for understanding the ongoing transformations of German

society. This so called Frankfurt "group experimentation" (Gruppenexperiment) was financed by the "US High Commissioner for Germany" and consisted of 121 formalised "group discussions" with different groups of workers (e.g. from coal mining, farmers), based on a methodology imported from the US market research. Very much like today's focus group methodologies in market research, a small sample of workers from similar backgrounds was assembled to discuss some current issues. The aim was to analyse their assumed milieu-bounded "mentalities" and "political orientations". Mangold (1960) developed a systematic approach from this method as qualitative research, using additional resources from earlier Chicago School group research. Horkheimer and Adorno (1960), in their preface to Mangold's book, insisted on the scientific quality of such a method and argued that it should be further elaborated (see Keller and Poferl, 2016).

German critical theorist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas introduced basics as well as logics of interpretive inquiry in Germany in his most influential 1967 book on the *Logics of the Social Sciences* (Habermas, [1967] 1988). Some translations of US-based qualitative approaches were also published 1970 in German, and visits by German scholars to the US were undertaken, as well as the other way round. During the 1970s, fundamental identity-building around a qualitative research paradigm emerged. This subsequently resulted in the ongoing presence of qualitative and interpretive research emphases across German sociology *and* in its institutions. In contrast to the US, much of this research was oriented towards textual analysis of interview data and group discussion. For an example of analysis of biographical narratives or narrative accounts of situations, experiences and interactions, see Fritz Schütze's writings in methodology and empirical work on soldiers, or the lived experiences of people growing up in East Germany in the Soviet era (e.g. Schütze, 2008a, 2008b; the special issue on Schütze in Qualitative Sociological Research, 2014).

With deep historical reference to German hermeneutical traditions (e.g. Wilhelm Dilthey, 1989; see Soeffner, 2004), several qualitative approaches (including objective hermeneutics, reconstructive hermeneutics in the sociology of knowledge, the documentary method of interpretation, conversational analysis close to the US model, narrative interview analysis, etc.) were established in Germany based on different modes of sequential analysis in order to follow quite diverse interests in social research (e.g. Wernet, 2014). What they all shared was a strong focus on line by line analysis of textual documents (mostly interviews and documents of verbal interaction) and a strong urgency to demonstrate one's argument through textual materials (see, e.g. contributions from German scholars in Flick, 2014). Ethnographic work could not keep up with such demands and has remained at the margins of German qualitative inquiry. Later, grounded theory was seen to fit comfortably with the textual analytics characteristic of German qualitative inquiry, and it has

become the most prominent import from the US and a frequently used methodology.

The US has experienced rich and diverse developments in qualitative research as well. One important strand, deriving from Chicago School sociology and American pragmatist philosophy, was *symbolic interactionism*, the name coined by Herbert Blumer in 1937 (Blumer, 1969: 1). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, interactionism offered a very lively defence of interpretive research, largely against American structural functionalism and survey research. It also sustained Chicago School engagements with diversity, marginality and racism (e.g. Reynolds and Herman-Kinney, 2003), and some works are considered prescient of postmodernist and poststructuralist developments.

The second enduring strand of anti-scientism in American social science that seriously nurtured interpretation was C. Wright Mills' (1959) more critical approach as manifest in his *The Sociological Imagination*, also with deep roots in American pragmatist philosophy. The third was *ethnomethodology* (Garfinkel, [1967] 1984), very much inspired by Alfred Schütz and his work on *social phenomenology* (e.g. Schütz, [1932] 1967, 1973a). Symbolic interactionists largely used ethnographic approaches as well as interviewing and field observations in research pursuits. In contrast, ethnomethodology insisted on more detailed and precise line-by-line analysis of smaller pieces of data, and rejected more general theoretical concepts such as social class or social structure.

