

# **Learning about Social Diversity in a Community-Based Research Service- Learning Project: Changing Students' Conceptions and the Impact on Individual Behaviour**

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(presented by: Janine Bittner)

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# Acknowledgments & Supplementary Information

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- **Authors Contributions:** Janine Bittner (senior lecturer) was responsible for the research design, the methods, the data analysis, presentation of the results. Janina Kempchen (student research assistant) was primarily responsible for conducting the online interviews, gave some valuable feedback to the interview guideline
- **Declaration:** There is no financial or conflict of interest with the given information, presented results of the study in this presentation
- **Acknowledgments:** We would also like to thank the students involved in the course and the community partners for their willingness to cooperate.
- **Thanks also goes to:** Members of the European Observatory of Service Learning, Uniaktiv, University of Duisburg-Essen, University Network Education through Responsibility and in particular Prof. Dr. Philipp Mayring, Prof. Dr. Thomas Frenzl, Mag. Stella Lempke for giving advice and feedback during the first steps of the data analysis.
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# Poverty, Homelessness, Social Inequality



Visible Signs of Homelessness in Berlin

# Background

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**EVALUATION  
STUDY**



**COURSE  
TOPIC:**  
SOCIAL  
INEQUALITY,  
POVERTY AND  
HOUSING



**RESEARCH-BASED  
TEACHING AND  
LEARNING /  
COMMUNITY-BASED  
RESEARCH**

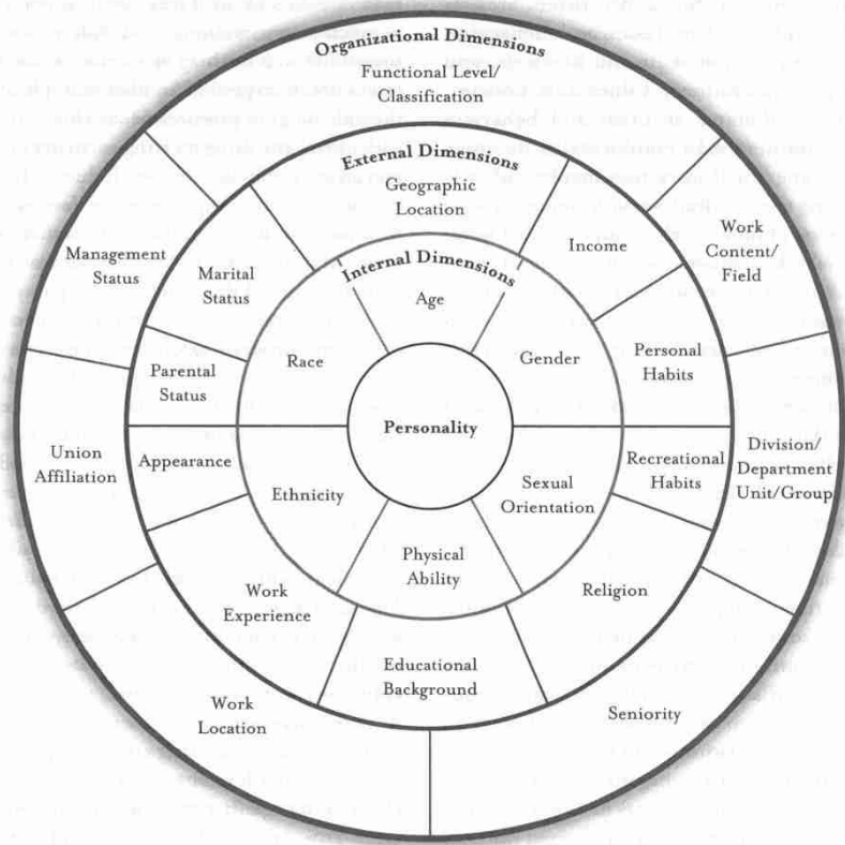


**SERVICE-  
LEARNING**



**LEARNING  
THROUGH  
EXPERIENCE  
(KOLB 1984)  
PRAGMATICAL  
EDUCATIONAL  
THEORY  
(DEWEY 1916)**

# Background



- No universal definition for the concept of diversity
- Widely used concept in the political, social and cultural sciences
- Often defined in terms of the (manifested and invisible) differences between people, the uniqueness of each individual should be recognised
- **Four layers model of diversity** from Gardenswartz, L., & Rowe was used as a helpful theoretical framework to classify the given answers and to understand the conceptions of the course participants

