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Qualitative Inquiry 2011 17: 787

DOI: 10.1177/1077800411423194

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Qualitative Inquiry
17(9) 787–797
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DOI: 10.1177/1077800411423194
<http://qix.sagepub.com>


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Abstract

In this article, I argue that the existing literature on qualitative methodologies tend to discuss analytical generalization at a relatively abstract and general theoretical level. It is, however, not particularly straightforward to “translate” such abstract epistemological principles into more operative methodological strategies for producing analytical generalizations in research practices. Thus, the aim of the article is to contribute to the discussions among qualitatively working researchers about generalizing by way of exemplifying some of the methodological practicalities in analytical generalization. Theoretically, the argumentation in the article is based on practice theory. The main part of the article describes three different examples of ways of generalizing on the basis of the same qualitative data material. There is a particular focus on describing the methodological strategies and processes in producing the three different ways of generalizing: ideal typologizing, category zooming, and positioning.

Keywords

generalizing, methodological procedures, practice theory

Introduction

To generalize on the basis of qualitative data seems to have become a less apologetic affair during the past 10 years. Part of this development consists in the publication of a number of articles in qualitative methodology journals and chapters in qualitative methodology textbooks where the authors have argued authoritatively for the cross-disciplinary scientific legitimacy and analytical strengths of generalizations based on qualitative research (e.g., Delmar, 2010; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Jensen, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Mason, 2006; Ruddin, 2006; Silverman, 2006; Tanggaard, 2009). Generalizing on the basis of qualitative data is done in various ways, but such varieties are most often referred to as analytical generalization, and such varieties most often use theoretical concepts to enable a more general perspective on specific qualitative patterns (Kvale, 1996, p. 233). This understanding of generalizing is the starting point of the article.

However, there is by no means consensus across social, scientific, and humanities researchers who work with qualitative methods that analytical generalization is an important or desirable way of inferring and concluding about data materials. Arguments against pursuing analytical generalization from researchers who use qualitative methods are often based on any of the three following kinds of reasoning. First, there is the more inductive reasoning coming out of more traditional parts of grounded theory thinking (e.g., Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). Second, there are arguments about

the particularity of findings and how the richness of qualitative studies enables sophisticated understandings of how and why specific occurrences, processes, and constellations happen (Thomas, 2010, 2011, pp. 17–21). Third, there is reasoning based on arguments about the complexities of patterns in qualitative studies and the problems of representing complexities due to, for example, dynamic multiple coconstructions of data materials or the messy relationships between enactments of subjectivities and objectivities (e.g., Clarke, 2006; Ellis & Berger, 2003; Law, 2004).

The last type of argumentation is the one that comes closest to the antifoundationalist notion that generalization is neither possible nor desirable and which seem to have been voiced across, for example, critical constructionist studies, feminist studies, performance studies, and interpretive interactionist studies (Denzin, 2010, p. 424). Although, I argue that analytical generalization is possible and desirable in this article, there are at least two important respects in which advocates of analytical generalization should incorporate the critique from the antifoundationalist argumentation. First, generalizing on the basis of qualitative studies must

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necessarily be much more specific and context bound than understandings of generalization as universalizing. I prefer to think about analytical generalization as producing context-bound typicalities. Specific social relationships, categories, and processes are both uniquely and recognizably performed at the same time, parallel to an argument about “the doubleness of the situation,” unique and typical at the same time (Delmar, 2010, pp. 121-122). Second, generalizing on the basis of qualitative studies must recognize and try to represent the dynamisms, ambivalences, conflicts, and complexities that constitute various overlapping contexts and the knowledge-production processes in relation to these contexts. Just as generalizing should not be universalizing, generalizing should also not produce stable representations but rather representations characterized by contingency and instability (Søndergaard, 2002).

