

CONNECTING INTERSECTIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL POSITIONALITIES

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❖ Intersectionality:

- ▶ The concept of intersectionality is defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

❖ Reflexivity:

- ▶ It refers to the examination of one's own beliefs, judgments, and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research.

❖ Social positionalities:

- ▶ Social positionalities refer to the various social categories, identities, and experiences that shape an individual's position and status within society.

Abstract:

► This paper explores the relationship between intersectionality and reflexivity in social research. The research process is examined in the context of social positions shaped by intersecting identities and how reflexivity can be employed as a methodological tool to address these complexities. It argues that intersectionality and reflexivity are important for understanding the complex and diverse experiences of people in communities and individuals. It also provides a framework for integrating intersectionality and reflexivity into social research, highlighting the value of self-awareness, critical reflection, and ongoing dialogue throughout the research process.

Goal of Study:

- ▶ To show how different kinds of methodological reflexivity are connected to the concept of intersectionality.
- ▶ Reflexivity includes continuous attention and reflection upon the social practices of positioning and differentiation in the field.
- ▶ To show how important insights into the processes of social category-making and the importance of locality and space for intersectional social positioning can be derived from reflexive analytic practices.

Research questions asked:

- ❖ How does one determine which categories of difference should be looked at?
- ❖ How does one ensure that an intersectionality approach does not re-essentialize pre-determined, fixed categories of belonging, but looks at their interaction and mutual constitution instead?

Research methods used:

- ❖ To answer these questions, the author follows a reflexive approach to research practice.
- ▶ A reflexive approach to scientific practice must include a continuous effort to read the lived experiences of the researcher and the research against theoretically pre-determined categories and concepts.

Research Process Steps:

- ❖ The author first shows how different ideas of relationality are connected to a methodological need for reflexivity.
- ❖ Furthermore, elaborate on different relations between concepts of intersectionality and reflexivity and show how these connect to fundamental ideas of ethnographic research.
- ❖ Lastly, how calls for reflexivity can be implemented when analyzing field notes from empirical research and how this can lead to important insights.

Relationality, reflexivity, and intersectionality:

- ❖ Understanding intersectionality as a critical concept embedded in a struggle for recognition and social justice thus also implies a non-essentialized understanding of the lines of difference that it creates.
- ❖ Intersectionality can, on the one hand, be employed to shed light upon social relations of dominance that are underexplored in the everyday experience of people in a research field. Like this, as a critical concept, it helps to shed light on “blind spots” of power and dominance.
- ❖ On the other hand, allowing personal experience to challenge and extend pre-determined understandings of power, inequality, and difference is firmly supported by the epistemological foundations of intersectionality.

Research Process Steps:

1. Lived experience as a counterpoint against pre-determined theoretical concepts:
 - ❖ To try to seriously, holistically, and intensely understand social and cultural life in the field on its own terms, rather than subsuming it under an already established social theory or concept.
 - ❖ The lived experiences and empirical realities of Black Women in the United States as a counterpoint towards existing social theories, policies, and movements.

2. Intersectionality as a counterpoint against implicit systems of dominance in the field:

- ❖ A conscious inclusion of social theories and perspectives that spell out previously ignored structures of oppression is the intersectional reflexive approach to research practice.
- ❖ With this, intersectionality as a critical social theory also offers a theoretically grounded perspective on reflexivity. Its theoretical advances suggest which categories of difference, systems of domination and struggles for emancipation should be considered to avoid “blind spots” of overlooking materialized social structures and hierarchies
- ❖ From its epistemological origin, intersectionality thus has a twofold connection towards reflexivity and suggests a dynamic relationship between theory and empirical data: I

Reflexivity and intersectionality: examples from the field:

- ❖ The field experience with an African immigrant called G.G by the author.
- ❖ The reason he gave to speak in German with the author was that he would like to integrate. Language proficiency and the willingness to learn the language has become one of the most marked signifiers of “integration” in the German immigration discourse.
- ❖ A critical reflection based upon intersectionality concepts and a critique of masculinist epistemologies that looks at field experiences as well as actual field notes can thus open up important insights.
- ❖ The gaps in my field note hint at the interdependence of knowledge production and social positioning.

Reflections on entering the field: extending concepts of intersectionality: Visit to a Nigerian Kiosk

- ❖ This opens up avenues to think about and to theorize intimate relationships when looking at intersectional social positioning.
- ❖ When we analyze practices of intersectional social positioning, we should thus take into account the complexities of (potentially) multilocal life worlds.
- ❖ The future task to bring concepts of intersectionality into conversation with notions of translocality, transnationality, or mobility is an issue that follows from the reflection of the author's field experience.

Strengths:

- ❖ Using specific fieldwork interactions in the attempt to reflect upon the relevance of different lines of division, their enactment in practice, and their relationship to power has been shown to be very productive.
- ❖ The proposed framework encourages ongoing critical self-reflection by researchers, which can help to identify and mitigate potential biases and limitations in the research process.
- ❖ Sharing the feelings in the field work of the author helps to make the people connect emotionally hence getting more useful information from them.

Weakness:

- ❖ I personally felt, the author focussed on the field experience and the previous theories that support her way of researching this concept.
- ❖ She mentioned a lot about how to portray oneself while doing the research in real world by engaging with people.

Major Findings

- ❖ The paper proposes a methodological framework for incorporating intersectionality and reflexivity in research practices, which emphasizes the importance of centering the perspectives and experiences of marginalized communities and engaging in field experiences with ongoing self-awareness.
- ❖ Methodological reflexivity includes continuous attention and reflection upon the social practices of positioning and differentiation in the field as well as analytical reflection upon the importance of academic knowledge and processes for social and political struggles. Understood in such a way, reflexivity connects with intersectionality in different ways.

Personal thoughts / reflections:

- ❖ The paper explains the dynamic and twofold connection to reflexivity that intersectionality is a particularly useful concept in research on identity, difference, and inequality.
- ❖ A reflexive approach helps to strive for an open-endedness of intersectionality as a theoretical concept when brought into conversation with empirical data.
- ❖ The analysis of concrete processes of interaction, feelings, thoughts, and personal experiences in the field can highlight important issues that expand and enrich intersectionality as a theoretical concept.
- ❖ Using an intersectional approach to reflect upon the creation of specific social categories during fieldwork can provide important cues and stepping stones for further interpretative work.

THANK YOU!



Questions?