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National Center of Competence in Research –
The Migration-Mobility Nexus

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unine
Université de Neuchâtel

Workshop Emotions in Fieldwork

17 May 2024

09:15 – 16:30

University of Neuchâtel

Please register through [this link](#) no later than 15 May 2024.



Swiss National
Science Foundation

The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs)
are a funding scheme of the Swiss National Science Foundation

Workshop on Emotions in Fieldwork

This course is part of the third pillar of the Doctoral Program of the nccr – on the move. All members of the NCCR community and doctoral students enrolled in a CUSO program are welcome to attend. For the doctoral students enrolled in the Certificate in Migration and Mobility Studies, the participation in this course is worth 1 ECTS.

General Description

During fieldwork, we are often faced with difficult stories, painful memories, and strong emotions. Our interlocutors relive their experiences during interviews, or we, as researchers, witness unfolding events during ethnographic observations. This might be stories of migration, emotionally triggering life events, or any instances when people experience emotional distress. How can we ensure that our research participants are not harmed and that the research interaction is actually beneficial? Could emotions during fieldwork contribute to our analysis instead of being treated as an undesired by-product? What would such a methodology look like? We, as researchers, are not immune to emotional distress, especially accumulated during long fieldwork. So, how could we deal with our own emotional reactions to what we hear and see during research?

This workshop will support Ph.D. students and fellows who are preparing for fieldwork or recently completed one and would like to know how to deal with emotions in the field. The workshop will contain inputs on ethical concerns and methodological questions, an interactive session providing practical strategies and coping mechanisms (both for research participants and researchers themselves), and an exchange session based on the needs and examples of the workshop participants.

Facilitators

Jean-Claude Métraux is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist working with victims of armed conflict and migrants.

Giulia Salzano is a PhD student in Social Theory at the University of Perugia (Italy). Her thesis focuses on the notion of empathy analyzed in the frame of phenomenology, sociology of emotions and social aesthetics.

Alessandra Polidori is a scientific collaborator within the SFM at the University of Neuchâtel and a research associate at the LAP laboratory (Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Politique) at EHESS. She completed her doctorate in 2023 with a thesis on youth and mobility.

Practical Information

The course takes place in presence (no online participation) on Friday 17 May 2024 from 9:15 to 16:30 at the University of Neuchâtel, Av. du 1er mars 26, 2000 Neuchâtel, room D62. Please register through [this link](#) no later than 15 May. Applications by members of the nccr – on the move will be prioritized, and registrations will be treated on a first come first served basis. Lunch is included for all the participants, and travel expenses to and from Neuchâtel will be reimbursed for members of the nccr – on the move. If you have further questions, please contact Robin Stünzi per email at robin.stunzi@nccr-onthemove.ch.

Timetable

09:15 - 10:45 **The Encounter of Sensitivities: Empathy at Work in Qualitative Research**

Giulia Salzano, University of Perugia

In the fieldwork social researchers are continuously confronted with a diverse array of emotions. Feeling perceived in the observed or interviewed subjects, elicited and instilled in them (such as trust, tranquility, and safety), reactivated and experienced by researchers themselves. Within these dynamics, empathy, as the phenomenon through which the experiences of others are perceived and understood, plays a central role. But what we talk about when we talk about empathy? In this session, we will endeavor to answer this question by exploring the concept of empathy as it has evolved over time and across various disciplines. We will examine how empathy has come to encompass a constellation of distinct yet interconnected phenomena, such as emotional contagion, sympathy, altruism, care, identification, and projection. The goal of the session is to critically examine the phenomenon of empathy, providing an overview of its models, components, and modes of activation and articulation. By doing so, we aim to offer theoretical and conceptual tools that may prove valuable to researchers in their empirical investigations. During the session participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences in the field in order to provide valuable insights into the practical applications of empathy, as well as its challenges and boundaries.

10:45 - 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 - 12:45 **Self-Reflexivity in Social Research: Practical Tools for the Researcher and his/her Research**

Alessandra Polidori, University of Neuchâtel

The choice of an object of study draws on motivations that are more or less distant from the sphere of the personal, though they always have a link with the researcher's experience, interests and background. This is particularly important in the social sciences where we are faced with a variety of contexts and situations in direct contact with the reality in which the researcher acts. It is important then to mobilise self-reflexivity as an exercise that allows the individual to look at the causes that, together with others more external to the researcher himself, have determined the choice of a field of study, a particular methodology, a certain approach.

In the proposed workshop we will reflect on the purpose and importance of reflexivity for the research itself and we will try to understand, by mobilizing emotions and experiences, the various choices made in defining the research object and in conducting the research.

Timetable

12:45 - 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 - 15:30 **What to Say, What Not to Say, in Our Encounters with Bereaved And/or Traumatized People?**

Jean-Claude Métraux, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Lausanne

What the researchers say and what they do not say have a decisive impact on the way bereaved and/or traumatized people experience the interview, on the words they will feel free and/or comfortable to express, and in turn on the researchers' „digestion“ of their emotions. Various categories of moments, languages and words will be differentiated and presented: introduction to the interview, interview itself, end; verbal, non-verbal language; declarative and interrogative sentences; coined, precious, sacred words. The ideas put forward will aim to ensure that the interviews are as harmless as possible for both the people interviewed and the researchers, and ideally that they can even be beneficial to them.

15:30 - 15:45 Coffee break

15:45 - 16:30 **Conclusion**