

# Abstracts

## **Using auto-photography in psycho-social work environment research – when worker well-being is a socio-material matter**

*Mette Mogensen*

The article addresses auto-photography as a method within psycho-social work environment research. The organizational aesthetics approach, which is often associated with photographic methods is being challenged on the basis of a performative and actor network theory position. The analysis of a single auto-photograph picturing a bike with a kickstand demonstrates how the articulation of photographic objects and its social and material relations to the wider organization may shift the focus from a psycho-social to a socio-material perspective on employee well-being. Otherwise put: well-being is also in a kickstand. The article concludes that the potential of auto-photography does not lie with its aesthetic qualities, but is to be found in the researcher's ability to articulate the research field, to make visible new roads for action.

## **Knowledge production, positioning and power in the chronicle workshop**

*Agnete Meldgaard Hansen & Maria Hjortsø Pedersen*

Chronicle Workshops have become popular in recent years as a research method in working life research in Denmark. The chronicle workshop is a method, which aims to provide a collective, participant-

driven narrative of a workplace's history and development. The method is characterized by negotiation and consensus-seeking, sharing some features with focus groups. At the same time the method aims to grasp the existence of multiple and competing narratives in a workplace, and their appearance in the workshop is thought to be a way for researchers to observe social relations, including conflicts, in the workplace.

This article contributes to the development and discussion of the chronicle workshop as a research method. The authors find the method useful and valuable in working life research, but also argue for an increased attention to and analysis of the interaction of participants during the workshops and the impact of this interaction on the knowledge constructed through the workshops. With a point of departure in positioning theory and poststructuralist understandings of power and knowledge production, the article argues that chronicle workshops should be seen as spaces in which complex relationships between power, knowledge and subject positions unfold.

Empirical illustrations are drawn from two chronicle workshops conducted with social and health care helpers and nurses in a municipal care unit, providing home care and nursing for elderly citizens. The illustrations show the importance of attention to the concrete interaction in the workshops, in order to understand how certain narratives come to appear legitimate, true, and dominant in the chronicle workshop's collective production of knowledge. The article shows how discourses; hierarchical relation-

ships; and the chronicle workshop's focus on collective narratives, have noticeable consequences in terms of which narratives and subject positions achieve dominance, and which are marginalized in the workshops.

Following this analysis, the argument is put forward that systematic analysis of interaction and positioning in the workshops can generate new insights in relation to the analysis of the organizational narratives created in the workshops. Finally, the article presents a number of focus points that can contribute to an increased awareness of positioning and power relations in the facilitation and analysis of chronicle workshops

### **Critique and knowledge in action research – regarding the difficulties of doing and knowing which steps to take in order to prevent work-related stress**

*Mia Husted, Ditte Tofteng & Mette Bladt*

The article reflects on the questions: who knows what and who can do what in relation to the prevention and remedying of work-related stress. Based on experiences from action research projects, we discuss the importance of democratizing measures in relation to the prevention of work related stress. The article considers how employees' notions of criticism and vision can play an important role in the process of creating new relevant knowledge and how this can be an important alternative and complement to expert-based directions and solutions. Based on the empirical action research project Stop Stress, the article argues that cooperative learning arenas which unfold workers' knowledge of critical conditions and their notion of overlooked opportunities, can provide new perspectives and opportunities for action according to work-related stress. Thus the article argues that context-close collective cognitive and

developmental processes as a methodological prevention strategy could potentially elaborate new knowledge and provide new ways to prevent, mitigate and investigate work-related stress. The article does so through discussions and reflections about democratization of social change, the critique as an empirical and a theoretic figure and about work-related stress as a qualitative research area. The article concludes that democratizations of knowledge production processes can provide alternative answers and new types of actions both contributing to the development of research and field.

### **Mixed methods research as a framework to study complex phenomena**

*Sophie Danneris Jensen*

Among vulnerable cash benefit recipients it is difficult to measure the short term employment outcomes of program interventions. Possible long term outcomes such as employment or participation in education are difficult to link causally to program interventions. For this group of clients, such outcomes might not even be within reach. Thus we need a different methodology to understand the meaning and outcomes of the employment programs for our most vulnerable unemployed. This approach is based on the understanding that current – both qualitative and quantitative – research falls short in trying to elucidate the phenomenon. The methods may each be able to explain part of phenomenon but none of them reaches far enough individually in relation to the whole phenomenon. Thus, the available evidence is not robust enough to serve as a basis for developing activation programs relevant for cash benefit recipients that have complex

social problems. We are therefore left with a knowledge gap which no mono-methodological approach can fill alone. On this basis, the article suggests a mixed methods research approach which is able to navigate between the boundaries of the different methodologies. The starting point is thus not a particular method or philosophy of science, which the research design is committed to in advance. In contrast, the primary focus is the phenomenon, and how it is possible to use a combination of different methods to achieve a deeper and broader understanding of cash benefit recipients' progress towards the labor market. This approach is based on a relational understanding of causality where the individual's life situation is regarded not as a consequence of the surrounding context, but as an effect that is performed and reproduced in daily activities. By this is meant that the outcomes cannot be explained with reference to the intervention, because the intervention in itself is constituted by and created in interaction with the activities in the field. Thus, the article outlines a mixed methods approach in which interviews, observations, progression- and outcome measurements are combined in order to gain a more nuanced, in-depth knowledge about this specific target group's progress towards the labor market. The methods are integrated consecutive in the point of interfaces within the research process, where the knowledge gained during the data collecting inspires and affect the following data waves. In the point of interfaces, mixed methods research establishes its eligibility and contributes to filling in the knowledge gap exposed. Mixed methods research as a framework for understanding complex phenomena thereby gives us a qualified knowledge that should serve as an important complement to the more established forms of knowledge.

## **Employment agencies in a user perspective**

*Bente Bjørnholt & Jens Hørby Jørgensen*

The central question addressed in this article is how user surveys are prepared and used in Danish employment agencies. Based on the literature on evaluation a theoretical framework is developed based on four central themes: social program, values, knowledge and usage. The theoretical framework is applied on three illustrative cases. The article concludes that methodical choices are not neutral but reflect a prioritisation of some interests at the expense of others and the choices are made within an interest-based context.

## **Kicked out and let down – two stories of collapse driven work life research**

*Charlotte Wegener & Marie Aakjær*

Several methods in work life research imply that the researcher gets access to the empirical field and engages in relationships with the people, things and places of study. Once in a while, however, access to the field is interrupted or radically changed. When kicked out or let down out, should the researcher insist, change direction or give up? What methodological considerations and insights might be gained from being rejected? Our point here is that a collapse can be a unique opportunity to challenge preferred interpretations. We propose to consider this approach to research collapse-driven. Collapses can serve as pivotal points for reflective practice that not only offer new perspectives on the empirical field, but also new perspectives on the theoretical field and thus possible new theoretical contributions.