

The prospects of a reflexive sociological craft: a review of unemployed workers, a digital video data title - *Abasebenzi e -Wyatt Road* in Durban, within eThekweni Municipality

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### **Abstract**

This paper emanates from a critical review of the study conducted in 2005 that focussed on the survival strategies of the unemployed workers of which was also recorded through a digital video data. In addition, the paper will look at ethnography in relation to reflexive sociological craft in consideration of the experiences of the above mentioned study.

Therefore, this paper look at various scholars that contributed towards improvement of ethnography that resulted in formulation of different theories. Furthermore, It will also revisit theories such as the constructivism theory (Marcus, 1995) and epistemologically reflexive (Foley, 2002) in relation to information creation processes and as well as the different types of ethnography.

In conclusion, the paper will look at challenges and opportunities that come with reflexive sociological craft such as usage of unconventional ways such as usage of video machine in production of knowledge and presentation (Marcus, 1995). In addition, the paper will explore different views from ethnography practitioners and also utilizes the 2005 study as the bases of reviewing what other practitioners in this field have discovered.

### **Introduction**

Therefore, firstly we need also to take note that ethnography is used concurrently with other research methods and sometimes that create misunderstanding to other researchers and scholars, as they tend to fail to distinguish it from other methods (Foley, 2002:472). In highlighting some of these modes, Marcus argues that the other less common mode of ethnographic research is that it is purposely entrenched in the world system, as currently they are mostly related to the wave of intellectual capital labelled as post-modern (1995:96). It is argued that this type moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. In addition, this mode defines itself as an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation and develops strategy or design of research that acknowledges macro theoretical concepts (Marcus, 1995:96). Furthermore, narratives of the world system although it does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects, takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilise the distinction. Marcus makes an example by looking between life world and system

by which ethnography has been conceived, as it investigates and constructs aspects of the system within itself through the associations and connections it suggested among sites (1995:96). Marcus argues that the intellectual capital of the so called postmodernism provided ideas and concepts for the emergence of multi-sited ethnography, especially as it occurred in response to empirical changes in the world and that led to transformation of locations of cultural production (1995:97). It is argued that some of the new "postmodern" perspective are interesting but lack the transformative political agenda beyond Marxism of which is seen as the original bearer of the view of alienation and objectification through wage labour and that has been broadened to include objectifying, alienating, everyday cultural practices (Marcus, 1995:97).

Therefore, in arguing further, research in anthropology has embedded the ethnographic subjects of study within context of a world system, historical political economies of colonialism, market regimes, state formation, and nation-building developed within sorts of Marxist anthropology, anthropology and political economy, and anthropology and history (Marcus, 1995:97). Marcus argues that some of the contemporary models of multi-sited ethnography of which are developed within these traditional genres and these studies arise from anthropology's participation in a number of interdisciplinary arena that have evolved since the 1980s (1995:97). For example, in the media studies, feminist studies, science and technology studies, various strands of cultural studies, and theory, culture and society group. In ethnography the world system does not mean that it is theoretically constituted holistic frame that gives context to the contemporary study of peoples or local subjects closely observed by ethnographers but it becomes, in a piecemeal way, integral to and embedded in discontinuous, multi-sited objects of study (Marcus, 1995:97). However, this shows that ethnography has been utilised by various theorists when they were conducting their respective studies in various subjects.

## **Background**

Accordingly, that will call for one to have a better understanding about the challenges and opportunities of ethnography as a reflexive craft; one will need to be familiar with some of the theories that contributed towards the improvement of ethnography. So, Marcus argues that that a constructivism theory views artist as an engineer whose task is to construct useful objects, much like a factory worker while actively building a new society (1995:106). This theory manifest itself, as it use technique such as following people in cases such migration studies and this is regarded as the most general current research type of the basic mode of multi-sited ethnography. Another technique that is use is the following of a thing as the way of constructing the multi-sited space of research that involves tracing the circulation through different contexts that manifest in material object of study. For instance, on things such as commodities, gifts, money, work of art, the technique that is utilized is the intellectual property of which is at the heart of fine-grained study of process in the today's' world system (Marcus, 1995:107).

