Research Degrees that relate to Citizenship Education and Identity

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CiCe
Guidelines
on the
Design of
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Courses

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Children's Identity & Citizenship in Europe

Socrates
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This report does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network

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> " Conscious of the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, and of the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe, Ministers consider it necessary to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process. They emphasise the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally. Ministers call for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encourage the institutions concerned to increase their co-operation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers. "

Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin
19 September 2003   (Additional action) (Bologna Group)

Introduction

This booklet has been written to support research degree students and their supervisors who are working in the broad area of the development of identity and citizenship education within Europe, with particular reference to children and young people.

We have tried to focus particularly on issues that are specific to this field, and not to address more general questions about research degrees. We are concerned in particular with PhD and MPhil students in the 'third cycle' of higher education, as identified in the Bologna process and the movement towards a European Higher Education Area.

The report has been drawn up by a small working group, established by CiCe in 2003. Each of the authors has some experience of supervising doctoral students in this area, but we have also sought to consult colleagues (within and beyond the CiCe network) to analyse the experiences of both research students and supervisors, in order to be able to address the issues that appear to these two groups. We have had responses from students (either still studying or completed), and supervisors, and from 42 colleagues who attended the CiCe conference in May 2004 and who responded to our questions. We are grateful for all these, and to the colleagues who in addition allowed us to interview them for the case studies. While we have tried in particular to identify the views and needs of supervisors and students, we have also taken into account the experience of other higher education lecturers with experience in the field. We also hoped to explore the views of employers who have taken on those who have completed PhDs in this area, but found it hard to locate respondents in this category.

Researching children's and young people's sense of identity and the development of citizenship

Our survey has arisen partly from the work on Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, undertaken as part of the Socrates programme of the European Commission's Department of Education and Culture. This initiative, reported on in Gonzalez and Wagenaar (2003), identified generic competences that might be expected to be developed in undergraduate ('first-cycle') courses in European Higher education. What might one expect every graduate to be able to do? These generic competences are to be complemented by specific competences: the expectations one might have of a graduate in a particular discipline.

We have taken this idea forward in the CiCe network to consider the specific competences in first-cycle, second-cycle courses (Masters programmes) and third cycle studies (Doctoral research). This booklet in part suggests what one might expect to be the specific competences of a successful PhD student who has worked in the

area of children's/young people's identity and citizenship. These we discuss in the second section of this booklet. Competences will be judged differently by the students concerned, by faculty members, and by the potential employers of the graduates, and we explore these differences as far as is possible.

There are also significant questions about the ethical issues involved in research in this area. Researching questions of identity requires particular sensitivities, and when this is associated with working with children and young people, special care is needed in obtaining permission, and perception and sensitivity in questioning young informants. Section three introduces various questions about specific ethical considerations that might apply to work in this area.

Definitions of identity may be problematic, perhaps especially so in the context of ethnicity and social class. Assigning individuals to particular categories, whose use may be contingent upon circumstance and location, poses particular problems for the researcher, which need to be handled with circumspection and respect for the informant. Section four sets out some questions that may need to be addressed in these areas.

Methodological questions were also identified as being areas in which difficulties were encountered. PhD research in this area appears to be conducted using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods, and both approaches raise particular issues. Some of these may relate to the context of the study, and there are areas of Europe and the world where changing territorial identities, political hegemonies and cultural changes make identity a fast-changing concept, the study of which can raise political and cultural sensitivities. Our fifth section deals with some of these issues.

Finally, we give some case studies that act as useful illustrations of some of the points that are raised in the earlier sections. We hope that these will give some sense of authenticity to our earlier discussions. We present the perspectives of two students and one supervisor, not as 'typical examples' of the genre, but for illustrative purposes, to demonstrate the enormous diversity that must be expected in student-supervisor relationships in this area.

This is not intended to be a definitive statement of the situation. We expect issues, challenges and solutions to change as more PhD studies are completed. We would very much welcome feedback on this document, and will include what we can in any future updating of this report and in future activities in the CiCe Network.

Competences

Generic competences of the PhD

The PhD is most often defined by the place it holds in the spectrum of academic awards – generally as a three-year full-time course of research study, taken as a postgraduate programme, carrying out and reporting research that is an original contribution to knowledge. It is less often defined in terms of its outcomes: what can a person with a PhD be expected to be capable of doing?

As part of the Bologna process, it was agreed in Berlin in 2003 that each country should elaborate national qualifications frameworks for their higher education systems, which would relate to an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area - 'against which individual national frameworks could articulate with due regard to the institutional, historical and national context'. At each level, the framework would describe the workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile, and describe qualifications in generic terms (e.g. as a third cycle degree).

The Joint Quality Initiative group established to advance this met in Dublin in October 2004, and produced what are known as 'The Dublin Descriptors'. (Joint Quality Group, 2004)

These suggest that for the award of a Doctorate (third cycle) degree, students must show they

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity
- have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas
- can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise
- can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.

The Bologna Working Group on Qualification Frameworks reported in December 2004. This suggested that all higher education qualifications should be described in terms of

- *Learning Outcomes* (what a learner will know, understand, and be able to do when they complete the programme)
- *Qualification Descriptors* (statements on the outcome of study).