Fundamental to the coming qualitative renaissance, explicit social constructivism was triggered in the US in 1966 by Berger and Luckman's (1966) classic *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, based on a quite different reading of Schütz. This constructivism assumes that people (including researchers) construct or interpret the realities in which they participate through their own situated perspectives and with the help of their repertoires of social knowledge and meaning making. Such repertoires emerge from historical processes of institutionalisation and change performed by human beings dealing with their existential affairs. They become a socio historical a priori – taken for granted as *reality as it is for us here and now*.

Blumer's (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* was another US sociological "manifesto" for constructivism and the interpretive turn. In anthropology, Geertz (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures* provoked similar debates. But in terms of research methods, it was *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, the manifesto for qualitative research by Glaser and Strauss (1967) that became the most influential document of the qualitative renaissance for many decades. Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* can be considered the next major milestone intervention in US qualitative inquiry, serving as a broad and inclusive umbrella for a wide array of interpretive approaches. Significantly, its impacts were felt across multiple disciplines, specialties and even

the professions, widening perspectives and widely introducing new theoretical and epistemological worlds of interpretive research.

Closely linked to symbolic interactionist writing, ethnographic field work and interviewing, a broader interest in *public discourses* and *collective struggles* over the definitions of situations also emerged in the US during the 1970s. Some Chicago scholars such as Herbert Blumer (1933) had begun analysing movies and their influence on youth behaviour in the 1930s. Again Blumer (1958) pointed to the highly consequential public construction of ethnic or racial categories and their shifting consequences. Other interactionist work focused on social problems, deviance, the careers of public issues and the reformist campaigns of "moral entrepreneurs" (e.g. Becker, 1963). With a background in early pragmatist arguments about "universes of discourse" and the core role of communication in society as well as about "the public and its problems" (Dewey, 1927; Mead, 1934), scholars started investigating public discourses as conflictual processes of defining situations between competing organisational actors (see Gusfield, 1981; Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988). Social movement research, picking up on Erving Goffman's (1974) work on frame analysis, began analysing strategic campaigns (Benford and Snow, 2000) and mass media coverage of public concerns, moving from qualitative exploratory research to quantified coding of framing processes in public debates (e.g. Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; for a critical discussion: Ulrich and Keller, 2014).

Grounded theory too became a more complex family of approaches or tradition in its "second generation" (Morse *et al.*, 2009). In 1990 and 1998, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990, 1998) published the first two editions of *The Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, essentially a "how to" textbook largely in the interactionist tradition which became extremely popular. Glaser (1992) soon actively distanced his own approach to GT from that of Strauss. Then, at the turn of this century, Charmaz (2000, 2006, 2014) argued for a new and more fully *constructivist interpretive GT* that emphasised reflexivity and theorised analysis rather than generating formal theory. This was soon followed by Clarke's (2005) cartographic extension of GT, *Situational Analysis* (SA), explicitly including analysis of extant discourse materials found in the situation under study. SA's perspective on situations as co-defined by the observer and the observed led GT further around postmodern and poststructural turns, towards more reflexive theorising of complexities and ecological relations in the situation, also eschewing formal theory (see Clarke and Keller, 2014; Clarke, Friese and Washburn, 2015, 2018).

Providing a more panoramic view, Keller (2012) framed the major strands of interpretive research as "the interpretive paradigm", using Thomas P. Wilson's term (Wilson, 1970). In an article on "Qualitative Methods in Europe", Knoblauch, Flick and Maeder (2005: §5) stated that this paradigm is:

based on theories like symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnomethodology etc. – positions that stress the importance of investigating action and the social world from the point of view of the actors themselves. In a Kuhnian sense, this interpretive paradigm was supposed to substitute for the 'normative paradigm', represented by structural functionalism or Rational Choice theories.

Thus qualitative research today is both supported by and dependent upon approaches oriented towards meaning, context, interpretation, understanding and reflexivity.