However, researchers who have made up their minds that analytical generalizing is a worthwhile research pursuit run into a bit of a challenge. The existing literature on analytical generalizing appears to be describing and discussing generalization at a relatively abstract and general level, often the epistemological level of theory of science (e.g., Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Blaikie, 2007; Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002; Delmar, 2010; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Höijer, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Thomas, 2010). It seems to be more difficult to find literature that describes and discusses specifically and concretely how to go about methodologically when producing analytical generalizations on the basis of qualitative empirical materials. Thus, the “translation” of rather abstract epistemological principles into practical methodological procedures is less explicitly and systematically dealt with in the existing literature on qualitative methods. Epistemological theory of science positions and reflections are off course central to establishing generalizability, among other things, because one of the basic means of establishing analytical generalization is to use theoretical concepts to make the patterns of the specific case or sample more general (Kvale, 1996, p. 233). However, it is not particularly straightforward to appropriate and implement rather abstract, general, and complex recommendations at theory of science level into well-functioning operative methodological procedures. In communication research, it has been argued and shown empirically that abstract knowledge and recommendations do not easily “translate” into practical choices and guidelines for text users (Jensen, 2002, pp. 166-167; Schröder, 2001; Thompson, 1995, pp. 37-43). Such problems of implementing more abstract ideas also exist for researchers as text users. Thus, it is necessary to describe and discuss more operative ways of dealing with analytical generalization as methodological procedures in qualitative research.

This article presents three concrete examples on methodological procedures in how to produce analytical generalization on the basis of qualitative empirical data material.

The argumentation in the article takes a starting point in practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002) whereby qualitative research can be seen as a social practice. The content of the article is the following. First, I shortly specify some of the main theoretical assumptions of a practice theoretical approach and present some suggestions about the possible consequences for producing analytical generalizations. Second, I briefly introduce the empirical research project from which the three examples on methodological procedures in generalizing are made. Third, I describe and discuss three examples on generalizing in operative methodological terms: ideal typologizing, category zooming, and positioning. Finally, the article is concluded.

Practice Theory and Variability in Generalizing

Practice theory is not *a* coherent theory. Rather, a practice theoretical approach attempts to develop a synthesis of conceptual elements regarding the performing of social action in the following existing sociological theories: Early Pierre Bourdieu (1990), Judith Butler (1990), late Michel Foucault (1978), Harold Garfinkel (1967/1984), early Anthony Giddens (1984), and Bruno Latour (1993). The attempts to synthesize a practice theoretical approach more systematically has primarily come from authors preoccupied with grand theory positioning and conceptualizing within social and cultural theory (e.g., Archer, 2002; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001). However, in recent years a growing interest in applying practice theory in various empirical fields of social and cultural research can be noticed (e.g., Couldry, 2004; Gherardi, 2009; Halkier, Katz-Gerro, & Martens, 2011; Warde, 2005).

From a practice theoretical perspective, social life is primarily performative. The main theoretical assumption is that activities of any kind in social life continuously have to be carried out and carried through and that this mundane performativity is organized through a multiplicity of collectively shared practices (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 71-86). Practices are seen as configurations of a number of analytically equally important and interconnected dynamics. This web-like conceptualization of practices comes out in the much quoted definition of practices from Reckwitz:

A practice . . . is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice—a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself or of other etc.—forms so to speak a “block” whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness

of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements. (Reckwitz, 2002, pp. 249-250)

This conceptualization allows for a multirelational view on the performing of particular practices, involving both tacit and discursive elements, bodily and mental dynamics, and material things and immaterial processes. However, such a conceptualization is not to be misunderstood as simply purporting an open complexity. Another main theoretical assumption is that practices and practicing are coordinated by specific social dynamics—understandings, procedures, and engagements (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 77, 87; Warde, 2005, pp. 133-136)—whereby practices become collectively organized and certain activities become recognizable as belonging to a specific practice.

Thus, doing qualitative research for example can be seen as a social practice, collectively shared and organized among research practitioners, with a range of coordinated activities (the typical doings and sayings of qualitative research, e.g., interviewing or text analysis), understandings (e.g., abduction as strategy of empirical inquiry), procedures (e.g., ethnographic interview questions or discourse analytical coding), and engagements (e.g., against methodological individualism).