Therefore, it is worth noting what is entrenched in the learning theories that are presented by Dewey (1916), Piaget (1972), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1990) of which argue that a constructivism learning theory of which is defined as active construction of new knowledge is based on a learner's prior experience. Woolfolk (1993) states the following:

... The key idea is that students actively construct their own knowledge: the mind of the student mediates input from the outside world to determine what the student will learn. Learning is active mental work, not passive reception of teaching learning (Koohang et al, 2009:92).

Marcus argues that these techniques are clearly visible in various levels in ethnography study and when you follow the parables that are traced within the realm of discourse and modes of thought and the circulation of signs, symbols, and metaphors guides that tend to influence the design of ethnography (1995:109). In addition, it is also used when you follow the plot, story or tale you notice that it is told in the parameter of a single-site fieldwork that serves as a heuristic for the fieldworker when constructing a multi-sited ethnographic research. In arguing further, Marcus highlights that in recent years this theory has been favoured in projects such as in life history, form of ethnographic data, and when you are following the plot (1995:109). Marcus highlighted that when it comes to following parties to conflicts, another approach is applied when generating a multi-sited environment in ethnographic research. This technique was utilised in small case societies and a practice was established and was called the "the extended case method" in the anthropology of law (1995:110). Marcus argues that this technique is strategically situated in a single-site ethnography that can be considered as a fore-shortened multi-sited project and also identified from the single-site ethnography that study its local focus articulations mainly as a junior to a dictatorship of capitalist or colonial system (1995:111). In addition, Foley argues that the two "neo-Marxist" perspectives are concepts of culture that resulted recognises class conflict and collective agency (2002:471). Foley argues further that post-Marxist criticized ethnographers because they usually do "critical discourse analyses" of how the capitalist state and its cultural institutions create a civil society that is filled with both compliance and cultural struggle (2002:472). It is argued that the difference between various neo- and post-Marxists is that these two viewpoints represent new and useful ways of understanding and critiquing capitalist culture (Foley, 2002:472).

In addition, it's also worth noting that before one understand that ethnography is the writing of participatory experience, we need to consider what other researchers or scholars did about ethnography. The exposure of various researchers to this method led to a point where ethnography becomes segmented into different types. Marcus argues that there are different forms of ethnographic research of which are based on things such as time, specific features, and experience of ethnographic research they exemplify and the selection of the appropriate form of which dependent on the contingent circumstances of the research and as well as the main purpose of the research and that suggest strategies for developing work in contemporary circumstances (1995:99). Another type is multi-sited ethnography of which is implemented in the mapping terrain and its goal is not holistic representation, as it depicts the world system as a totality and also claims that any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system cannot be understood only in terms of the conventional single-site mise-en-scene of

ethnographic research (Marcus, 1995:99). Marcus highlights further that the multi-sited ethnographies define their objects of study through several different approaches or practices and these practices can be understood as practices of construction through preplanned or opportunistic movement (1995:101). In addition, multi-sited research is design around shackles, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of linkage or connection among groups that defines the argument of the ethnography that stimulate a complicated practice of constructivism of which is good practices of representation and investigation.

Therefore, the idea of reflexivity is regarded as the guide of collection of data and this format dependant strongly on Mead's (1969) modernist, symbolic interactions perspective and is considered as the capacity of language, a thought of any system of significance that turn or bend back upon itself and as a result of becoming an object to itself (Foley, 2002:473). Foley argues that this idea of flexibility has been practiced for a long time, as most thinkers in Greeks have practiced some form of reflexivity between 1900s and 1950s whilst an unreflexive style of social scientific research is based on logical positivism (2002:473). Furthermore, there are varieties of reflexivity of which are modernist formulations of reflexivity of which remains as a degree of optimism that the road to quasi-objective knowledge claims is through a reflexive, self-critical awareness of our limits as interpreters (Foley, 2002:473). Furthermore, Foley argues that George Marcus (1998) labels this form of reflexivity as "confessional" to interrogations of subjectivity that has become fairly standard in contemporary American ethnography (2002:473). Whilst Tedlock argues that during the 1970s and 1980s such confessional reflections were only permissible after one had published separate formal scientific realist ethnography (Foley, 2002:473).

