Scientific Knowledge through Involvement – 
How to Do Respectful Othering

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The theme of this article is how we as social scientists can research others through involvement, and develop true knowledge about the other without “othering” them, that is, not objectifying them or making them an instrument in our research, but rather be respectful of the other as a person. The thesis of this article is that othering is a matter of degree as well as principles. Social science and Action research can do respectful othering. Doing that is both a matter of personal skill and the wisdom of the researcher and of complying with some design principles. I argue that these design principles can be related to four areas of knowledge that we are likely to find in an involved research situation: knowledge about oneself, knowledge about the other, knowledge about the relation and knowledge about the situation.

Key words: involvement, respectful othering, action research, research design, knowledge

Introduction

The question I will try to discuss in this article is the following: a) how can we as social scientists research others through involvement, and develop true knowledge about the other without “othering” them, that is, not objectifying

* I should like to thank Professor Davydd Greenwood, Professor Tor Claussen, Professor Richard Ennals and Professor Olav Eikeland for critical and constructive comments.