**Source:** Gardenswartz, L., & Rowe, A. (2008). The effective management of cultural diversity. In M. A. Moodian (Ed.), *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the Cross-cultural Dynamics within Organizations* (pp. 35–43). SAGE Publications. Page: 37

# Background

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“The term diversity is derived from the Latin word "diversitas" and refers to difference or variety. Diversity is generally used as the opposite of uniformity or unity. Diversity is concretized through different dimensions. Therefore - as a first approximation - diversity can be understood as a relationship between different dimensions of diversity and their characteristics. A well-known example is the diversity of workforces, which differ, for example, in terms of age, gender, social and ethnic background or qualifications. (Bürmann 2018)”

# Literature Review

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- Service-learning can contribute to scrutinize and rethink students' beliefs and assumptions about the population they work with as well as students' notions about social issues by which the population group is affected
- In individual cases, however, a reinforcement of existing prejudices was also observed
- Other studies demonstrate that views of diversity changed during a service-learning experience and that some participants developed a more complex, differentiated understanding of the topic
- The perception, that something needs to change, the desire to contribute making the world a better place can increase
- The development of empathy for others is stimulated
- The intercultural competence and sensitivity can increase

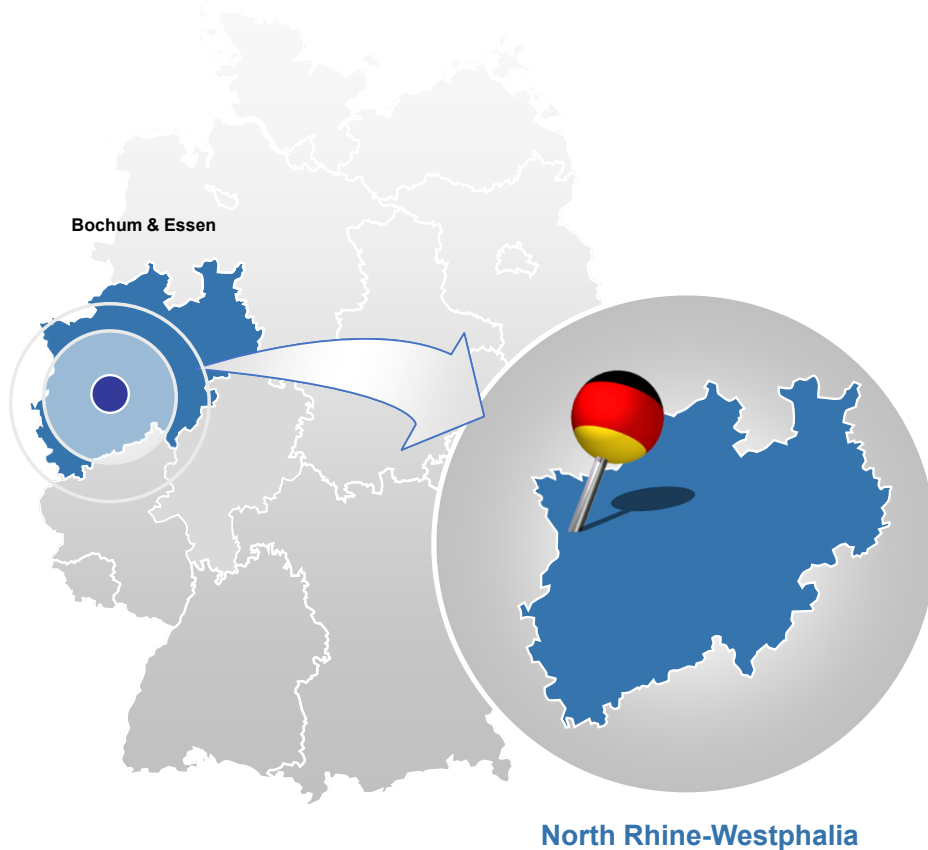
# Course Structure

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- seminar with integrated field work
- three student project teams worked with partner institutions
- very heterogeneous composition of the course participants
- The predetermined topic area was social inequality, poverty and homelessness, with a regional focus on the Ruhr area
- The work in the heterogeneously composed teams was moderated, and students' experiences gained during the project were reflected in special sessions
- the aim was to offer a variety of rich learning experiences that offered the opportunity to reflect on one's own views, prejudices and habitual behaviour