Furthermore, the privileging of the performative character of social life in practice theory comprises an understanding of practices and practicing as relational accomplishments among practitioners, rather than fixed entities. There are always varieties of ways of practicing or performing a particular practice, and it is in interactive processes that such performances become accomplished. Thus, this version of practice theory can be seen as a moderate social constructivist one, in the sense that this version defines practices as dynamic multirelational configurations and defines social categories and dynamics as socially produced.¹ Seeing practices as interactive processes of accomplishment comes from the intersectionality element (Butler, 1990) of practice theory, and it focuses on the unfolding of appropriate conduct of practicing something in everyday contexts (Warde, 2005, p. 146). Thus, while doing qualitative research, for example, research practitioners are at the same time enacting and negotiating expectable and acceptable performances of qualitative methodologies. One of the purposes of a journal like *Qualitative Inquiry* is to create discursive space for exactly such negotiations.

This brings us back to the issue of the article of how to make analytical generalizations. Looking at the existing literature on generalizing at the basis of qualitative data through a practice theoretical perspective, it is the element of operative procedures that is in need of being described and discussed. The two other elements of practicing analytical generalization—understandings and engagements—are being shed light on in articles and chapters. For example,

there are quite a number of texts about different ontological understandings related to generalizations on qualitative data patterns. One of the much cited ones is Flyvbjerg's article "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research" (Flyvbjerg, 2006) which argues in favor of the analytical validity of case study data material by systematically refuting a number of conventional rationalist arguments against the ability to make generalizations on the basis of qualitative data patterns. There are also quite a number of texts which employ different specific theoretical engagements related to analytical generalizations. One of the much cited authors in qualitative methodologies, Norman Denzin, presents, for example, his antifoundationalist theoretical engagement in qualitative methodologies and inferences in the article "The Elephant in the Living Room" (Denzin, 2009).

Some texts about generalization and qualitative data point to procedural elements of how to do it but often without providing empirical examples that demonstrate the practical procedures involved in how to do it. Ruddin (2006), for example, agrees with the position of Flyvbjerg on the legitimacy of analytical generalization on the basis of qualitative case study material. He concludes, "One exercise would be as the basis of generalizations, for which we need a convention of case study procedure that will guide our selection of comparable and comprehensive features of our cases" (Ruddin, 2006, p. 807). However, the article does not offer concrete suggestions to such operational case study procedures. Delmar (2010) aims at outlining procedures to guide and validate generalizability in qualitative research. The article offers a concept called "the doubleness of the situation" by which is meant that social relationships, categories, and processes are always both unique and typical. This concept underpins the main "grand" procedure of analytical generalization: To "enlarge" the significance of specific concrete empirical patterns in the case or the small sample by the applicability of theoretical concepts (Delmar, 2010, pp. 121-122). However, no empirical examples and suggestions on how to go from one side of the doubleness to the other are provided. Thomas (2010) takes a stand in favor of abduction and phronesis as guiding qualitative research strategies of inquiries and inferences. The article suggests seven concrete methodological procedures for what he calls "case narrativity" (Thomas, 2010, pp. 579-580) but the procedures are argued in general and not empirically exemplified.

The main aim of this article is to contribute with empirical exemplification to describe operative methodological procedures involved in generalizing on the basis of qualitative data. The suggestions for procedures and ways of generalizing in this article are built on and exemplified by one empirical qualitative study. I will suggest three different ways of generalizing and that it is possible to produce several generalizations on the basis of the same data material (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Mason, 2006). One of the methodological consequences of applying a social constructivist

practice theoretical approach is to enable the research practitioners to see varieties of ways of practicing something (Halkier & Jensen, 2011, pp. 102-104)—hence this also goes for qualitative research as a practice and generalizing as a way of practicing this. Hence, another point of this article is to underline the potential multiplicity of ways of generalizing not only due to the well-known richness of qualitative data but also due to the theoretical perspective which directs attention toward the complexities of data patterns and inferences, just like other analytical positions in the broad spectre of poststructuralism, social constructivism, and perspectivism (e.g., Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Atkinson & Coffey, 2003; Denzin, 2009; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2007).

In the next section, however, the empirical study from which the different ways of generalizing are exemplified is shortly presented.