The interpretive turn and its receptions

Let us first clarify more specifically here what we mean by the interpretive turn, and then discuss its varied receptions in our three focal countries. Since the 1960s, theoretical and methodological shifts in direction and emphasis have commonly been referred to as "turns" (e.g. see Bachmann-Medick, 2006). To make a long story short, the *interpretive turn* (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987a) – which is central to SKAD – has deep roots in (German) European traditions from Friedrich Nietzsche via Wilhelm Dilthey to Max Weber, and their welcoming reception in US pragmatism, as well as pragmatism's later welcoming reception in French post-structuralism.[6] The interpretive turn became a cultural force in the late 1960s and early 1970s through some important books and extended far beyond our core field of sociology. These works demonstrated new philosophical interest in language and speech acts (e.g. Rorty, [1967] 1992), and major anthropological debates about what constituted "good" interpretive ethnographic work (e.g. Geertz, 1973; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; and Rosaldo, 1989). In the late 1970s, Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, ([1979] 1987b) had predicted a general turn towards a more interpretive social sciences and presented a collection of core articles on such a turn. Anthropologist Geertz' call for "thick description" was echoed by interactionist sociologist Denzin's (1989: 52) call for "thick interpretation" in his *Interpretive Interactionism* which innovatively interwove interactionism and poststructuralisms (see also Fontana, 2005).

The interpretive turn built upon several foundational assumptions:

- Meaning is re-located from *reality out there* to *reality as experienced by the perceiver*;
- An observer is assumed to inevitably be a participant in what is observed;
- Interpretations are not assumed to be universal but situated – emerging from some specific place, time and social space;

- Cultures are best understood as changing networks of distinctive symbols and signifying practices, and therefore interpretation per se is conditioned by cultural perspectives and mediated by symbols and practices.

Thus the interpretive turn asserts an interesting relation between what those researched do (their own situated interpretations), and what researchers do (situated interpretations of others' situated interpretations).

To pursue research, social science inquiry must directly engage with this condition of the interpretation of interpretations. Social scientists must provide some account of what is being done and why. In these post-positivist times, if you do not wish to proceed by blurring boundaries and combining different genres or forms of relating to the real such as those used in art (novels, documentary photography, painting, etc.) or journalism, then you need to account for your use of one or several particular methodologies in doing your research.

For example, attending to the complexities in case study research today (such as studying a situation or a discourse, see Clarke and Keller, 2014) is not inquiry "after method" (see Law, 2004). Rather, it needs to be conducted with the accountability called for by an ethics of reflexivity. That is, we do not believe "anything goes" methodologically. Instead we are asserting that the researcher must account for what they have done, and moreover, do so reflexively. Regardless of earlier critiques of methods development, social science research still has to clarify what makes it valuable as a contribution to knowledge production.

Certainly and perhaps for good reason, one can advocate the blurring of genres and a general queering of disciplines as well as methods. But while there may be gains through such a stance, there may also be some important losses in terms of the analytic reach and richness of research. This is why we are insisting here on the need for methodologies in discourse research which *neither* fall into the trap of pure positivism *nor* accept the myth of pure artistic production and creativity. We are both, in our distinctive ways, attempting *not* to throw the social science research baby out with the bath water, however murky the latter may be. Sensitive, critical interpretive methodologies are and will continue to be useful in social science – and other – research (see Clarke, Friese and Washburn 2015, 2018; Keller, [2005] 2019).

The receptions with which the interpretive turn and its sub-turns were met varied tremendously. As we have seen, the dynamics of qualitative research development had already unfolded in quite different ways in the three countries in focus here. French research communities, at least in sociology, had generated rather individualistic approaches to qualitative perspectives, with different ethnographic perspectives as well as some influence of interactionism, narrative analysis and individualised method making. Germany followed a more institutionalised pattern wherein

qualitative inquiry became a kind of identity anchor for a broad and established research community subdivided into an array of different competing and sometimes conflictual specific approaches and interests. In both France and Germany, some facets of the interpretive turn were taken up and others not.

