

The positioning of the researcher in the field + representations

November 7th

Presentation by Joshi and Jeton (Group 3) Silverman chap. 20

Suggestions on how to structure a PR (extended slides on how to structure a thesis)

Movie: "Representation and the Media" by Stuart Hall

Presentation by Sara, Elise and Sigurd (Group 5) on the "positioning of the researcher"

Readings: Silverman 17, 20, 21, 26 + Knowles

Silverman

chap 17 - relations in the field

1. What is involved in obtaining access to a field site?
 - Closed/private settings + Open/public settings - examples?
 - Covert (subjects do not know) / Overt (agreed) - examples?
2. What ethical issues lie in wait?
 - Clarify your intentions while you formulate your research (what is the purpose; whom are you writing for; who might be interested in or affected by your research; access, implications of your research; consent from the research subjects*) - why is this important?
3. Is feedback to research subjects necessary and/or useful?
 - Go back to the subject with tentative results and refine them in light of subjects' reactions (see table 17.3)
4. What can you learn from relations in the field?
 - Think through how your identity was view by the participants
 - Gender
 - Maintain good relationships with informants

Silverman

chap 17 - relations in the field - table 17.1 - what is informed consent?

- Giving information about the research which is relevant to subjects' decisions about whether to participate
- Making sure that subjects understand that information (e.g. By providing information sheets written in subjects' language)
- Ensuring that participation is voluntary (e.g. By requiring written consent)
- Where subjects are not competent to agree (e.g. small children), obtaining consent by proxy (e.g. from their parents)

See also table 17.2 a sample consent form

Structure of RP

- Title
- Summary 1 page (or an abstract)
- Acknowledgement
- Table of content
- Introduction: give the reader a short precise presentation of the content of your work, including the motivation for your study: what are you inquiring (object/subject of investigation) – how and in what way is it important for a broader audience?
- Literature review (related research, if any, positioning your work vis-à-vis the research literature). (This chapter may be combined with the first in your RP).
- Theoretical chapter
- Presentation (background information) of setting / case/ field / object of study
- Method chapter: a discussion of what you have chosen to do *and* how your choice is relevant and relates to the knowledge you seek.
- An empirical chapter describing the fieldwork you have conducted (if you do not have a chapter presenting the 'case') + reporting the outcome in a form and structure that has emerged from the group's analytical work (see slide for guideline on empirical chapter for a thesis)
- 5) Interpretation/discussion: what do your outcome tell?
- 6) Conclusion – sum up + cementation of the outcome of your fieldwork.
- 7) Bibliography - alphabetically listings of all the texts referred* to or cited**
- 8) Appendix: log of group work, work distribution. Other appendices, e.g. interview guide, photos (or a visual description like a drawing of the field site and/or the relations of material immaterial members -> if relevant, such material could go into one of the chapters), log of activities in the field (date/time; activities (observation, interview, attending meetings, phone, email, online visits).

Introduction

- Setting the stage, provide the readers knowledge about the content and answer the question: “What is this piece of work about?”
- Present:
 - The area of your research (problem domain / topic)
 - Your main motivation for conducting your study (explain in what way your study is important?)
 - Purpose of your research, incl. your research question(s)
 - What do you aim at contributing
 - A brief description of how you attempt to find out (methods/theory)
- You could also try to answer:
 - What is the target audience?
 - What is your personal motivation for this study
- Sketch the structure (content in each chapter) of the thesis

Literature review

- A survey of literature (journals, conferences, books) on the areas relevant to your research question(s). One section pr. area. -> here you make use of Knut's lecture
- Conclude the chapter / each section with summarizing what you want to develop further (*vis-à-vis* the exciting literature) or what you see as a challenge. A summery could be presented in a list, model, etc. Each issue could correspond to your analytical chapters - but they should definitely be discussed in the discussion / conclusion of your thesis.
- Silverman p. 295:
 - What do you already know about the topic?
 - What do you have to say critically about what is already known?
 - Has anyone else ever done anything exactly the same?
 - Has anyone else ever done anything that is related?
 - Where does your work fit in with what has gone before?
 - Why is your research worth doing in the light of what has already been done?
- The chapter should end with an argumentation of your work (e.g. the literature on the area is ambiguous, or e.g. does not look at the topic from this particular theoretical standpoint, which will shed light on xxx in a novel way).