In addition, another type of reflexivity that emerged from the marginalized feminist and native ethnographer who began integrating such reflections into their formal ethnographies and some identified these highly subjective, mixed-genre texts as "auto ethnography" as a blend of autobiography and ethnography (Foley, 2002: 474). This idea was debated by various school of thoughts, as scientific ethnographers like Behar and possibly and the most auto ethnographers are unwilling to give advantage to the rational over the emotional (Foley, 2002: 474). Another view argues that it replicate the old Cartesian mind and body dualism of which leaves us subscribing to a series of unfortunate dichotomies such as the science and humanities, objective and subjective, rational and intuitive, and male and female (Foley, 2002: 474). Foley highlights another view of the traditional theoretical ethnographers of which dismiss auto ethnography as a self-indulgent, narcissistic "diary disease" or excessively subjective that have a superficial "textual reflexive" (2002: 476). Another ideal type of reflexivity of which draws a sharp dichotomy between the subjective, "confessional reflexivity" of feminists and is more of objective critical ethnography (Foley, 2002: 475). In addition, another view suggests that this project is viewed to replace the existing macro sociological perspectives such as systems theory and functionalism with an alternative and foundational perspective. Furthermore, Foley argues that it looks like the earlier phenomenological and ethno methodological sociologists that advocate a return to the study of everyday life and "ethno practices" (2002:476). Another type

of reflexivity of which is the “epistemologically reflexive” that is utilised by sociologists as they ground their theoretical constructs in their everyday cultural practices of the subjects (Foley, 2002:476). In addition, such a move replaces abstract armchair theorizing about everyday life with an experiential, abductive (deductive and inductive) way of knowing (Foley, 2002).

In arguing further, Foley, argues that an adductive ethnographer must move back and forth mentally between the concrete field experience and the abstract theoretical explanations of that experience of which at the end the “theoretical reflexivity” should produce a reasonably objective, authoritative account of the cultural other (2002:477). Foley raises a differing view of Bourdieu who differs radically with auto ethnographers because he argues that the existential notion of an experiential, intuitive, introspective knower like other French poststructuralist thinkers of which distance themselves from existentialist or Hegelian notions of consciousness and an autonomous self (2002:477). In addition, they are not like most poststructuralist thinkers, Bourdieu does not reduce the self, subjectivity, and authors to mere “effects” of discourses because his concept of the self or subjectivity retains a much stronger notion of individual agency in relation to dominating structures (Foley, 2002:477). Foley argues that those who are vested with ethnographic research, they know that the “epistemologically reflexive” in a least two ways of which are that *firstly*, they must critically analyze the disciplinary and discursive historical context that shapes them and their interpretations. *Secondly*, they must practice a systematic, disciplined abductive process of theory development within and against the discursive traditions of a discipline(s) (2002:477). Besides what has been highlighted about types of reflexivity as the protocols of conducting research and there are also some criticisms against these types.

Therefore, the postmodern notion of “intertextual reflexivity” is the most understandable type of intertextual reflexivity that is practiced by many scholars in historiography and many ethnographers extended the intertextual sensibility, as Johannes Fabian (1983) points out that they are bound to view the present and lapse into the timeless, authoritative (Foley, 2002: 478). It is also argued that these narrative styles of the ethnographic present practices that may make ethnographers somewhat less intertextually reflexive than what historians generally are (Foley, 2002: 478). However, the intertextual reflexivity also refers to the rhetorical use of representational practices, as the early postmodern critiques of ethnography called upon ethnographers to be more self-conscious about their narrative and representational practices (Foley, 2002: 478).

In addition, Foley argues that this critique highlights the limits of critical ethnography of scientific texts and suggests that ethnographers need to be more experimental (2002: 478). Whilst the view from the deconstructionists suggests that the best way out of this linguistic/semiotic predicament is actually to embrace the paradoxical, analogical both/and logic of signification systems and some postmodern ethnographers embrace the more analogical logic of poetic images rather than either/or dichotomies (Foley, 2002:479). Furthermore, the postmodern ethnographer like Patti Lather (2001) advocates this radical, antifoundational position in what she considers as a constructive manner. Foley argues that a post-modern ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse

intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality and that will provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect (2002:479). In addition, Foley, argues that in a word and poetry not in its textual form, but in its return to the original context and function of poetry by means of its performative break with everyday speech, evoked memories of the ethos of the community, thereby provoked hearers to act ethically (2002:479). Maybe to best understand the best methods to capture lively experience, it will be significant relevant tool such as audio-video recording. So, it will be also significant to see how these guidelines of collecting data are influenced by technological development of which need to be considered when we speak about ethnography.