In sharp contrast, in the US and UK contexts, by the late twentieth century, a deep and serious fissure had developed *within* worlds of qualitative inquiry essentially in reaction to postmodern and post-structural theories and their research implications essentially captured as "the interpretive turn". Those who largely eschewed the interpretive turn continued to advocate more "classical and scientific" approaches to qualitative research often with positivist tendencies, while others, more experimental, constructivist and critical in their perspectives, more enthusiastically advocated that turn, pursuing an array of new directions. They were varyingly inspired by social movements and political engagement with issues of race, gender, Indigenous rights and concern about participatory, decolonising and democratising potentials of research methods and orientations. The International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, a highly international organization based in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois and initiated by critical interactionist Norman Denzin, became one haven for such interests (see Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008). To date, and for many reasons, in both Germany and France there has been much less impact of such more political forms (discussed next) of the interpretive turn on research methodologies. There have also been some subsequent turns following the interpretive turn. Most were articulated by Anglo-American scholars and are referred to as the *visual turn* (e.g. Jay, 2002), the *body turn* (e.g. Gugutzer, 2006), the *affective turn* (e.g. Clough and Halley, 2007) and most recently, the *material turn* (e.g. Mukerji, 2015). Those turns can be seen as objections and corrections to a certain textual bias in research questions, research objects, data collection and analysis which have characterised qualitative and interpretive social research for quite some time. But given the interpretive turn's argument that *there is no escape from interpretation*, in considering affect, for example, you must *define* something as affect. Moreover, it must be defined as something different from, for example, calculated action. You classify, and in the very act of doing so, you therefore perform an interpretation.

At this historical point, these subsequent turns can be considered helpful suggestions about where to look next in research, possible turns ahead, or what else you might consider taking into account, methodologically. But they do not replace the basic arguments of interpretive research and methods. Moreover, this holds true for a quite different turn too which we might call the *political turn*, which centres on the challenging and sometimes existential question of *why we do research, for whom and with what (hoped for) benefits*. Again this political turn is having very different impacts in different countries, due to historical contexts, political developments and

situations and many other factors. To date, its impact on qualitative methods in sociology beyond the core academic culture of various specialised "studies" (such as feminist and queer studies, disability studies, postcolonial studies, etc.) is rather low in Germany and France and other European contexts. In sharp contrast, impacts seem rather high in the US and in many countries in the southern hemisphere whose scholars are increasingly participating in transnational conversations about social science methodologies.

The political turn includes engagements by feminist, civil rights, anti-racist, queer, post- and decolonial, Indigenous and related scholars. Critiques of *both* qualitative and quantitative research in the U.S. since at least the 1980s have included, for example, having sexist, racist, classist, elitist, homophobic and/or voyeuristic colonialist tendencies. The feminist adage that "the personal is political", or "lived experience matters", was a key early generator of feminist research issues as well as the central tenet of consciousness-raising. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) published perhaps the major anti-racist feminist statement as *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* still echoing loudly across the social sciences and humanities and increasingly around the world. The feminist anthropologists' response to the almost complete absence of women's voices in Clifford and Marcus's (1986) edited volume was *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Behar and Gordon (1995). Visweswaran's (1994) brilliant *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* then integrated postcolonial, cultural and discourse concerns. More recently Phellas (2012) and others have attended to *Researching Non-Heterosexual Sexualities.* More broadly, there has been a spate of new books on critical research (e.g. Cannella, Pérez and Pasque, 2015; Denzin and Giardina, 2015), including critical auto-ethnography (e.g. Boylorn and Orbe, 2014) and critical interactionism (Jacobsen, 2019). There is even discussion of post-qualitative research (e.g. Lather and St. Pierre, 2013). How, when and where these will manifest next remains to be seen (see e.g. Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

SKAD discourse research and the disciplines

Discourse means different things in different languages (for the following see Keller, 2013). In German, the word did not exist but was introduced centuries ago from other languages (most importantly Latin). Its newer usage was mainly influenced by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and his "ethics of discourse" paradigm which refers to a normative setting of well-organised processes of discussion about conflictual issues (such as consensus-conferences or environmental mediation). Habermas' approach is linked to the idea that better arguments win, or at least prepare the ground for consensus-building between stakeholders in conflictual situations.