They also reported that only four countries had developed qualifications frameworks to date: Ireland, Scotland, EWNI (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Denmark. Hungary is in the process of preparing a framework, and Sweden has conducted a review of qualifications. The UK developments began internally in 1997, and in Ireland the framework is established in law. Each framework gives learning outcomes and descriptors at different levels: each also prescribes a single third-cycle level.

The EWNI descriptors are also broadly comparable to the Dublin Descriptors: third-cycle courses 'recognise leading experts or practitioners in a particular field. Learning at this level involves the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.'

A person with a PhD should be able to

- deal with complex issues, usually considered to be of a professional nature, often make informed judgements in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- act autonomously in planning, implementing and analysing work regarded as being of a professional or equivalent level
- take a leadership role and demonstrate innovative approaches to tackling and solving problems
- where appropriate, continue to undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches

and will have:

- the knowledge and technical capacity and qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable contexts of a professional or equivalent nature.

                                    Qualifications and Curriculum Agency, [2001]

Specific competences of the PhD in this area

Whatever *general* statements might be made about a person with a PhD, we seek in this paper to identify and focus on the *specific competences* that might reasonably be expected to be found in a person who had a doctorate in the area of children's understanding of citizenship and the development of identity. Clearly, such a person would have specific research abilities related to their study, and specific specialist knowledge and understanding of a body of literature. But what could we say their specific competences were?

We devised an initial list of twelve possible competences, grouped into the four areas of research ability, social sensitivity to the context of research and study in this area, ethical awareness of the uses and consequences of research and study in this area, and the ability to set such study in a broader socio-political context. These competences are set out in full below:

Processes of carrying out research

1. Be able to design and use sensitive instruments for fieldwork with young people, both (or either) qualitative and quantitative
2. Be a sensitive researcher – in the interpretation of data, in negotiation with informants – with an awareness of the varieties of meaning of identities, citizenship, etc., particularly as they are affected by issues of gender, social class, ethnicity, linguistic, religion, and within the researcher's own society and in other societies in Europe and world
3. Be able to critically reflect on their own history/identity construction; and attempt to control for this in the research process
4. Work sensitively with children and young people

Awareness of context of research, re disciplines and territory

5. Have an awareness of different disciplinary perspectives in the field, the various contributions each makes, and the potential that each has to attribute different meanings to similar terms
6. Have an awareness of the history, evolution, and contemporary relevance of subject, in a European and global context, as well as a national and local context

Awareness of uses and consequences of research

7. Be aware of how research in this area can contribute to social inclusion, and be aware of the processes of social inclusion and exclusion

8. Be able to relate research and theory in a cross-cultural, cross-national way: not to confine research to a narrow national cultural base (while they might carry out national /local research, they should be able to relate this to the wider context, while not attempting to generalise from their data)
9. Recognise possibilities and limitations that their research can/cannot be used to generalise, and the limitations of their own research

Wider consequences of using research background

10. Be able to relate the results of their own research – both findings and methods – in contributing to the solution of issues related to citizenship and identity
11. Be methodologically competent to evaluate and assess the impact of educational programmes and innovations in the area
12. Be able to contribute to the research development of new researchers, in terms of helping them scope wider issues

We then sought the opinions on the relevance and validity of these possible competences from a variety of informed groups [see below: Who did we ask?]. We sent out a questionnaire to those who are currently supervising, or have supervised students; to recent and current PhD students; and to employers of PhD students in this area. This is a relatively small field of study, and our resources were limited, so there was a not unexpected low number of responses from supervisors [12] and from students [6]. We received very few responses from employers, and did not pursue this group. We decided to extend our survey to include a group of higher education lecturers attending the CiCe conference in Krakow in May 2004, from whom we received 42 responses.

Respondents were asked to identify essential, desirable, and non-essential items. These we have translated into a scoring system, and then presented in rank order as prioritised by each group. Although there are some differences in ordering, it must be remembered that some groups [particularly the student group] is very small. In general, there appears to be a fairly good degree of agreement between the groups (see the Appendix).

All the items on our list were seen as either essential or desirable by most respondents. The following table attempts to summate the various views expressed under the three categories of Essential, Desirable or Significant.

	Essential	Desirable	Significant
Processes of carrying research	Be able to design and use sensitive instruments for fieldwork with young people, both (or either) qualitative and quantitative		
	Be a sensitive researcher – in the interpretation of data, in negotiation with informants – with an awareness of the varieties of meaning of identities, citizenship, etc. within the researcher's own society and in other societies in Europe and the world		
	Be able to reflect critically on their own history/identity construction; and attempt to control for this in the research process	Work sensitively with children and young people	
Awareness of context of research - territory and disciplines	Have an awareness of different disciplinary perspectives in the field, the various contributions each makes, and the potential that each has to attribute different meanings to similar terms		
	Have an awareness of the history, evolution, and contemporary relevance of subject, in a European and global context, as well as a national and local context		
Awareness of uses and consequences of research	Recognise possibilities and limitations that their research can/cannot be used to generalise; limitations of own research	Be aware of how research in this area can contribute to social inclusion, and be aware of the processes of social inclusion and exclusion	Be able to relate research and theory in a cross-cultural, cross-national way: not to confine research to narrow national cultural base
Wider consequences of using research background		Be able to relate the resultsof their own research – both findings and methods – in contributing to the solution of issues related to citizenship and identity	
			Be methodologically competent to evaluate and assess the impact of educational programmes and innovations in the area

Essential	Desirable	Significant
		Be able to contribute to the research development of new researchers, in terms of helping them scope wider issues

Who did we ask?

