**Florian Znaniecki’s Memoir Method in Social Scientific Research**

**Abstract**

The concept of humanistic sociology and the memoir methodology approach was introduced by Florian Znaniecki with W.I.Thomas in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* *(1927)*. The first aim of this paper is to review some key studies which have employed the memoir approach and consider their process of data collection and analysis. A second aim is to explore the current status and usefulness of Znaniecki’s memoir approach in current social science research methodology. The humanistic sociological approach, according to Znaniecki, emphasised the need to accept social and cultural values and actions as facts, just as human agents themselves accept them. Every individual is seen as a member of at least one group social system (e.g. family, school), and interpreted as a centre of experience and actions based on the culture of that group(s). These conscious human agents play the major role in maintaining and changing a group’s cultural system. Based on Znaniecki’s published works, there are four different types of memoirs: the full life memoir, oral memoirs based on detailed conversations or interviews personal correspondence, diaries and personal statements. The advantages of such personal documents, which originate in the consciousness of the writers, is that they are less structured and influenced by the researcher. Respondents are free to write their thoughts, feelings, aspirations and assessments. There is a scope for the respondents to recall some events, select certain incidents, omit others, and reveal the influence of people in their past life, according to their judgment at the moment of writing. According to Znaniecki, in sociological analysis all data must be taken with the humanistic coefficient, that is, from the standpoint of the conscious human agents who experience the phenomenon being investigated, not from that of an outside observer. This paper highlights examples of personal statements about a current phenomenon, secondary students’ participation in sport, and shows how the data were collected and analysed, and what findings emerged. Gathering memoir or personal document data, and analysing them from the perspective of the writers, is a method that has an important place in understanding the culture of different social groups. It can be applied at many levels – global, ethnic, national, socio-economic or family group, and has special application to language, religion, gender studies, sports and leisure.

**Keywords**: Humanistic Sociology, Memoir Method, Humanistic Coefficient

**Introduction**

This paper intends to discuss the memoir method developed by Florian Znaniecki in his humanistic sociological approach to social scientific research: The paper looks at the historical development of the theory and the memoir approach in America, Poland and Australia. The memoir method, in the different forms introduced by Znaniecki and later scholars, is explained, together with the model of memoir analysis developed by Smolicz and Secombe (1981). A discussion of Herbert Blumer’s detailed critique of Znaneicki’s humanistic sociology follows, highlighting the supposed lack of academic rigour in memoir analysis. More recently, memoir method has been used for educational research in the Australian context, after its introduction by Jerzy Smolicz over 30 years ago. Examples of these studies are discussed, including the most recent investigation of young people’s participation in sport and sense of cultural identity.

**Florian Znaniecki and the Development of Humanistic Sociology**

Florian Witold Znaniecki was born in 1882 in Swiatniki, Poland. As a student at the University of Warsaw, in Russian occupied Poland, Znaniecki with some others formed an underground group which rebelled against the imposition of Russian as the language of instruction, and organised unofficial teaching of university subjects in Polish. This incident led to Znaniecki being expelled from the University of Warsaw. He was forced to leave Poland and studied philosophy at the University of Geneva at Zurich. Later he returned to Poland where he finished his doctorate in 1909 at the University of Cracow, in the Austrian occupied part of Poland. At this time Znaniecki was exposed to the ideas of thinkers in the discipline of sociology including Durkheim, Levy-Bruhl and Celestian Bougle. By 1912 he published *Humanism and Knowledge*, which elaborated on his thinking in philosophy in relation to society (Dulczewski, 2000; Halas, 2010).

However, Znaniecki’s major contribution in humanistic sociology and the memoir method came from his collaboration with the American sociologist W.I. Thomas, who was undertaking a study of Polish immigrants, when Znaniecki was stranded in the United States by the outbreak of World War One. Their work on *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, based on the analysis of family letters, turned out to be a landmark in the development of social science (Dulczewski, 2000).

After the First World War, when Znaniecki held the chair of Sociology at the University of Poznan in independent Poland, he established the Polish Sociological Institute and the Polish Sociological Review. He also trained some of the finest Polish sociologists, of the next generation with whom he further developed the memoir method (Chalasinski, 1938). At this time he published some of his most influential books, *Sociology of Education* (1928-1930) in Polish and *Social Actions* (1936) in English. *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* was published in 1940 when he was again stranded in America by the Second World War. He had started to establish himself as a leader in American sociological circles, when he became a visiting professor at Columbia University, and later held the chair of sociology at the University of Illinois. All these achievements led to him being elected president of the American Sociological Association in 1953 (Dulczewski, 2000; Grathoff, 2000; Halas, 2010; Lagneau, 1988).

**The Concepts of Humanistic Sociology**

Humanistic sociology has a strong anti-positivistic approach towards the study of society. It links the study of the social and the cultural by seeing culture as made up of the shared meanings (or cultural values) which members of a particular social group create, maintain and modify as the basis of the things that they do together. A fundamental principle of the whole theory of humanistic sociology is that cultural values and individuals’ attitudes to them must be taken as facts in their own right, and looked at in the way that individuals, viewed as active social agents, themselves identify and acknowledge them (Murugaian, 1988; Smolicz, 1994; Znaniecki, 1963).