In English and French, the meanings of this term have been quite different. In everyday English, discourse simply means a conversation, a verbal interaction between people or a debate in the public sphere. In French (or Latin and related languages) *discours* (or *discorso*) is the usual term for a comprehensive serious speech act, such as a lecture, a treatise, a sermon, a presentation and more. "Public discourses" here also refers to debates in the public sphere, mediated by mass media.

The contemporary transnational and transdisciplinary field of discourse research contains a multiplicity of research methodologies and interests, influenced by traditions from linguistics, the humanities and the social sciences.[7] In sociology and the social sciences (including Birmingham Cultural Studies), interest in discourse research questions has been articulated throughout their history (as we noted above regarding Max Weber and the classics of the sociology of knowledge). But except for certain ideas in the works of Michel Foucault since the 1960s, and contributions from social movement research in symbolic interactionism in the 1970s also noted above, there has been little work on a methodology of discourse research for the social sciences. The major exception is the broad use of the concept of discourse for studying processes of "social construction" (see Hacking, 2000) via collective meaning making.

Here SKAD, much like situational analysis in a different realm, is an intervention which aims to strengthen social science interest in discourses as power/knowledge regimes, and discursive constructions of reality as major sites of current and ongoing highly consequential meaning making. In contrast to perspectives in discourse theory and research which pose a strong explanatory intent on the one hand (such as work inspired by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, see Howarth, Glynos and Griggs, 2016), and a rather narrow or loose usage of term on the other (see the discussion in Leipold, 2014), SKAD proposes a heuristics of discourse research based in the interpretive traditions of sociology and linked to methods.

So what then is the place of SKAD in the broader field of discourse research? In American structural and distributional linguistics, Zelig Harris (1952) initially introduced the term "discourse analysis" to characterise a precise structural-grammatical analysis of Native American languages. Here "discourse" referred to distinctive linguistic structures. Harris's approach became a source of inspiration for *quantitative* analyses of major text corpora in linguistics, including in France in the late 1960s, making interconnections between linguistics and history. In contrast, linguistic pragmatics is concerned with *language in use*, and has inspired conversational analysis since the 1960s, as well as "discourse analysis" as analysis of verbal interaction or textual genres (like news, media commentary, etc.) still lively today. Here the core focus is on micro-processes and structured patterns of language usage, verbal interaction and textual organisation or features of distinctive textual genres.

Another very influential intellectual tradition was initiated by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure ([1916] 1977) centred on his theory of language as sign system where each sign/meaning-relation depends on the particular position of this combination within a broader comprehensive system of signs. This theory was inspired by sociologist Emile Durkheim and his ideas about institutions as historically created social facts. Saussure became very influential in French structuralist philosophy and anthropology (e.g. in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss) and eventually provoked post-structuralism as a counter-movement in philosophy and beyond.

Yet another thread of discourse research drew upon the pragmatist concept of "universes of discourse" as systems of shared symbols and meaning, especially in the work of George Herbert Mead (1934) and the linguistic theory established by Charles S. Peirce (1994; see Cefaï, 2016). In the 1930s and 1940s, Charles Morris (1946) presented a conception of different sub-universes of discourse within societies (such as fiction, mathematics, religion) which presaged later usages by French philosopher Michel Foucault.

Today, the most influential thinker in discourse research is Michel Foucault.[8] Across his career he moved from a more structural perspective centred on discourses as comprehensive formations or systems of meaning making, to a more pragmatist and poststructuralist view. In his later more pragmatist post-structural tradition, one asks: What do discourses and actors do in conflictual situations? How is meaning performed, made, and used in concrete discursive practices? While Foucauldian structuralism understood and investigated discourses as regulating systems, his post-structuralism turned attention to the interactions between (abstract) symbolic orders and the concrete use of language or signs, that is, the relationships among various structures and events (mostly linguistic actions or social practices).