The supervisors were mostly social scientists or historians, with particular interests in pedagogy, education and sociology. They were generally involved in teams in PhD supervision [with anything between one and twenty research students], and worked in universities [often in teacher education departments]. The difficulties in supervision that they identified included supervising students from different cultural and political backgrounds, and dealing with themes related to these backgrounds; problems around multidisciplinary studies; methodological issues (for example around quantitative methods and micro-historical approaches); and needing more sophisticated techniques for analysing qualitative data.

The students we asked were teachers, social workers, and teacher educators, mostly working in schools or university departments and studying part-time. The great majority of our supervisors' students, and the students we questioned, were studying and researching on a part time basis. The subjects of these PhDs were diverse and included

- history teaching in pluralist and multicultural societies
- informal education in a learning society
- socialisation of young offenders
- children's national identity in a multicultural society
- the linguistic development of migrant children
- teaching in multiethnic classrooms
- teachers' conceptions of children's identity and their own role in supporting this
- teachers' understandings of citizenship
- teaching methods in citizenship
- relationships in schools and citizenship education
- bullying related to ethnicity

The students were mainly following qualitative approaches, and more rarely quantitative or combinatory designs. Common methods were surveys, case studies, action research and ethnographic studies. There were also some experimental designs.

What did they say?

What did the supervisors feel that their students needed? They suggested an understanding of teaching and the educational sciences, social science research methodology, some political science to deepen their understanding of citizenship, and a basic knowledge of social theory. Students needed skills of critical thinking, understanding ethical issues and methodology, and knowledge of cultural studies and collective identities. Students were given courses in a range of areas, including epistemology, historiography, research methodology, statistical analysis, the philosophy of science and ethics.

The students we questioned generally suggested that qualitative approaches were most useful, but that beginning with quantitative methods gave a useful overview. Having the same language and world-view as their young subjects was also identified as critical. Problems they identified included the research methodologies, the need for wide variety of careful interpretation of sensitive research results, social communication barriers, language problems and of the use of interpreters. They said that they would welcome a broad range of research training, including the methodology of researching teaching, statistics, data analysis, field research and critical understanding of experimental designs. Opportunities and support for working in other countries would be welcome in some cases.

Ethics and Power: a brief overview

What are research ethics?

The principles of contemporary research ethics originate in the medical Hippocratic oath. Knowledge about the nature of Nazi scientific research undertaken in the 1940s led to a realisation that it could not be assumed that research was necessarily carried out with care and respect for human rights. The *Nuremberg Code* (1947) highlighted the inherent dangers of research and defined the critical importance of obtaining the informed consent of those participating in research, given without coercion. More detailed ethical research guidelines developed from this, for example in the *Declaration of Helsinki* (World Medical Association, 1964/2000), which arose from the medical establishment's concern about how little was known about drug treatments aimed at children and pregnant mothers. Modern medical ethics developed from this, and research ethics committees, based on firm ethical frameworks, are now widespread (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001).

Ethical frameworks

'Good' practice in research is based on three ethical perspectives

- ideas of justice and respect, that offer fairness and do not threaten human dignity
- a rights-based agenda, that ensures those participating in research projects, especially the vulnerable [including children and young people], are protected from harm, are well-informed about their participation, and that their views are listened to and respected by researchers, and
- best outcomes based research, that both avoids harms and maximises benefits from research.

Why an ethical concern for the outcomes of research is important

Social and educational research usually poses less potential danger than medical research. But educational and social researchers can nevertheless cause anxiety and distress in research participants, and also breach trust with them. It is inevitable that moral questions about the power and integrity of researchers and their potential to abuse will arise in various ways in most research studies. Insensitively conducted research, and its reporting, can stigmatise already marginalised groups. All social and educational researchers – but particularly those working in sensitive areas of identity – should regularly conduct ethical reviews of their work and reflect on such potential impact. A defined and explicit ethical stance helps heighten awareness of the deeper issues research can throw up, but does not necessarily supply an easy resolution. Positivistic values about representative sampling may lead to uncertainty about whether to exclude groups whose inclusion may make the research

process problematic. Involving the public and building trust requires researchers to always seek informed consent. There is a tension between being transparent about the focus of a research project and possibly influencing the behaviour of an informant.

The ethical status of children in research

Alderson [2000] identified three levels of ethics in research involving children; each showing a different level of concern over power and respect for the child's status:

unknowing objects of research: children's consent is not sought and they are unaware that they are the subject of research. Children may be asked for their views but not be told about how the data will be used or why the study is being made. Historically, children's views and feelings on such issues were often seen as unnecessary.

aware subjects: children are asked for their informed and willing consent, but are positioned within the confines of an already created adult-designed project.

active participants: children contribute to shaping a study and their consent has affected all aspects of its design and dissemination.

Researchers needs to examine and reflect on their own model of childhood or personhood as they design a research study. Debating this within a research team will better help address ethical relations with the issues of the researcher-subject power relationship. Several studies explicitly utilise the UN's *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989; Hood 2001) in reporting children's views.