Then when we look at research tools that are used in the digital era have been accoladed with some advantages when is compared with previous times. Maybe, it is vital to briefly explore the innovative ways of collecting data such as audio-video recording before endeavouring further. So, the first advantage is that the hardware that is required for the production of high quality audio-visual recordings is smaller, lighter, "less expensive" and easier to operate; the second characteristic of the technology: media can be captured from a camera onto the hard drive of a computer, then edited and copied indefinitely without any degradation of the original images or audio tracks (Shrum et al, 2004). In addition, the digital recordings can be copied with no loss of audio and video quality unlike the previous analogue tape, which degrades slightly each copy, and to a film, where an audience in a typical theatre views the print. Furthermore, the digital video media are simply files (although differ in sizes) that can viewed, copied, published on the web or attached to an email for delivery anywhere in the world, any number of times. This characteristic of recording in the digital era means that researchers need not to fear the destruction of their original work. However, it also raises a host of ethical issues regarding distribution and transformation. Shrum et al highlighted that editing in technology can be viewed in terms of *two analogies* of which are the methods for 'word processing' images and 'data processing' images (2004). The type of tools that are presently being explores in the world of research in this era especially those that are regarded as digital and technological oriented.

Since this era is termed a 'digital era' because it refers to a mutually constitutive set of technological and socio-cultural developments that occurred in the 1990s (Shrum et al, 2004). Thus, the research practice in the new millennium it has developed the technical artefact of recording that have become 'radically accessible' even to non-professional users. Furthermore, the technological developments have also developed the digital media and nonlinear editing systems. Therefore, it is argued that technological development has impacted ethnography positively, as we see researchers today utilise the digital video as a research practice (Shrum et al, 2004). This is proven by the fact that the digital video has been not just used as a new way of presenting research but it has become a new way of practicing field research (Shrum et al, 2004). Shrum et al argue that the rise of the digital video as another variety of traditional ethnography and also as response to the new social conditions (2004). Therefore, this suggests 'that digital video should be broadly classified as another type of qualitative methodology in which historical and comparative methods are qualitative. In addition, video recording devices

can be used to create data for input into standard statistical packages just like comparative and text-based methods that are usually used to create tables and statistics (Shrum et al, 2004).

Hence, the ethnographic approach is favoured because it 'captures and records the voices of lived experience, contextualises experience and goes beyond simple fact and exposes the appearances of current specifics, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another' (Marcus, 1995:536). Ethnography is also regarded as the science that deals with culture of human group (Lowie, 1938:3; Werner and Schoepfle, 1987:29). Another significant factor is that ethnography is not viable when you hunt for a quick completion because it is seen as unlikely to satisfy 'value for money' criteria despite of the 'thick description', and rich analysis that gets close to the lived experience of participants in social settings (Marks, 2003:59). Perhaps it is significant to explore the practical experience on this ethnographic approach in relation the challenges and opportunities of a reflexive sociological craft.

### **Findings and analysis: Ethnographic Experience that emanates from a digital audio visual video data title – *Abasebenzi e Wyatt Road***

Maybe, before the paper endeavours to the findings as suggested, it will be significant to briefly highlight some background to the project under scrutiny. This project was done as a strategy to emphasise the urgency for change in the livelihoods of the previously disadvantaged populace especially the workers. Additionally, the intention was to expose the true experiences of respondents that participated in the study that focussed on the survival strategies of the unemployed people. Although this study was captured in the text and published in 2003 title: *survival strategies of the unemployed individuals and households in the surroundings of eThekweni Municipality*. However, that could not reveal enough the live experience of respondents in this regard and that necessitated a video capturing as the addition to the demented text as part of stressing the urgency for change in the manner that keeps on forcing indigenes to sell their labour power despite the highly celebrated post apartheid era in the country.