Empirical Study for the Generalizing Examples

The empirical research drawn on in this article is a qualitative in-depth study of the food habits among ethnic Pakistani Danes and how nutritional contestation of food is handled among them.² Nutritional contestation of food refers to the potential social and cultural consequences in everyday life from public health promotion that questions food habits via information campaigns about diet. The Danish tradition for public food information has increasingly become focused on scientific nutritional knowledge and the individual as responsible for changing food habits in more “healthier” directions (Holm, 2003; Vallgård, 2007). Pakistani Danes are specifically targeted because they are in comparatively high risk of getting type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease.

The overall research design and process was based on abduction (Blaikie, 2007). The selective sampling strategy was one of maximum variation (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28) regarding the following criteria: age (15-65), education (with and without high school degree), gender, whether participants were born in Denmark or Pakistan, whether a person in the family had been diagnosed with diabetes 2, and whether participants worked in the health sector. A total of 19 Pakistani Danes participated in individual interviews, family interviews, or group interviews.

The qualitative data in this study were produced by several methods. One part of data were produced by individual in-depth interviewing (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Spradley, 1979) the main cooking practitioner in the family about provisioning, cooking, and eating in their everyday life in relation to other people in their network and in relation to constructions of healthy food. Another part of data was produced by auto-photography (Heisley & Levy, 1991) where the participating main cooking practitioners and

other members of their family households took photos of everything they ate and drank in the course of a whole ordinary weekday and of some food from the weekend. The photos were used as data in themselves and as input in family interviews and group interviews (Frey & Fontana, 1993), and in all of these interviews which were held in the home of the family, participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) was also used.

The next three sections of the article describe and discuss three different ways of generalizing on the basis of the qualitative data from this research project on the handling of nutritional contestation of food habits among Pakistani Danes.

Ideal-Typologizing

To build an ideal typology seems to be one of the most frequently used ways of producing analytical generalization. All qualitatively working researchers know ideal typologies. If we have not tried to make them ourselves, we have come across dozens of them in the academic literatures and used some of them for conceptual reflection or empirical comparison. One well-known ideal typology in cultural studies is, for example, the “en-coding/de-coding” model by Stuart Hall (Hall, 1980) which offers three different types of reception of mediated texts. Another example of a well-known kind of ideal typology across the humanities and the social sciences is segmentation, where the types consist in groups (segments) of people who have particular characteristics in common, for example, lifestyle elements (Bourdieu, 1984) or media use (Fiske, 1992).

The term *ideal type* comes from one of the founding fathers of sociology, Max Weber. He defined an ideal type as a one-sidedly focused synthesis of diffuse and discrete empirical phenomena into a unified abstract analytical construct which will never be discovered in this specific form (Weber, 1949, p. 90). The process of making an ideal typology consists in condensing the coded data patterns into a relatively limited number of descriptions which one-sidedly underline particular characteristics at the expense of others. The descriptions are labeled, and each of the labels represents one type in the ideal typology. The descriptions must off course be relevant to the research question, so that the ideal typology expresses inferences central to the knowledge interest of the research and valid for the inquiry of the study.

The following ideal typology is constructed on the basis of qualitative data from the research project on food habits and nutrition communication among Pakistani Danes. The typology consists in four types. The types represent different ways of “doing healthier food”³ in everyday life:

- Engaging proactively in healthier food
- Fitting in healthier food
- Doing healthier food ambivalently
- Ignoring healthier food as social practicality

The different types in the ideal typology will not be described in detail here as it would take up too much space and it is not the point of the article.⁴ However, since ideal typologizing is about differences, some of the main differences between the different types in the typology are briefly mentioned in the following. “Engaging proactively in healthier food” is different from the other types in the sense that doing healthier food here is initiated and discussed not just with in-group relationships of family and close friends but also in the larger circles of the social networks of food practitioners. For example, food practitioners bring dishes with less fat and sugar for large group picnics:

But as I told you, I have experienced that I have made some special food . . . somebody with diabetes comes and I make it with that sugar additive, sweetener, so I make two bowls, but then she doesn’t even want to eat it, she’ll rather have the one with sugar in it, right, and then I think, why do I slave. . . . (Rushy, female academic)⁵