Planning ethics into research

Ethics ought never to be seen as an afterthought, but should be an integral part of project planning, including scholarship application. Ethical questions will arise at each stage of a research thesis, and this is especially so when dealing with marginalised or otherwise relatively powerless sections of a society – children and minorities. Hidden values and social norms can produce damaging results for a community and be scientifically dubious. It may sometimes be difficult to identify ethical issues in advance, but it is crucial that a serious and well-documented attempt always be made. Many educational research associations and institutions provide ethical guidelines, which can be a helpful checklist to stimulate consideration about ethical matters. However, such guidelines should not be used as a minimalist form of approval.

Research aims

All research has a moral agenda which may be explicit to varying degrees. In working with children it is possible for the researcher to assert unreasonable power over them by stressing their dependency. Research can thus heighten the model of children as one in which they are portrayed as inherently weak and more vulnerable than adults. The three perspectives on children's participation in research above can help to uncover unintended prejudices. Researchers sometimes take children's perspectives for granted instead of developing methods which sensitively capture meaning. Research aims need to address the access that is necessary. 'Gatekeepers' may not necessarily act solely in the child's best interests, and may also exclude those children they think could reflect negatively on the provision in which the gatekeeper is involved. Positively agreeing to participation in research is a better way of achieving informed, willing participation than when a non-response is assumed to give consent, and is more respectful of participants' autonomy - although it can be less convenient and practical. In any sampling, the researchers must be aware of the risks involved in working with vulnerable groups, whose willing and informed consent could present specific legal and moral issues.

Conclusion

While parents are key gatekeepers, difficulties may arise if children wish to participate but their parents are unwilling to allow this. There are issues around the authority and power of a teacher or head teacher giving consent for pupils to participate, and if they can do so without contacting parents. Access to children and young people to participate in research depends on judgements made about whether they are competent to consent: standardised processes for this may not be adequate, and methods must be respectful of the individual's rights. Informed consent also requires that the researcher lets participants know that they can withdraw from a study at any point.

Ideally, a summary of research findings should be communicated clearly to participants in an appropriate and inclusive form (Fraser *et al*, 2004).

There are no simple solutions to questions about the ethics of research in this area, but this does not mean that good solutions cannot be achieved. Researchers are part of the society they are researching, and should reflect about the ways in which they themselves would be most comfortable if they were to be 'positioned' by research enquiries.

Sensitive issues: ethnicity, gender and social class

Personal identity is a most sensitive area, and research which questions identities and identity choices could very easily make research subjects feel vulnerable, uncertain and hurt. This is even more the case when dealing with children and young people, who may be very conscious of their own worries in establishing 'who they are'. These issues may involve their own questioning of relationships with parents, siblings and peers.

This section raises several particular areas of sensitivity.

1. Ethnicity is a multifaceted concept, which implies a sense of aligning oneself with a group that shares a similar background and values, and is used more often with reference to minorities than to majorities. Ethnicity also may be seen as having a close relationship to nation, state and power.
2. Gender identity is also sensitive with young people, who may be exploring both their gender and sexual orientation, perhaps in a social climate that they find hostile and uncertain. Younger children may have uncertainties that they are hesitant to share, or their parents may have strong views about how questions about sexuality should be dealt with – which may include not raising, or avoiding, particular issues. Research students working in this area have particular obligations to respect and protect children's and young people's privacy, and not to challenge, invade or question choices and uncertainties.
3. Social class is also a sensitive area. It should not be overlooked and there may be significant differences in culture, values, status and language use between different social classes. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) remind us that differential cultural capitals exist, and children may have very different understandings and attitudes towards their identities as learners and as members of communities and broader society. All this may also have an impact on children's self-esteem in relation to the position of the researcher.

Research as communication

Research on children's identity is basically communication between people, who may have different cultural and social backgrounds and languages. These are significant factors that have to be considered in every phase of the research process, from the research questions, the design of instruments and data collection to the interpretation and implementation of findings.

In data collection it is important to

- design and use instruments so they are comprehensible to your informants
- use sensitivity in approaching informants from ethnic and social groups other than your own, considering issues of language, conceptual and affective difference
- win the trust and confidence of your informants
- pre-research and be sensitive to cultural and social differences and different values and beliefs.

Linguistic issues are particularly sensitive (Bernstein, 1971), and the following points are of importance.

- Carefully consider the vocabulary and discourse you will use: reflect and consult on how you use particular terms and phrases, and potential ambiguity and imprecisions.
- Even when the researcher and informant share a precisely common language, this will still be a particular issue of inter-cultural and social class related comprehension.
- The meanings of particular important words may be misunderstood – by you or by your subjects – and you should explore potentially different linguistic codes.
- Both you and your subjects may demonstrate poor communicative competence in your dialogues.

Researching children's identity is to explore a highly complex and abstract phenomenon, in which the child's self-consciousness is still developing, even the use of their own language and vocabulary. Second language use will inevitably add to the complexity.

These linguistic issues will be closely related to conceptual and cultural differences and ethnic identity. Social and cultural identity will be reflected in language, thinking, religiosity, sexuality and gender roles, and in child-parent relations. Identity and self concept are culture dependent: family models, roles and expectations are generally very different in individual cultures than they are in collective cultures. As a researcher, you will have to develop sensitivity to cultural differences and value systems, as well as to individual differences.