Therefore, the *Abasebenzi- e Wyatt Road* video project attempts to address some of the concerns that are raised above analysis regarding reflexive sociological craft. This project also helps in confirming and highlighting some anxiety about the usage of this ethnographic method. Perhaps it will be also vital to take note of the shape, form and pattern that are essential to both the animate and the inanimate world (Tunney, 1999). Shape is also a useful, if sometimes over-simplistic, modeling device when explaining complex systems. Therefore, that will require some scrutiny especially when we speak of the parameters in which such complex system operates under in terms of laws that are geared towards a particular shape of society or community. Tunney describes in simple terms that regulations arrangement have involved a movement between the circular or cylindrical and the triangular dimensions (1999). Additionally, the circular dimension of law is normally found mostly among indigenes especially when they engage in decision-making. Consequently, the circle became displaced during

colonialism and imperialism processes that ousted indigenous systems and replaced them with a triangular, hierarchical structure (Tunney, 1999:2).

Consequently, this video footage tended to confirm the fact that technology that is produced for communication is likely to reflect the values and cultural context of the producers (Tunney, 1999:7). This tendency tended to manifest itself between respondents, researcher and supporting members as these stakeholders were seen to be more focusing on the best quality of their respective focus in the whole project. This manifested in the video footage where respondents did their best to clearly state their case across whilst a researcher was more concern about the best capturing of respondents and collecting information from the direct setting. Additionally, the assistance team was more focused on the capturing and editing the images and sounds that are captured in the video recording. Shrum et al highlighted that editing in technology can be viewed in terms of two analogies of which are the methods for 'word processing' images and 'data processing' images (2004).

Thus, for the research to team to perform effectively, it has to rely on a division of labour that creates divisions and hierarchies of knowledge, particularly between researchers who gather embodied and contextual knowledge in the field and those who produce textual knowledge in the office (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). So in this instance in effort to reach for a theoretical commitment to a post foundational epistemology that demands this to be translated into actual research *practice* that rely on concentrated team-based *relations* rather than *divisions* of labour, and a reflexive research practice that strives to involve all team members in all aspects of knowledge construction processes (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). This type of approach to information creation development will avoid tensions between team members for their respective contribution to the whole project in the form of credits for each individual work done instead of focusing to the objectives of the project. For example, the researcher who initiated the idea of the project after completed his study in 2003 when the study was completed and the researcher did not have skills on utilising the video recording machine in terms of know how to edit the video documentary capturing and that required some help of which led to the involvement of the person possessed the skills on know-how in video editing. But when the work was done, then differences of who owns what and so forth and that slightly diverted the initial settings of the project of which was to expose the nature in which so called change has brought to the livelihoods of the indigenes after the end of apartheid. Again to use the video footage as the advocacy tool redress the outstanding fundamental issue such as land dispossession that led respondents to be in the state they found in at present.

Although this study shows that the technological development has impacted ethnography positively, as we see researchers today make use of the digital video as a research practice (Shrum et al, 2004). However, this has also brought vast types of skills that need to be acquired to enable researcher/s to be in a position to utilise this method. Since, digital video has been used as a new way of presenting research but it has also become a new way of practicing field research (Shrum et al, 2004). So, this tends to qualify the rise of the digital video as another variety of traditional ethnography and also as response to the new social conditions that are brought about by global information technology (Shrum et al, 2004). Although the existence of

the threats and possibilities are accepted, then the option for alternative and avoid a repetition of the same situation whereby the researcher does not have relevant technical know-how of operating video equipment and that cannot occur by chance, but by design. This also suggests that there is a need for researcher to be a creative and seeks ways to combine scholarly work with educational, civic and political commitments and that will contribute further to the experimentation of new publish genres that are initiated in various public enterprises (Heilbron, 2009). The study revealed and confirms that ethnography is not viable when you hunt for a quick completion because it is seen as unlikely to satisfy 'value for money' criteria despite of the 'thick description', and rich analysis that gets close to the lived experience of participants in social settings (Marks, 2003:59).