Through Foucault's own empirical work and its reception in cultural studies, his ideas became the most influential usage of "discourse" today, probably around the globe, despite having a rather black-boxed methodology or, according to some, lacking a discernible one. In the British Birmingham cultural studies tradition, with Stuart Hall as a leading figure, Foucault was combined with interpretive, culturalist sociology from Weber to Gramsci, to symbolic interactionism. A variety of integrations of Foucault with other approaches has also occurred. "Discourse" here is used as a concept to analyse comprehensive processes of institutional or organisational meaning-making and knowledge production, as well as to inquire into current conflictual processes of discursive construction of realities.

Since the late 1980s and 1990s, a broad array of research approaches to discourse has emerged and many new methods have become established, demonstrating quite different interests and disciplinary backgrounds.

These approaches range from large corpus-based linguistics via pragmatics of language usage, to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with its interest in unmasking ideological and discriminatory language usage, to Essex School interest in populist movement mobilisation and other political science concerns with arguing as political process, to social science analyses of world making via studies of knowledge production, public mobilisation, domination and other performances of symbolic universes (see Keller, 2013; Jaworski and Coupland, 2002; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001).

It seems to us that besides linguistic concerns, CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 2010) is currently the most prominent version of discourse research in Anglo-American contexts. In France, for example, despite the world wide success of Foucauldian thinking, and despite some experimentation between history and linguistics using particular versions of discourse analysis (e.g. Guilhaumou and Maldidier, 1995) there have not been any major developments in social sciences discourse research. Inquiry into discourse largely remains a linguistic domain, specifically within corpus linguistics and pragmatics (Maingueneau, 2017). In French sociology, research on environmental conflicts, known as a sociology of controversies, can be considered closer to interests in discursive meaning making as approached here (e.g. Chateauraynaud, 2011).

Since the 1990s, German linguistics as well as the social sciences more broadly have seen a proliferation of debates, development and discussion of newer approaches to discourse research. In fact, these maybe the most lively sites of discourse research development today (e.g. see Keller *et al.*, [2001] 2011; and the *Journal for Discourse Research/Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung*, established in 2013).

SKAD was introduced into this lively field in Germany in the late 1990s as an approach which, by integrating different theoretical traditions, seeks to provide a heuristics for a methodologically sound way of approaching discursive meaning making and discursive constructions of realities. SKAD argues for using research strategies and tools from the interpretive sociological tradition, especially from the sociology of knowledge, pragmatism and Foucault. Significant here, SKAD does *not* presuppose or imply a general and explanatory theory of what discourses are and how they perform the work they do in the world. Moreover, it does *not* seek to generate such a theory through the analytic work it does. Instead SKAD takes a case study approach, insisting that each case we deal with is *a case of its own sui generis*, or at least has to be approached as such, via a *heuristics of research* which ultimately provides some theorisation about that case, but does not offer a definite causal theory.

In this regard, SKAD has deep affinities with situational analysis (hereafter SA) as conceived by Adele Clarke as an extension of grounded theory at the turn of this century (see Clarke 2003, 2005; Clarke, Friese and Washburn, 2015, 2018). In fact both approaches were developed very much in parallel, but without being aware of the other for quite a while.

With pragmatist and interactionist roots through grounded theory, SA sought to move grounded theory fully around the postmodern and post-structural turns, explicitly integrating the analysis of discursive materials. SA also attends to the significance of nonhuman elements in situations, and attends assiduously to the relational ecologies of the situation.