Confidence and trust in dealing with sensitive issues

When collecting data it is critically important to create an atmosphere that is both confident and confidential between the researcher and informants. This is critical for successful communication and for obtaining reliable and valid results. But the process of achieving this may well be problematic.

The attitudes that are expressed may show bias. Sometimes members of some groups, social classes or cultures do not want – or

do not dare – to articulate their 'real' thoughts, but instead express opinions they think are those you wish to hear, or which they assume to be legitimate in their society. In the contemporary world, identities are contingent and fluid: the respondent, child or young person, will inevitably construct a response that they consider most appropriate for the setting, in which you as a researcher ask the question. The same child may give a different response to the same question if it is asked in the setting of a school, the home, a place of worship or the street - and they will all be 'true' for the context. But it is the respondent who decides what they think the context is, not the researcher, and you should not – and cannot – make any assumption about what your respondent thinks the context happens to be.

The assurance of confidentiality is particularly vital in intercultural research, because many people may be reluctant to speak about their culture to those seen to be outsiders, to those who do not 'belong' (see Foster 1994). The researcher may be perceived as an intruder. Researchers in the area of identity should consider that similar attitudes towards the idea of 'being researched' may be found in any group being researched: such attitudes and feelings are not unique to members of cultural and social minorities.

Members of a particular social or ethnic group may have a [very reasonable] distrust of the purposes or assumptions of a specific study, or of a situation in which their views are to be examined. They may feel that the information they give will be abused. They may refuse to participate in the research, because the research is seen as a threat, or they fear that the data or findings could be used as a form of control. In the case of those who have newly arrived in a country, they may feel that their position is vulnerable or unstable, and they may feel unable to refuse to participate, or unable to express critical attitudes, through fear of being sent back, punished, not gaining employment, or having difficulties with the authorities. People who have come from dictatorial or repressive systems may think that your research is an instrument in the process of control. They may not trust in the anonymity of the research. Even with the assistance of an interpreter, there may also be suspicions of the interpreter - in some cases, they may, with understandable reason, be seen as an even more suspicious person than the researcher. It is essential that any interpreters should also be fully aware of the ethical issues of the research and the requirement for confidentiality.

Any research that considers ethnic dimensions of identity and citizenship must consider what is known about cultural and social systems of belief, norms and values, and also about forbidden

themes and topics. It may be very difficult to approach particularly sensitive and controversial issues.

Gender roles may be an issue in such research: female researchers may have problems interviewing males, and vice versa.

Ethnicity: particular sensitivities

Ethnicity is a dimension that is closely related to identities in multicultural societies, and with gender and social class it may be one of the most important elements of one's social identity. This section focuses on ethnicity as a particular example of a sensitive issue in contemporary Europe.

Ethnicity is a multifaceted concept, which implies the sense of sharing similar background and values, and which refers more often to minorities than to majorities, which are seen to have a closer relation to nation, state and power (Baker and Jones 1998; Kjaerulff, Monsen and Vacek 2003). The development and expression of ethnic identity is a complicated social process, which may never be completed but change across time, and may have different meanings to different members of the same ethnic group. An ethnic identity is more or less unique for each individual. This makes it difficult to generalise on the basis of membership of a particular ethnic group. Although everyone is a product of her or his culture, it is mistaken to try to explain everything on the basis of membership of a culture. The researcher should distinguish between what might be explained by the individuality of each person and what might be explained by their membership of an ethnic group.

There may be additional complexities from the different circumstances of each individual or family. For example, parental attitudes may differ in the degree to which the family or the individual has adopted the values of the dominant culture. Sensitivity needs to be shown to these different circumstances, which may include traumatic experiences, how they have been received in the new society, and so on: all of these may affect their answers. They may have been marginalised by the dominant culture, or they may themselves have adopted separational, assimilatory, or integrative attitudes toward the dominant culture. Parents may also have very instrumental attitudes (Spener 1996) about the views that they or their children should express: for example, they may think that expressing integrationist or assimilationist views to a researcher from the majority culture will be a means of getting a better position in society. This will clearly distort the research results.

Minority ethnic groups may find themselves in a wide variety of situations. Sometimes they may be confined to effectively ghetto-like conditions, or be subject to membership of caste-like groups in

society. They may be long-term residents of the country, of many generations' settlement. They may be widely dispersed amongst the majority ethnic group, or be living in close proximity to each other. They may be recent immigrant communities, or be autonomous (Ogbu 1986). If a minority group originally arrived in the country more or less involuntarily, there may still be long-term feelings of inferiority, and fewer opportunities for education, work and advancement. These very conditions may affect their attitudes towards education and the formation of identities (Ogbu 1986, p 27).

The subjectivity of the researcher

Finally, it is important that the researcher is conscious of his or her own gender, social and cultural background and commitments and how both their own identities, and others' perceptions of their identities, may affect the subjects of their research, and the responses that these subjects give. If researchers approach informants within their own particular cultural framework [and it is hard to see how they could not], this will have an influence on the way in which they design the instrument, formulate the questions, discuss issues with informants, and 'read' the data. It is important to see that your own framework – of whatever culture or identity you may have – is not the only alternative.

The fundamental problem remains; how to gain common understandings between people who live in realities delineated by their individual frameworks. Issues that are studied in these contexts are often emotional and controversial. A multi-perspective approach is needed, and a degree of respect for other cultures. Mac an Ghaill (1998, p 115) reminds us of the long history of white academics whose research helped reinforce racist stereotypes.