# Research Location: Ruhr Area, Cities of Essen and Bochum



Lake Baldeney, Villa Hügel (Krupp family) in Essen, World Heritage Site Colliery and Coking Plant Zollverein and other Pictures

# Aim of Study / Research Questions

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- **Research Goal:** We aimed especially to identify and classify different conceptions and meanings of the term social diversity among students. Another aim was to examine whether these conceptions have undergone a significant change. Finally we wanted to know whether the learning experiences with diversity aspects have resulted in longer-term changes in students' views and behaviour.
- **RQ 1:** What personal conceptions of "social diversity" exist ?
- **RQ 2:** In the opinion of the students, where did aspects of "social diversity" play a role in the project work? (activities, work situations, contexts) and which dimensions of heterogeneity are perceived?
- **RQ 3:** How have these changed through the work in the community-based research project?
- **RQ 4:** What was generally learned from the experiences, what influence did the experiences have on attitudes and behaviour?

# Data Collection

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- qualitative interviews with students after completion of the course on a voluntary basis
- conducted via the **ZOOM conference system**
- n = 13 - 92,87 % participation rate
- **interview length** usually around 60 min, between 32 min and 79 min
- **complex of questions “social diversity”** - 12 narrative-generating key questions plus maintenance questions and specific follow-up questions
- **Further question complexes of other sub-studies:** teamwork, learning behaviour
- The interviews were audiorecorded, an interview postscript sheet was filled out and the qualitative interview data was fully transcribed

# Qualitative Content Analysis

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- Due to the strict rule-based approach, I decided to use **qualitative content analysis** according to the method developed by **Prof. Dr. Philipp Mayring** to analyse the data (methodical control or strong rule-based approach to text evaluation)
- Inductive category formation was used to work as closely as possible with the text material



**Source:** [https://www.aau.at/blog/uninews\\_44065](https://www.aau.at/blog/uninews_44065)

**Further information to the QCA and the team:**  
<https://qualitative-content-analysis.org/en/category/news/>

# Content Analytical Units and Use of MAXQDA

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- **Coding unit:** smallest component of material which can be coded in the text (sensitivity) = clear meaning component (sense) / sinntragende Phrase
- **Context unit:** background for coding decision = interview transcript, entire response range for the context unit
- **Recording unit:** all documents (13 interviews)
- Coding and data analysis was software-supported by MAXQDA Analytics (version Release 22.8.0) (**Prof. Dr. Udo Kuckartz**)



**Source:** <https://www.maxqda.com/blogpost/ai-in-research-opportunities-and-challenges>

**Further information:** <https://www.uni-marburg.de/staff-info?dn=0000000603>

# **Course Participants' Understanding of Social Diversity**

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**Frequencies of main themes and subthemes –  
course participants' conceptions of social diversity**

<b>Main Themes and Sub Themes</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Percentage (valid)</b>
<b>Social diversity is reality in Germany</b>	1	7.7
<b>Characteristics of a diverse society</b>	8	61.5
<b>A colorful mixture</b>	1	7.7
<b>Appreciation of the individual</b>	1	7.7
<b>Acceptance</b>	2	15.4
<b>Openness, open-mindedness</b>	1	7.7
<b>Mutual enrichment</b>	1	7.7
<b>Equal valuation, equal treatment</b>	2	15.4
<b>Integration plays a significant role</b>	1	7.7
<b>Conflicts</b>	3	23.1
<b>Dimensions of diversity</b>	13	100.0
<b>Personality</b>	4	30.8
<b>Internal Dimensions</b>	13	100.0
<b>External Dimensions</b>	8	61.5
<b>Organisational Dimensions</b>	1	7.7
<b>Analysed documents</b>	13	100.0
<b>Total of coded segments</b>	49	100.0