Furthermore, this study attempts to follow what has been suggested by concerning a need to follow the earlier phenomenological and ethnomethodological sociologists that advocate a revisit to the study of everyday life and "ethnopactices" as part of attempting to replace abstract armchair theorizing about everyday life with an experiential, abductive (deductive and inductive) way of knowing (2002). Thus, also revealed that the idea of reflexivity is regarded as the guide of collection of data and a format that dependant strongly on Mead's (1969) modernist, symbolic interactionist perspective. In addition, it is considered as the capacity of language, a thought of any system of significance that turns or bends back upon itself and as a result of becoming an object to itself (Foley, 2002:473).

So, the process of reflection is the means through which a reflexive method of self inquiry is produced in particular when we critically consider and reflect on the premises for our thoughts, observations and our use of language (Alvesson and Skolderg, 2000). For Sterier (1991), the core of reflection (reflexivity) consists of an interest in the way we construct ourselves socially while also constructing objects in our research, for without construction, and without constructing and constructed self, there is no meaning'. From a sociological perspective this involves thinking about 'how' certain social forces or power relations shape what one does, how one thinks about one's identity and responds to the expectations of others within a particular context (Fleming and Fullagar, 2008:3).

This type of development manifested itself in this footage under scrutiny as the respondent's highlighted rationale behind their state of affairs that led to the type of situation they find under. In addition, this approach also paraded a series of skills that one is expected to have in order to utilise this reflexive ethnography method efficiently in a particular setting. Though this video footage has proven that the possession of such skills tended to expose the paradox in which the skills discourse has in meeting daily livelihoods of the respondents. However, it has also brought with it a series of challenges that need to be explored to further improve this new approach in conducting reflexive ethnographic study. When, we need to look briefly at the definition of skills in order to gain more understanding on what is meaning of this term. However, the conventional definition of skill, which tend to concur with what is said above, as it normally see skill as composed of two components – manual skill and knowledge skill (Webster and Leger, 1992:53). Webster and Leger (1992) argue that the ability to perform rapidly and efficiently on a vast project that requires the organisation of perceptual and driving

methodology with skilled workforce. If we only define skill in terms of manual skill and knowledge, and not in terms of quantity, it may imply that all researchers who use this research method possess skill. Therefore, the term skill implies that researchers have overcome certain barrier to gain entry into occupation such as the apprenticeship and an examination or a formal training course. In relation to the skilled researcher, some researchers are regarded, as semi-skilled or unskilled irrespective of the fact that they were engaged in a variety of skills in their workplace for a long time. Webster and Leger (1992) regard barriers, such as the act of mechanism of exclusion, as social closure. Because skills are capable of excluding outsiders and dominate, resources that are in turn denied to others. Another significant fact about the skill is that it acts as a barrier that is artificial social constructs, which relates to the qualifications possessed by workers. Therefore, the skills definition suggests that skill is socially constructed and that demand that its definition cannot be measured objectively since its construction is the result of the related strength of employers and employees in a particular historical milieu. In addition, you need to forget that each milieu is influence by the organisational power of workers at the point of production and in the labour market (Webster and Leger, 1992::55).

Whilst looking at the *craft* which is known to be the '*on the job*' knowledge, many descriptions of crafts or traditional trades need to be reviewed. Most literature have placed that emphasis on the relationship between worker, materials and tools, and a depiction of the craft worker as being responsible for producing the *whole* item. The craft workers perform in succession all the operations necessary to produce a specific item, using a wide range of tools and they are mindful of the inherent qualities of the material used. The relationship between part of practice and knowledge and whole is essential, as the craft worker must be able to figure out how the parts fit into a whole, at the sometime have a sense of how the whole series of interlocking parts are constituted. What relates the parts to the whole is an 'embodied principle of arrangement'. Principles operate at a general and non-empirical level, but craft workers grasp the relationship between part and whole through the act of *visualisation*, rather than through formal reasoning, talking, reading and writing (Gamble, 2002).