Issues of methodology and design

Our survey of supervisors and students identified a series of issues about the methodology and design of student research programmes in this area. Some of these concerned the overall design of the research: for example contrasting the utility of qualitative and quantitative methods, raising issues about interdisciplinary research, and the use of comparative methods. Other issues raised concerned methodological processes, for example the positivism implicit in the identification of groups and their members, and the power relationships implicit in any research with potentially vulnerable subjects such as children and young people.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches

Although large-scale quantitative research often produces results that can be generalised, qualitative approaches provide a deeper and richer understanding of particular contexts. Students and supervisors saw both approaches as appropriate, and valued the methodological triangulation that was possible through combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Such a combination can both add to the diversity of the findings and give a more comprehensive overview. However, both students and supervisors suggested that qualitative methods provide the most satisfying and useful tools for achieving a deeper understanding of the achievement of identity and that they enabled powerful in-depth analyses of the perspectives.

Some respondents saw surveys as providing seemingly neutral and objective data, while others argued that many survey results were potentially spurious and argued that survey results should be interpreted with caution.

It is argued that qualitative methodologies have a higher degree of ecological validity in comparison with quantitative and structured questionnaires. The very formulation and deployment of these methodologies places boundaries around the social worlds of informants.

Multidisciplinary strategies

Many of our respondents referred both to the value and to the problems of combining different disciplinary paradigms. Many research projects in this field include both sociological and social psychological concepts, and while this may add to the richness of understanding, it may also lead to some confusion when apparently similar concepts are used differently in two or more disciplines. The concept of identity for social psychologists is in many ways the identity of an individual and a group, while for sociologists, group identities tend to be seen much more as social constructs than as an essentialised concept (Hall,1993).

Comparative and case study designs

Some respondents argue that it is necessary to carry out a range of studies in different groups or countries in order to provide generalisations, whereas others argue that a case study or idiographic approach is more appropriate. Comparative approaches present particular difficulties in ensuring that there is a similar conceptual understanding of informants from the different communities. Issues may not have the same relevance in different societies and cultures, while some issues may be particularly sensitive in some contexts. There may be structural differences, for example educational and social institutions may differ and make comparison impossible, or national statistics may be collected in very different ways in different countries. Single case studies, on the other hand may have so many unique features that it can be difficult to identify significance or to draw any appropriate conclusions that may be of use in other contexts.

Problems of positivism and essentialism

The identification of social groups in research always runs the risk of essentialisation. This is the artificial creation of an assumed group identity that is presumed to be somehow 'natural'. Many statistics are collected around what are little more than heuristic assumptions made by policy-makers. For example, in the UK in the 1950s many migrants arriving from the Caribbean were simply characterised as 'coloured' and 'Black'. By the late 1960s they were rather more accurately categorised as 'Caribbean' or 'Afro-Caribbean'. Later 'Black African' and 'Black Caribbean' came to be seen as different categories, partly because of the size of the two groups. It also became more appropriate to refer to people as being of 'Black African origin' and 'Black Caribbean origin'. However, by the late 1990s the term 'Black African origin', which had largely meant persons of anglophone West African origin, was becoming stretched because of the francophone Africans, Somalis, East African and South African settlers, and it may now become necessary to create new official categories.

It is important to perceive that any methodologies recognise the limitations of the usefulness and the artificiality of such categorisations. Identities are self-ascribed and contingent and should not be seen as absolute.

Method and power

Many methods of educational and social research can be used in research involving identity, but the implications and consequences of the choice of method must be carefully considered at the outset. Methodology cannot be simply reduced to a set of techniques: it is also a social process, and implies communication between the researcher and those being researched.

The choice of research methodology is never simply a technical assumption, because methods are culturally sensitive to a very large degree. Method is about power, and the choice of method will affect the answers you are given. For example, intelligence testing has been used in the past, but this use has been has been challenged because of the way findings have been used in forming social constructs of groups and identities. Testing the nature of stereotypes using attitude scales will very easily reproduce the very stereotypes being investigated. There is a very high risk of bias if respondents do not share the conceptions, technical skills and expectations constructed into the research design.

Mac an Ghaill (1998, p 101) offers a reminder that dominated groups may feel that researchers cannot ask the right questions, and that researchers may also 'use their cultural power to define the dominated groups' social worlds'. Classifying and defining implies the use of power, and power also underlies assumptions of what is perceived as the norm and what is 'normal' (ibid p 103).

Case studies of practice

These case studies report on the experiences of research students and supervisors, and illustrate some of the points made in the earlier sections.

They have all been made anonymous.

Case Study 1: Research Student - Kurt Smid

PhD on the pedagogy of citizenship education with post-16 students; Full time student (state bursary) 2000 – 2003

Background

Kurt had previously completed a first cycle course (BA) in Politics and Modern History, followed by a course to qualify as a secondary school teacher. He then started his PhD study, examining pedagogic strategies to develop an understanding of citizenship with students in post-compulsory, pre-university education (16 – 18 years old).