SKAD sought to move the sociology of knowledge and interpretive research in German (and Anglo-American, etc.) contexts towards an interest in the work discourses do in contemporary societies. Such a move can be pursued using a methodology of discourse research designed for social science questions about discursive meaning making. SKAD argues for a re-orientation of discourse research toward questions of power/ knowledge regimes, their processing through time, space and people and their actual impacts on fields of practices. As sociology of knowledge based research, it also has affinities with some social studies of science work. But distinct from some of its threads, SKAD insists that performances of knowledge and meaning making are present not only in science and technology fields, but can and must also be traced throughout societies and their heterogeneous fields of practices. Thus it may be useful to clarify the contingencies of relations of knowledge and knowing, and the politics of knowledge and knowing, as well as their effects in our current moment. Again SKAD is situated close to Foucauldian ideas of experimentation and critique (see Keller, 2017a, 2017b).

Outlook

In a millennial review, two main themes in current qualitative inquiry in Europe were discerned by Knoblauch, Flick and Maeder (2005): *diversity* manifesting in an array of new approaches, and *unity* through sharing the interpretive paradigm. They also remind us that qualitative inquiries are "imprinted by cultures … their surrounding institutions, traditions and political as well as economic contexts" (Knoblauch, Flick and Maeder 2005: §4). But today's pressures for using English as a common language in academia risks our ending up with a rather hegemonic constellation of Anglo-American traditions and approaches. We risk ignoring or excluding rich traditions from *out there* or *down there* due to the fact that they are based in different epistemological cultures or emerge from other continents, despite the efforts of some handbook projects to try to make them more visible (e.g. from Germany to the Anglo-American public, see Flick, 2014; for Indigenous methodologies, see Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008).

There are today more intentionally transnational venues for publication about research, such as the new *International Review of Qualitative Research* and *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, but still in English. The *Journal for Discourse Studies* (edited by Reiner Keller, Werner Schneider and Willy Viehöver) was founded in 2013 and publishes articles from authors all over the world in either German or English. The online

journal *FQS: Forum: Qualitative Social Research/Sozialforschung* innovatively offers abstracts of everything in English while articles may be in some other languages, allowing much broader access for scholars not from the West but from what Stuart Hall (1996) called "the rest".

While some have lamented the profusion of new approaches in qualitative inquiry (e.g. Hammersley, 2008: 181), in contrast, we agree with political scientists Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006: 390): "If knowledge is power, then methodological pluralism disperses that power, whereas 'one best way' concentrates it. Reembracing interpretive approaches as a legitimate scientific undertaking, then, strengthens both the human sciences and democracy". Using interpretive qualitative inquiry to strengthen democracy is a critical and increasingly urgent task for decades to come all over the planet.

Notes

1 One of us, Adele Clarke, was fortunate to take part in the group discussions the book refers to. The other of us, Reiner Keller, was trained in similar procedures but much later and in quite different contexts.
2 It can be seen as a theory-methods package, according to the terms Susan Leigh Star (1989) applied to grounded theory.
3 E.g. both Robert E. Park and Talcott Parsons earned their PhDs in Germany; other pragmatist philosophers and sociologists also studied and travelled in Germany in the early twentieth century.
4 We can see echoes of this in feminist standpoint epistemologies (e.g. Sandra Harding, 2003) and theories of situated knowledge (e.g. Donna Haraway, 1988).
5 Ironically, this was a contribution to a Festschrift for critical theorist Max Horkheimer.
6 In 2005, the original SKAD book had carefully noted the affinities between Michel Foucault and pragmatism (Keller, [2005] 2010: 150; see in addition Keller 2008, 2017b). Richard Rorty (1982) and Nancy Fraser (1997) had made similar arguments. On pragmatism and French post-structuralism today, see e.g. Bignall, Bowden and Patton (2014), and the Special Issue of *Foucault Studies* (2011) on Foucault and Pragmatism, especially Koopman (2011a, 2011b).
7 This includes discursive psychology, argumentative discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, discursive institutionalism, Essex school discourse research, corpus linguistics, pragmatics and many others. A more detailed discussion of the area of discourse research, including full references, is given in Keller (2013).
8 See Keller (2017b) and Keller on SKAD (Chapter 2, this volume) for a summary discussion and further references.

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