*Diversity also means, of course, that everyone is somehow different and has their own way of doing things, and that's what I think is so exciting about living together with other people and interacting with them. And I think that's primarily what I would understand by social diversity.* (Understanding Social Diversity – Dimensions / Layers of Diversity - Personality / Transcript - Interview 01, pos. 11)





*So, I understand it to mean that different ethnic groups as well as different groups with different views live together without conflict. Or that each other's opinion or appearance is accepted and does not lead to any conflicts. (Understanding Social Diversity – Characteristics of a diversity Society - Acceptance / Transcript - Interview 02, pos. 11)*

# **Students' Experience with Social Diversity during Coursework**

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# **Change of Views on Social Diversity**

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**Frequencies of main themes – change of students’ understanding of social diversity (view), main themes with single occurrence are not reported**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Percentage (valid)</b>
<b>Understanding of social diversity has not changed so much</b>	2	15.4
<b>Social diversity is a reality</b>	2	15.4
<b>More positive understanding of social diversity</b>	1	7.7
<b>More detailed / clearer understanding of social diversity</b>	4	30.8
<b>Complexity of social problems has been recognised</b>	2	15.4
<b>Different reasons for social emergencies</b>	1	7.7
<b>Benefits of social diversity are seen</b>	1	7.7
<b>Necessity of research in subject area recognised</b>	1	7.7
<b>Documents with code(s)</b>	10	76.9
<b>Documents without code(s)</b>	3	23.1
<b>Analysed documents</b>	13	100.0
<b>Total of coded segments</b>	14	100.0



*Especially when it comes to homelessness, it's an issue that is much more complex at first glance than it looks to me. That the reasons for this are incredibly diverse. That the lack of housing also plays a role, of course. That people's problems play a role in it.*

*(Complexity of Social Problems has been Recognized / Transcript - Interview 08, pos. 111)*



*Not necessarily changed, rather something has been added. So I think that dealing with certain vulnerable groups of people again simply gave me more information. I was simply able to penetrate more into their lives through the excursion, for example, through information, data and so on. That I know and can think even more about another group of people. (Understanding Extended by other Aspects/ Transcript - Interview 14, pos. 95)*

# **Relevance for Students' Behaviour and Attitudes**

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**Frequencies of main themes – relevance for students' behaviour and attitudes,  
main themes with single occurrence are not reported**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Percentage (valid)</b>
<b>Greater openness</b>	1	7.7
<b>Greater understanding of life realities</b>	3	23.1
<b>Importance of treating others with respect</b>	1	7.7
<b>Greater serenity</b>	1	7.7
<b>Less fear of contact</b>	3	23.1
<b>Learned approaches to work in heterogeneous teams</b>	1	7.7
<b>Learned approaches to work with community partners</b>	1	7.7
<b>Prejudices overcome through encounters</b>	3	23.1
<b>Motivation to help people increased</b>	1	7.7
<b>Documents with code(s)</b>	8	61.5
<b>Documents without code(s)</b>	5	38.5
<b>Analysed documents</b>	13	100.0
<b>Total of coded segments</b>	16	100.0



# Strengths/ Limitations

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- the interview guide is of very good quality
- the available data material from the interviews is very extensive, the questions asked were answered consistently
- some of the answers given could not be coded because the answers did not fit to the defined unit of analysis
- limitations result from the small number of course participants and from the need to change the course schedule
- intra- and intercoder reliability could not yet be determined due to time constraints

**Thank You for Your Attention !**

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Visible Signs of Homelessness in Berlin

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Street Newspapers, a Voice of (former) Homeless People, Bochum

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# Image Sources

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- **Visible Signs of Homelessness in Berlin:** own picture, Berlin
- **Four layers model of diversity:** Gardenswartz, L.; Rowe, A. (2008), p. 37
- **Prof. Dr. Philipp Mayring:** [https://www.aau.at/blog/uninews\\_44065](https://www.aau.at/blog/uninews_44065)
- **Prof. Dr. Udo Kuckartz:** <https://www.maxqda.com/blogpost/ai-in-research-opportunities-and-challenges>
- **Street Newspapers, a Voice of (former) Homeless People,** Bochum: own picture, Bochum
- **Map:** created with a template from PresentationLoad