The Study

The region in which he was researching has been marked by factional divisions, and Kurt chose to largely avoid these issues of contested identities. He selected a case study school that was academically selective (lycée d'enseignement général/grammar school/ gymnasium) with a largely affluent professional class background, in which about three-quarters of the pupils came from the majority community. Students were specialising in specific subjects, and relatively few were specifically focussing on history or politics. The introduction of citizenship education as a subject for all students was under discussion at the time of the study. Kurt's approach was initially as a non-participant observer in the school, interviewing students and staff. He then went on to develop, teach and evaluate a short optional course in citizenship, lasting about an hour a week over 12 weeks. Student demand was much greater than anticipated, and he taught about 120 students in several parallel classes. He collected student responses, used a personal log, and developed his findings around the work of Habermas (*Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 1987) and Jerome Bruner.

Ethical issues

Kurt found no particularly problematic ethical issues in the research. Permissions for access were negotiated with the school, individual teachers and individual pupils and their parents. All respondents were given anonymity, and referred to by pseudonyms. He was not aware of any pressures exerted on him over the conduct of the research by government, the university, the school or from the community and his respondents.

He did not gather data on the factional allegiances of the students, nor did he attempt to analyse the responses on such a basis. In one of the twelve lessons he introduced discussion of the recent history of the region, and there was debate about the different interpretations of local history that pupils had been taught (either in their primary school or through the community), but this was not a matter of contention or difficulty. Nor were issues of gender or social class evident: the seven classes were relatively evenly divided between the sexes, and contributions in most classes were evenly balanced. All groups were relatively homogeneous socially.

Methodological issues

Kurt employed a case study approach, and argued that the conclusions he was able to draw from his study were transferable, if not generalisable. He considered making a study that would include more schools (possibly across the faction and ability divides), but decided that an ethnographic study located in a single school would provide much richer data than a wider, more superficial study. He concluded that he had become 'a qualitative zealot'.

Research Training

Kurt undertook compulsory social science research methods training in his first year that covered both quantitative and qualitative methods. This was an undifferentiated course, taken by all social science research students, and was informally assessed. The quantitative element was taken from an undergraduate course. Following this, he had to formally present drafts of two chapters (a literature review and a 'nascent methodology') before he was allowed to progress to his PhD. Later in his course, there was some more specific training possible (for example, on ethnographic methods), but he did not avail himself of this, nor did his supervisor suggest that it might be necessary. He reflects that the PhD process is largely auto-didactic, and that he met his training needs through his own engagement with the literature.

Kurt's advice

While PhDs are context-specific, he suggests that qualitative research approaches are much more likely to be fruitful in the area of citizenship education. He thinks that it is important that qualified teachers get involved in this sort of research, and that it is not left to researchers from outside the profession: teacher researchers can engage with students at a deep and grounded level.

Case Study 2: Research Student - Alicia Podskorny

PhD on culture, citizenship and the curriculum: secondary education and 'white' identities; Full time student (university bursary) 2003 – 2006 [interviewed in second year]

Background

Alicia had completed a BA in Geography [including a fieldwork year in southern Africa examining recent educational influences on a local cultural identity], an MA bursary, and now a PhD. Her topic arose from her interests in the politics of identity, from both geographical and sociological perspectives, but also addressed her wish for a study grounded in educational reality: she didn't want to undertake an esoteric study of the ambiguities around identity.

The Study

Alicia's study was of two schools situated in a sector of a city-port with a long tradition of colonial trade, and a resultant substantial ethnically diverse population, many of whom settled here in the past fifty years (but some much earlier than this). One strand of her study was an analysis of curriculum policy around citizenship and the idea of national identity, utilising recent official and unofficial enquiries into inter-community tensions and violence. The second strand was case studies of the delivery and practice of the curriculum in two secondary schools; observing and recording classes, conducting focus groups and interviews with pupils, interviewing teachers and other adults in the school, etc. She was following a class of 12 year olds constructing their individual autobiographies, and two classes of 15 and 16 year olds studying citizenship education and religious studies.

One school was particularly diverse in its ethnic composition, and the other was predominantly 'white' in a strongly working class area. She was finding that the concept of 'whiteness' was hard to identify in the school where many pupils were of dual (mixed) heritage, and she was not bringing the aspect of 'white' identities to the forefront when presenting her research to her informants, as it was often construed in very different ways by them. Nevertheless, she still expected to interpret her data within this frame, and was hoping that the 'white' identity would be seen as an alternative to 'the other', and not merely as a residual identity.

Ethical issues

Alicia had spent much time discussing ethical issues with her supervisor. She had intended that her role as a researcher would be made clear to the students. In practice, she found that she was meeting the pupils in a variety of informal settings - homework clubs, in the schoolyard, etc, and they frequently identified with her as a school ancillary worker, confiding in her in ways that they would

not do with a teacher. Although she had been introduced as a researcher to the pupils and staff, and had obtained informed consent from students, their parents and the school to participate in the study, she felt that the status of some of the information she was now gathering was not wholly clear.

The students and schools were made anonymous, and she intended to show her analysis to her informants for confirmation, though this did raise certain issues of confidentiality. However, as her thesis was not critiquing teachers' practice or performance, she did not anticipate that this would be an issue. In accordance with national practice, she had been subject to police checks to ensure that she was not unsuitable to work with young people.

Ethnicity was a major element within the study: the school was giving her the pupil's own self-identification of ethic status, though she was aware that this identification was not straightforward and was sometimes contested by the pupils themselves in various contexts.