The “fitting in healthier food” type is different from the other types because doing healthier food here is mainly about adapting practical procedures (whole wheat flour in chapattis, less oil in masalas, etc.⁶) in relation to taken-for-granted knowledge: “Actually, we know already really well what is healthy and what is not healthy . . . And we also try to make that, so actually we don’t have to seek any advice . . . But we do what we can” (Ahmed, male taxi driver). The “doing healthier food ambivalently” is different from the other types in the sense that tension and negotiation of different food engagements dominate the ways in which healthier food is handled in everyday life, for example, taste with nutrition: “It tastes very good if you use a lot more [oil]” (Zabel, female kitchen worker). The “ignoring healthier food as social practicality” type differs by the ways doing healthier food are overruled by other food procedures and engagements such as elements of guest practices:

. . . you know when we have guests, then the first thing you serve is something to drink and then we can make deep fry, you know deep fry something for them. That, although it is unhealthy, this is how we do it. (Solejma, female office clerk)

The building of this ideal typology took place in (at least) three steps. First, a round of basic open coding and then a round of relational categorizing (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, pp. 26-45) were made of the entire data material (covering transcripts of individual interviews, group interviews and family interviews, photos and notes from participant observation). Second, we took the first vaguely discernible web of categories that seemed to represent something about relating

to healthier food in the everyday lives of the participants. We began to trace through the material how some of these categories were systematically related—for example, related by being expressed together or related by not appearing together. Through the tracing of systematic relationships between categories, emerging patterns of handling healthier food were organized according to similarities and differences. In the same process, we also looked for countersystematics that could go against the emerging patterns of similarities and differences. This step is often called analytical induction or the constant comparative method (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001, pp. 66-70; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, pp. 232-236; Silverman, 2006, pp. 295-297).

The third step consisted in taking the emerging patterns of similarities and differences and to reduce their complexities further by aiming for a more tightly connected synthesis. We did this by conceptualizing (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, pp. 45-51; Silverman, 2006, p. 296) at an applied level what these patterns represented. The conceptualization was mainly informed by seven dimensions on which the emerging patterns seemed to differ from each other. The dimensions came from empirically applicable concepts within practice theory: food activities (doings and sayings), food consumption moments in these activities, food understandings, food procedures, food engagements, intersections between food practices and other practices, and interaction about food in social network relationships. For example, the “engaging pro-actively in healthier food” type differs from the other types because doings and sayings of healthier food are performed in the larger social networks as well as in the in-group of family and close friends. Here, talk about dietary advice is initiated and cakes with less oil and sugar are brought to parties. Whereas, for example, the “fitting in healthier food” type represents a more tacit way of adjusting food activities, especially adjusting the procedures of shopping, cooking, and eating. This step, of course, involved a lot of analytical reflection and discussion about when some relationships or patterns in the data material belonged to which emerging type and when performances in the data material were sufficiently dissimilar to count as being different or sufficiently like to count as being similar.

Part of this step in the process was also to name the types in a way that represented the empirical variation as well as the theoretical perspective. We tried to let the “most different difference” between each of the empirical patterns define the type in the name, so the types appeared clearly distinct from each other. Furthermore, each of the types reflects the practice theoretical perspective by the help of which they were made. Engagement is a central element of the concept of practice itself; fitting in is an analytical point about the relationship between reproduction and change in practice theory; using the term *doing* reflects the

intersectionality element of practice theory; and the term *social practicality* refers to the understanding of interdependence of the practical and the social in practice theory.

In methodological terms, this ideal typology is not based on methodological individualism (Jepperson & Meyer, 2011). This means that each of the types in the typology represents enactments from several participants, and the enactments of each individual participant may align with different ways of doing healthier food in different contexts. This ideal typology makes generalized inferences about patterns of food practicing and not about patterns of individual food practitioners. Each of the types (ways of doing healthier food) in the ideal typology is performed by multiple participants (food practitioners) in the empirical study. Likewise, every participant conducts food practices as shifting or gliding between several ways of doing healthier food in different situations or relationships, and each participant now and then performs multiple food practices in one situation.