Theoretical framework

- Description of the theory you have chosen to work with (and/or the concepts you have chosen from the theoretical framework)
 - In what way has the theory been fruitful when engaging with your material? Both in the field, when analyzing and writing up?
 - Avoid the temptation to explain and illustrate the theoretical concepts with examples from your work - (save that for later in your analyses)
 - If your motivation is to develop theory, your chapter should be structured in a way that leads up to your motivation (e.g. argument such as: the theory needs elaboration in this and this way, which will provide insight on xxxx)

Presentation of setting / case / field / object of study

- Provide an overall impression of the ‘place’ your research unfolded -> the background information, which for is necessary (helpful) for understanding your “case”; but which is not the kind of information you want to delineate within your analyses (rich descriptions of e.g. a company, its products (services), customers, the people who crossed your path during field work, their inter-relations, work tasks, etc.)
- Could be from your own empirical work, or from other’s descriptions (research, documents, etc.)
- Not always a separate chapter. You could present this information in the introduction or in the methodology chapter (in a section devoted to describing the case / the setting / object(s) of study).

Methodology

- A choice of methods between alternatives -> justify. You should demonstrate that you are aware of strengths and weakness of your strategy, design and methods.
- A detailed report of the fieldwork that was carried out:
 - What did you do, how did you do it, why did you do what you did? Some of these activities can be summarized in an appendix outlining your activities in the field + e.g. your interview guide*
- How did you select your 'case' and participants (those you interview and observe?) How did you conduct observations (what kind of situations, what time, what activities, particular focus, etc.)? Whom did you interview, on what issue(s), in what situations or settings (during work hours, in an office, at a cafe?)
- How did you work with your data (organize by indexing in themes, coding/memos?)
- Challenges you encountered during generation of data (access, change of method, some transcripts not read (verified) by participants, limited time, etc.)
- Any sensitive data - how did you related to it -> before, in the process of generating material, when writing it up, after the study was completed? -> here you make use of Gisle's lecture

Sample from appendix

- activities at X 1999-2001 (Finken 2005)

November 16th 2000, 2PM-3PM: Interview with the graphical designer.

The interview is verified.

Photos (2)

DIWA-participants: SF

November 17th 2000, 2PM-4PM: Prompted Reflections workshop with three site developers. The participants have not verified the transcript from the workshop, since we have been waiting for the evaluation reports to be written.

Photos (8)

DIWA-participants: SF/FK

November 22nd 2000, 9AM-11AM: Interview with the consultant manager.

The interview is verified.

Photos (3)

DIWA-participants: SF/FK

Example of appendix

- Interview guide (Finken 2005)

- Name:
- Occupation:
- Education:
- Qualifications:
- Role in the project:
 - Internal
 - With customers
- Primarily collaborators:
 - Internal
 - With customers
- Artefacts in the job:
 - Internal
 - With customers
- What works well?
 - Internal
 - With customers
- What works less well?
 - Internal
 - With customers
- Any need for further qualifications?
 - Internal
 - With customers

Analytical chapters (empirical)

- One or several - how do they relate to each other?
- Theory /concepts are briefly re-introduced and applied.
- Analysis and discussion can be integrated, or discussion can be provided in an separate chapter. The discussion should link up to the issues discussed in chapter two and /or three.

Conclusion

- Summary of findings, main problems and your conclusions
- Present your research question(s) once more
 - What did they lead to?
- Comparisons with literature in chapter two - how does your findings fit in?
- What are the contributions and implications (practical, theoretical and/or methodological)?
- Possible directions for further research

Examples of field material containing ‘tricky’ words when translated into English

(Finken 2005)

- Next to this list of projects I have a note that the CM explains why we are denied access to the classified projects. According to my notes the new director of Dweb wants to increase the company’s confidence towards/with the customers [the Danish word used is “fortrolighed”, which I have translated with “confidence towards/with” in order to capture the word’s meaning of both being ‘more familiar with’ and ‘discrete’].
- It finally snapped into place, the customer is positive about your participation; but is concerned about your presence in phase 1 – if it will affect the participants [customer’s clients – the users] negatively.” [The Danish word used by the CM to express the customer’s concern is “bekymret”, which can be translated into the English “concerned/worried]. (Email from CM to researcher on May 17th, 2000. My translation)