Another view by Kusterer (1978) suggests that skill is inseparably link to "working knowledge," and is a precondition for effectively performing any job irrespective of its traditional classification as being skilled, semi- skilled or unskilled. In addition, Kusterer (1978), highlight that there no job that is truly "unskilled" because all jobs need the acquisition of a substantial amount of working knowledge in two areas such as "knowledge about routine processing procedures" and "knowledge about the formal organisation" (Manwaring and Wood, 1985: 138 and 143). That suggests that there is no workers who are unskilled since all jobs demand the acquisition of some working knowledge. (Kusterer,1978:136) rejects the deskilling thesis, as it shapes the practice and destroys various job specific skills along the way, new skills are created and generated continuously, demanding the acquisition of new working knowledge.

## **Challenges facing a reflexive sociological craft**

Therefore, in order to improve the reflexive sociological craft it will be vital to look critically at this approach of conducting research. First and foremost it is significant to consider the argument about some of the new “postmodern” perspectives are interesting but lack the transformative political agenda beyond Marxism of which is seen as the original bearer of the view of alienation and objectification through wage labour and that has been broadened to include objectifying, alienating, everyday cultural practices (Marcus, 1995:97).

This form of development tended to be observable in this study as video footage is “not capable” as the image is cannot transform or change the daily livelihoods in which respondents live under in this case the vulnerable workers. Hence such capabilities solely depended on the individuals’ capabilities and commitment in bringing about the desired change in a particular circumstance or community. However, it helps in capturing the moment for later comparison in different times especially when it comes to assessment of developmental change in particularly milieu to the daily livelihoods of the previously disadvantaged communities in the “former” colonised countries and workers globally.

Another challenge is that this method is accessed by the rich in terms of affordability when it comes to purchasing the equipment and elite in the society as they utilise this method for their academic or related work. Therefore, this suggests that this method remain a tool for the society’s chosen few- elite who always have a upper hand in terms of deciding what and when to document and how and who to be part of the footage. So this set up tends to be bias against the vulnerable individuals/communities as it is a known fact that people in such state they are normally exposed to exploitation as they normally accept whatever that can be brandished as geared for the betterment of their undesired living condition. In addition, another concern is the fact that since the elitist aspects of liberal democratic theory find new currency as the alliance of reformers and moderates commits itself to a form of politics. Then in return tends to preserve the central pillars of capitalist society, ensuring that entrenched power holders – especially the bourgeoisie – maintain a veto over the pace, content and institutional form of the new reflexive ethnography approaches (Mthembu, 2007).

So the failure by the researchers especially in this field to scrutinise critically the new “postmodern” perspectives that tends to lack the transformative political agenda and that will lead to consolidation of foreign ideals to the former colonised populace as they attempts to decolonise their socio-political sphere. That will result to what Alatas (1974) call it as the ‘captive mind’, which largely refers to the theoretical and institutional dependence of traditional researchers(especially those from the previously disadvantaged people) to colonisers, ideals, leadership and the uncritical and imitative manner in which such knowledge is assimilated and disseminated. In considering what Abdullah and Low (2005) noted when they argue that the intellectual imperialism has resulted in diverting or lack of attention from issues that should be of critical concern to African communities (Mthembu, 2007). Therefore, such concern becomes a centre for is the greatest concern about these new “postmodern” perspectives as research’s main objective is to understand that particular phenomenon with a

view to come up with best means to address it. Then the need to adopt the *linear thought* approach is highly recommended in addressing problems the colonised are experiencing and to come up with lasting solutions to the evils of colonisation of Africa and her children and decolonisation of the mind of the human race in general and workers in particular (Welsing, 1991).