Often, ideal typologies are used to represent a comprehensive covering kind of pattern of the empirical data material, central to the main research question. However, in the process of building an ideal typology, a considerable reduction of complexities takes place. Thus, many other patterns and the overlaps, grey zones, shifts, and multiplicities run a risk of not getting represented through ideal typologizing, even when the ideal typology is a more social constructivist variant, as the case is in this example. The richness of qualitative data suggests that it is a valid pursuit to make several different complementing general claims from such data. The next two main sections illustrate two other ways of generalizing on the basis of the same qualitative data material.

Category Zooming

As the heading indicates, this way of generalizing “zooms in” on particular single aspects of the qualitative data material. Thus, category zooming is different from ideal typologizing in the sense that usually the inferences do not try to say something more comprehensive about the empirical patterns related centrally to the research question. Rather, this way of generalizing goes into depth with the details and complexities in one single point of the study.

In qualitative comparative case studies with multiple cases, it is widely used to go into depth with the details of one single aspect of the study to make sure that what is being compared is analytically sufficiently identical across the cases. In qualitative research leaning more toward realism, this is sometimes labeled *single variable generalization* (Ragin, 1987; Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 173-177), echoing the language of quantitative methodologies. However, there are also ways of doing comparative multi-case research that leans theoretically more toward critical realism and social constructivism and which implies the use of going into detail with single categories in a more

context-sensitive fashion. For example, the pragmatic sociology approach to cultural comparison developed by Lamont and Thevenot (2000), where the single aspects to be compared are seen in their sociocultural contexts of larger discursive repertoires or social orders. Category zooming builds on a similar perspective where single categories are placed in context and their nonessential character underlined.

The way in which category zooming was constructed in the research project on food habits and nutrition communication among Pakistani Danes began with critique and reflections in relation to the ideal typology. Although, we stress that the participants in the study can shift or glide between the types in the ideal typology in different contexts or performing several types in the same context, the typology form did not lend itself easily to representing such complexities. In other words, we needed to build some analytical generalization that could represent contradictions, exceptions, and processes that glide between established types. At the same time, there were other parts of the data analysis that suggested that it would be relevant to look closer to the category of “procedures” (one of the applied concepts from practice theory). An analysis of the food habits, not including the nutrition and health element, showed that across the social differences in the group of participants, the culturally hybridized food practices of the Pakistani Danes were surprisingly similar with regard to the meals cooked and eaten, the understandings of food implied in cooking and eating, and the normative engagements expressed in food. The only patterned variation in these food practices was linked to the element of procedures: principles and rules of how to do and how to organize shopping, cooking, and eating. Hence, we decided to zoom in on the category of procedures, and as an attempt to make this form of generalization represent more polyphony, we looked at procedural processes. Three procedural processes seemed to be particularly important in organizing inclusions and exclusions of healthier and unhealthier food activities in ambivalent ways. These three procedural processes form the category zooming generalization:

- Caring
- Timing
- Socializing

I will briefly explain one of the categories, before going on to describe how the generalization was built. The category of “caring” for others through cooking, for example, is enacted in ambivalent ways across the social differences of the female participants in the study. Caring can consist in serving meals constructed as healthier, with less fat and sugar, more vegetables, and fibers and to discuss healthier food with members of the social network. Here is an example of such a situation, described by Aysha, female medical secretary:

My mother has a very bad heart and problems with her lungs and such, and um, every time she is about to take something, some cake, but you know, she really does take care of herself, right, but she can set her mind on taking just a small piece of cake, and then I say . . . you know very well it's not healthy and you know.

However, caring can also consist in serving meals that family and friends love to eat, but which are constructed as less healthy, for example the famous Pakistani parathas.⁷ One of the teenage daughters in the family interviews explained such a situation:

You know, all of us are a bit spoiled, right. You know, a lot of times when my brother comes home from work, or maybe just suddenly at 11 o'clock in the evening, then he just feels like eating French fries or something like that, right. So sometimes he makes it himself, but he also says, mum, I need to have something now at eleven o'clock, and then she has to make it.

These two different performances of caring, which draws the handling of healthier food in opposite directions, even occur in the same meal session. Solejma, female office clerk, "hides" the vegetables in the dishes by blending them to sneak them into her children and at the same time serve deep-fried chicken nuggets for at starter to make her children happy.