Methodological issues

Alicia's research paradigm was ethnographic fieldwork with semi-structured qualitative activities around her two case study schools. The schools were to be compared in a loosely comparative manner, but the choice of school was partly pragmatic, and not made wholly for the need to make a contrast.

Research Training

Alicia had substantial sociological research methods training in both her BA and MA studies, and felt confident in this. She was less prepared for the school-based study, and took time to observe and live in the schools' settings in order to appreciate and learn how best to interact with pupils. She had undertaken two modules in educational research as part of her PhD studies, but found these over-theoretical: as a non-teacher, she would have welcomed more hands-on practical training.

She was wary of the value of quantitative research in work such as this. Though competent in quantitative methods, she was convinced that life histories and narrative approaches to identity were more valuable. She liked long unstructured interviews.

Alicia's advice

Getting involved in networks of researchers was supportive and valuable, as PhD work was often isolated and lonely. Meeting other students – particularly from across a range of social disciplines – was another support and provided a useful group with whom to debate and discuss.

Case Study 3: Supervisor - Anna Forslund

Professor (Education and Language); PhD

Backgound

The supervisor has MA and PhD degrees in philology, and advanced studies in education. She has worked as secondary school teacher and as researcher and senior lecturer in university departments of languages, education and teacher education, and as professor for about ten years. She has been involved in supervision of research degrees from 1988, and so far eight of her research students have completed their doctoral dissertations.

Her own research interests can be described as multidisciplinary research (language, language learning, intercultural communication).

The dissertations on identity and citizenship

Several of her students' completed dissertations related to issues of children's identity and citizenship. One dealt with children's national identity in the Baltic states, and another with the construction of immigrant pupils' multicultural identities. A third study followed a small group of migrant children learning Finnish.

Sensitive and problematic issues

There were sensitive issues in the Baltic study, which focussed on Baltic majority and Russian minority children, all in the same schools. Thus a Scandinavian researcher was doing research on identities in another culture, in which minority issues are highly sensitive. This may have caused some problems as to reliability of the results, as the minority children were obviously more careful in their answers and tried somehow to conceal their ethnic identity. The number of those informants was, however, small.

The other study dealt with immigrant children in a local school, and the children's ethnic identities were not so problematic as in the first study. The case study considered 26 children with ethnic backgrounds including Russian, Vietnamese, former Yugoslavian, Kurdish and Somali nationalities. The children were selected on the basis of self-concept assessment and representativeness from a larger primary group. They were 11–12 years old and studied in schools which had about ten years' experience of teaching migrant children.

Methodological issues

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in these two studies, although the emphasis was on qualitative.

One student used self-constructed questionnaires about children's self-image and national identity. Parents were asked about the family's socio-economic conditions and their educational goals and attitudes. Selected children were interviewed about their attitudes towards national issues. In the second study, the case reports were constructed from interviews with children and self-concept scales, and from teachers' assessments of children's self-esteem and academic success, social skills and expressions of cultural features.

Both of these studies raise questions about the cultural sensitivity of research methods. One of the researchers pointed out the difficulties in comparing the self-concepts of children, whose cultural backgrounds differ from each other, because the scales may reflect traits that are typical to the main population. Defensive thinking can also have an influence on the results of self-esteem assessment. There is always the risk that the informants do not really understand the framework and ideas of the researcher.

Linguistic problems are also important in research in multilingual settings. In the first study, children could read and write sufficiently well to answer the questionnaires. Special attention was given to making the questionnaire relevant to multiethnic contexts, but there may have been expressions that were difficult for some children if the questionnaires were not in their first language.

Wider issues

In all these studies, all parents permitted their children to participate. Thus there seems to have been trust in the researchers. The supervisor felt that the research students had a high degree of social competence and interpersonal skills, and this was as a major factor in the success of these studies of a multicultural settings. This helped in creating contact with schools and parents, and also with children in research situations. In the study on language learning processes, the supervisor stressed that the student had spent a great deal of time with the group. This meant that she and the children knew each other well, she was able to get a high degree of cooperation and this contributed to the success of the study.

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Appendix

Comparative ratings of the Specific Competences by Lecturers, Supervisors and Students

	Competence	Lecturers	Supervisors	Students
1	design and use sensitive instruments with young people	2	1=	1
2	sensitive researcher: interpretation, negotiation, as affected by gender, class, ethnicity, etc	1	1=	4=
3	critically reflect on own history/identity construction	6	5=	2
4	work sensitively with children and young people	7	10	4=
5	awareness of different disciplinary perspectives	4=	5=	4=
6	awareness of the history, evolution, and contemporary relevance of subject, in a European and global context	3	7	10=
7	recognise limitations of research	4=	1=	3
8	aware of how research can contribute to social inclusion	9	12	4=
9	relate research in a cross-cultural way not confined to narrow national cultural base	11	8	12
10	relate own research to solution of issues related to citizenship and identity	8	1=	4=
11	evaluate and assess impact of educational programmes	12	9	9
12	contribute to development of new researchers	10	11	10=

[Essential *2]+[Desirable]-[Unnecessary]

The Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe (CiCe) Thematic Network links 28 European states and some 80 universities and college departments which are engaged in educating students about how children and young people learn about and understand their society, their identity and citizenship.

A cross-disciplinary group, we include lecturers in social psychology, pedagogy, psychology, sociology and curriculum studies, and those who educate various professions such as teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, early childhood workers and youth workers.