### **Opportunities for a reflexive sociological craft**

Before attempting to explore opportunities that come with the new “postmodern” perspectives of reflexive sociological craft, it vital to note that the emergence of a widespread set of convention, which compose a legitimate order of value in these societies, by which capitalism tends to justify its existence and referred to that as the rise of a *new spirit of capitalism* that is geared to retake and reformulate the old Weberian expression (Martins, 2009). Hence the examination of changes in the spirit of capitalism has exposed a key reorganisation in dominant value systems (Martins, 2009: 12). That means even the analytical perspectives that are being used as its adherents that are referred to as the sociology of the regimes of engagement in action need to be revisited (Martins, 2009: 12). Thévenot (2006) highlights three different systems of engagement in action that are identified, which vary from a more personal and cherished form of engagement to a more general and rational space of conventional constraints (archetypal of the public sphere): *family*, *plan* and *public* (Martins, 2009). In addition, Martins (2009) argues that this separated differentiated by the individual evaluation of which is the most convenient approach to each situation, based on the generality of the perceived relationships between the beings (humans and non humans) in existence. Familiar is illustrated by Thévenot (2006) as the first of these regimes, within the analytical parameters, that highlight that the regime of familiar engagement sustains a personalised, localised good: feeling at easiness (Martins, 2009). In addition, Martins (2009) argues further that the well-being experienced in comfortable because familiar human and material surroundings is greatly dependent on the person who has come to accommodate himself in and feel comfortable in them, and on the path by which he familiarized himself with a milieu produced by continued use. Furthermore, this is more than a fixed habit because it involves a dynamic relation with an immediate milieu that is experienced (Martins, 2009).

Furthermore, it is argued that currently in the familiar world where agents partake in action through a special “friendly” approach (Martins, 2009). However, this commitment does not engage the need to place under any principle of correspondence to the human beings and objects that partake. Therefore, the immediacy sphere might be best demonstrated by the petty relationships that recognises with objects and people that are known. For example, Martins argue that such instance can be found on that simple action of hitting the car’s dashboard, with the practical expectation that this will turn on the speedometer light, as it has in the past. Nevertheless, this gesture would be difficult to explain to someone else, mostly for moral reasons such as “you shouldn’t hit the car like that, it might damage it” (Martins, 2009). In addition, in this system, even verbal language has a non-analytical nature and might even appear strange, given its’ inherently general character. For example, the word “cup” refers to

all possible cups and there is always a deviation from the ordinary cup that one is normally used for serving coffee to avoid language puzzlement (Martins, 2009).

Whilst the plan system, entails an increase in the level of generalisation of the relationships between the people and objects at present, as it extends beyond the friendly circle of close habituation-driven solidarities. Furthermore, Martins (2009) emphasizes that:

“The regime of engagement in a plan corresponds to a level of engagement so frequently used that the specificity of this means of apprehending the relation between the human being and surrounding reality may well remain invisible. This is why we can also speak here of “normal action,” or the “normal format” of action. The good in this engagement also tends to get lost in the ordinary idea of an accomplished action, especially since the widely used vocabulary of ‘needs’ and ‘utility’ neutralizes the form of evaluation specific to this engagement. (...) The plan intention cannot be experienced without recognition that environmental components have a functional capacity—this is what ensures the type of guarantee particular to this regime. The object thus grasped confers its solidity on the plan intention while facilitating agent’s control of plan execution. Analysis of this regime of engagement brings out the complementarities between agent’s power as an individual engaged in realizing his project and a grasp of the object in functional terms”.

In addition, Martin argues that the plan system is often recognised with a *functional* action in face of a more or less defined project (2009). In addition, in this instance, both humans and objects tend to be liable for in action based to opportunities within the situation, inducing “plans” which are more or less shared by all the participants. Lastly, the public system is the common in terms of the manner in which individuals assess and coordinate their actions in a particular situation (Martins, 2009). In addition, engagement is qualified during an order of legitimate worth, which is a stipulation of common good. Therefore, Thévenot (2006) argued further that:

“[This regime] is oriented by demands of a public order, since the evaluation must be valid for a third party and characterized by generality and legitimacy. This is the level which is most demanding with regard to the equivalency required by commonizing. Luc Boltanski and I (...) brought to light the demands made by the sense of justice common to all orders of legitimate worth involving specification of a common good (...). In [this regime], the relevant reality is grasped according to a cognitive format grounded on the conventional qualifications of persons and things” (Martins, 2009: 9-10).

Thus, when we look at the innovative ways of designing and formulation of a new knowledge and information processes of which is managed and directed by the affected communities. The following constructive method tends to involve the affected communities as the primary focus in determining knowledge creation.

## Concluding remarks

The paper attempted to critically scrutinise the challenges and opportunities of a reflexive sociological craft based on the experiences of the unwaged workers in Durban, South Africa that were captured through the audio visual data capturing tool. It also attempted to look at some of the challenges, opportunities and as well as suggesting other alternatives that can be considered for a reflexive sociological craft.

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