This generalization was build by way of at least three steps. The first and the second step have already been described. The first step consisted in receiving critique from colleagues about the lack of representation of potential complexity and contingency in the first generalization made, the ideal typology, and reflecting on this. The second step consisted in holding together these reflections with other main patterns analyzed in the data material to locate one or several analytically promising categories to zoom in at. This resulted in the focus on the category "procedure" or rather procedural processes.

The third step was then to go back to the data material and the first round of coding and categorizing and do a focused thematic coding to explore which ambivalent procedural processes regarding inclusion and exclusion of healthier food could be identified across the patterns already analyzed. Having identified those tentatively, we did a domain analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, pp. 92-99) on the data material for "caring," "timing," and "socializing." A domain analysis is an analysis where "what, when, how and what are the products of something" is analyzed systematically. Finally, the patterns constructed on the basis of the domain analysis were compared with conceptualizations of each of the three

procedural processes in the international literature—caring, timing, and socializing.

In methodological terms, this way of generalizing can be used to underline the contingency of types and categories. This specific category zooming makes generalized inferences about the patterns of the multiply intersected character of food practicing and not about individual cognitive motives for food choices.

Positioning

This way of making analytical generalization underlines the nonstable and nonfinal character of inferences made on the basis of qualitative data materials. Thus, positioning as form of generalization is just one example of a broader tendency within perspectivist qualitative research where the main point is that the contents of expressions and actions are constituted by the forms of social dynamics such as group interactions, negotiations, conversational processes, and discourses (e.g., Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Potter, 1996; Søndergaard, 2002). Hence, the inferences and generalizations made by qualitative researchers on the basis of patterns of expressions and actions in the data material must include and cover such communicative processes and their potential consequences for contents of interpretation and analysis.

Typically, this way of generalizing conceptualizes what it draws inferences about as "voices" (Stern, 1998), "stories" (Ellis & Berger, 2003), "positions" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), "discourses" (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002), and the like. The common characteristic here is that "voices" and so forth are something that participants in qualitative research can occupy to various degrees in different situations and negotiate between in the same situation. Such a way of generalizing enables the researcher to represent some of the communicative dynamisms that are coconstitutive of social constructions of categories, relationships, and performances. A relatively well-known example is the work of Bronwyn Davies on representing female subjectivities as positioning (Davies & Harré, 1999).

In the research project on food habits and nutrition communication among Pakistani Danes, we used the specific "positioning" variety of this kind of generalization. Positioning theory works with a concept of agency fairly similar to a practice theoretical one (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 35). Positioning is a particular kind of social construction in interaction whereby subject positions are reproduced or changed. Also, the content of these social constructions cover identification and normativity at the same time (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 17). This means that positionings can be used to represent processes of enacting and negotiating appropriate conduct. Positionings can be, for example, self-positionings, other positionings, and positionings of specific social categories (Jensen & Halkier, 2011).

We used this way of generalizing on a number of aspects of the empirical data material: positionings and negotiations in relation to constructions of Danish food, Pakistani food, good food, bad food, healthy food, and unhealthy food; in relation to appropriate and inappropriate cooking and eating; in relation to everyday agency; and in relation to methodological challenges of being two majority Danish researchers in interaction with minority Danish participants.

The following concrete example was just one of the many interaction and negotiation bits that formed the basis of a positioning generalization called "positioning in relation to the category of healthier food." The exchange is from one of the family interviews, where two sisters-in-law, Sada, a nurse, and Maria, a child care assistant, discuss a third female family member:

Maria: My sister, do you know what she does? She only uses two teaspoons [of oil], and then when the onions have coloured, she takes the oil out and throws it away. And then she finishes the dish, that's why her food tastes to bad.[. . .]

Sada: Shahida's?

Maria: Yes, because she takes the oil out. When she has browned the onions.

Sada: I have wondered why it tastes as it does.

Maria: Then she adds all sorts of other ingredients.

Sada: But she can still say she has used oil.

Maria: Yeah, but she doesn't use that much. You know, she hardly uses any. She only uses it to the browning, and then she takes it out and throws it away.

Sada: That's not good. That definitely doesn't taste nice.

Maria: No, it doesn't taste good, but then she feels she has done a good deed, right . . . NOW we're eating healthy!

The exchange is an example of how expressed content around food and health is accomplished through the dynamics of social interaction and interpersonal communication. In the discussion between the two sister-in-laws, the construction of what good cooking consists in is negotiated. The content result is a consensus about good cooking as containing a sufficient amount of oil to taste properly. The communicative processes that are part of forming this content are exchanges of categorical other positionings of the sister of Maria as performing bad cooking but at the same time performing healthy eating. In the same process, the two sister-in-laws indirectly position themselves as cooking practitioners who knows the taste and quality of proper Pakistani food. This way, one particular construction of "doing good cooking" where sufficient amounts of oil is necessary is accomplished in the interaction because it is possible to other position one from the social network. At

other points in the same family interview or in the individual interview with Sada, "doing good cooking" is constructed as not using much oil and sugar, and this is accomplished in different situations of communication.

Positioning as form of generalizing achieves to underline the situational and the dynamic about how "healthier food" is performed in everyday life. Thus, positioning as a generalization type expresses the instability and complexity of our knowledge categories. However, at the same time, positioning enables the researcher to conclude something about the patterns in negotiations and power struggles over practical morality in food and intersectings of different identifications in relation to "healthier food" practicing.

This kind of generalization was built in two steps. First, we went back to the data material and did a selective coding of interaction bits where negotiations of categories central to our research question were taking place, for example, negotiations of the category "healthier food." Second, we applied the methodological tools from positioning analysis (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) to the interaction bits, supplemented with concepts from conversation analysis (Antaki, 1994) and discourse psychology (Potter, 1996). This way, we could explore the varieties in which "healthier food" was being reproduced, negotiated, adapted, changed, and experimented with as part of shifting interactive processes.

In methodological terms, this way of generalizing can be used to focus on representing the interactively constituted and thus performative and potentially dynamic character of the ways in which we as qualitative researchers conclude about the patterns in our data materials.

Conclusion

This article claims that the existing literature discusses analytical generalization at a relatively abstract and general theoretical level without necessarily "translating" such abstract epistemological principles into more operative methodological strategies for producing analytical generalizations. The aim of this article has been to contribute to the discussions among qualitatively working researchers about generalizing by way of exemplifying some of the methodological practicalities in analytical generalization. Theoretically, the argumentation in the article is based on practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002; Warde, 2005) which for the purpose of this article has two analytical implications. First, looking at the existing literature about analytical generalization through practice theoretical lenses makes it clear that the discussions focus on analytical understandings and theoretical engagements, rather than methodological procedures. Second, one of the analytical capacities of practice theory is to focus on variation and complexity in the performing of practices. Hence, generalizing as part of the practice of qualitative research has

potential for several different ways of generalizing on the basis of the same data material. The main part of this article describes three different examples of ways of generalizing on the basis of the same qualitative data material, and there is a particular focus on describing the methodological strategies and processes in producing the three different ways of generalizing: ideal typologizing, category zooming, and positioning. When such operative procedures are attempted made more explicit, it hopefully becomes possible to discuss whether or how they constitute acceptable performances of qualitative methodologies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The author received financial support for the research referred to in this article from the National Danish Social Scientific Research Council (FSE).

Notes

1. There are also more explicitly critical realist versions of practice theory (e.g., Archer, 2002; Gronow, 2008).
2. The research project was called "Network Communication and Changes in Food Practices," it was funded by the National Danish Social Scientific Research Council (FSE), 2008-10, and the other senior partner was Associate Professor Iben Jensen, Department of Communication, Business and Information Technologies, Roskilde University, Denmark.
3. What is "healthier food" is what is constructed here as such among the participants in the empirical study. The constructions, however, do come rather close to official Danish nutritional advice (Andersson & Bryngelsson, 2007, pp. 36-38).
4. A presentation in depth of the ideal typology can be found in Halkier (2010, chapter 6), for example.
5. The participants have been given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.
6. Chapattis are dry-roasted pancakes and masala is the common denominator for the basic sauce in Pakistani cooking, often made with oil, tomatoes, onions, and spices.
7. A kind of pancake or flat bread where the dough is made with butter, roasted in butter on a pan, and buttered once again before eating it.

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