Znaniecki, in particular, has stressed the need to interpret all social and cultural activities from the standpoint of the actors themselves, and not merely that of the outsider observer (Smolicz, 1979, p. 21).

In this way Znaniecki believed that humanistic sociology could take account of the double dilemma in understanding social and cultural life:

The problem of dependence of the individual upon social organisation and culture; the problem of the dependence of social organisation and culture on the individual (Smolicz, 1979, p. 26).

In the context of research on cultural diversity in Australia, humanistic sociological theory was further elaborated by Smolicz (Smolicz, 1979), who contended that all human beings are active agents in a particular group, and their participation defined the group’s culture. However, to become active members and be recognised among other group members, individuals have to learn the shared meanings or cultural values which make up the group’s culture. The group members’ own thoughts, expressions, and behaviours are then influenced by the group’s values.

When an object, word, or person’s action has a meaning in the life of a group, in addition to its concrete existence in the natural world, Znaniecki (1969) called it a ‘cultural value’. Most often a particular cultural value is linked to others like it in a group system. For example, words are part of a linguistic system. People in relation to one another form a group system of social values. The system of sporting values relates to various meanings given to sport. In the area of sporting values, it is possible to think of more specific group systems – of soccer, volleyball, swimming, cricket or netball values, where cultural meanings are given to the equipment and space used, the rules of the game, the various players and their particular actions, allowed and not allowed (Maniam, 2011).

It is helpful to give Smolicz’s term “personal cultural system” to the systems of cultural values which individuals develop for their own use, based on those meanings they have learned from their participation in the group’s activities (Smolicz, 1979). The group’s shared meanings, which develop from one generation to the next, are sustained and changed as individuals actively participate in the groups’ culture and its evolution (Secombe, 1997).

Humanistic sociology tries to take account of the essential interplay between the members of the group as individual persons and the life and activities of the group as a whole (Secombe, 1997, p.45).

The concept of the humanistic coefficient was developed by Znaniecki as an important part of a humanistic sociological investigation. Znaniecki (1968) emphasised that sociological data needs to be interpreted with the humanistic coefficient, that is, from the standpoint of the conscious human agents as social persons who experience the phenomenon being investigated. Based on this idea, Znaniecki believed that all cultural data must be viewed as facts that belong to somebody and not in the abstract, as belonging to nobody (Znaniecki, 1939).

To understand cultural phenomena, researchers use the humanistic coefficient in their investigations. Every social and cultural activity is understood and interpreted from the participant’s point of view and not from perspective of the researcher who is studying the cultural phenomenon (Murugaian, 1988). The application of the humanistic coefficient puts the focus on the motives and experiences of individual agents, and their consciousness of themselves in their cultural situation and social roles (Znaniecki, 1963, 1969).

Znaniecki’s views are highlighted most explicitly in a paragraph from *Social Actions*;

The action of speaking a sentence, writing a poem, making a horseshoe, depositing money, proposing to a girl, electing an official, performing a religious rite, as empirical datum, is what it is in the experience of the speaker and his listeners, the poet and his readers, the blacksmith and the owner of a horse to be shod, the depositor and the banker, the proposing suitor and the courted girl, the voters and the official whom they elect, the religious believers who participate in the ritual. The scientist who wants to study these actions inductively must take them as they are in the human experience of those agents and re-agents; they are his [sic] empirical data in as much and because they are theirs (Znaniecki, 1969, p. 221).

Examples of such actions related to playing sports are serving an ace in tennis, tackling an opponent in soccer, crossing the finishing line in a marathon; marking the ball in Australian Rules Football; hitting a boundary in cricket; and shooting a goal in netball. Each of these actions is what it is in the experience of the player; the game concerned is interpreted in terms of the shared cultural meanings which make it possible for the sport to be played.

Znaniecki argued that if the humanistic coefficient were taken out of the cultural research context, then the researchers would lose the essential cultural dimension being studied. Instead, they would discover “a disjointed mass of natural things and processes without any similarity to the reality” of what they are investigating (Znaniecki in Secombe & Zajda, 1999, p. 287).

**The Memoir Method of Humanistic Sociology**

The meanings shared by a group of the participants can be investigated through what Znaniecki called ‘cultural data’, where the participants are asked to explain their experience and comment on their thoughts, feelings and actions in their own words (Secombe, 1997). Such data are different from natural data which are derived from direct observation or questionnaire responses which can be measured and counted quantitatively. In the case of cultural data, researchers can study a cultural item by tapping into individuals’ comments on their participation of experiences in it. From cultural data, interpreted through the humanistic coefficient from the participants’ perspective, the researcher can find evidence of cultural meanings or values which make up individuals’ personal cultural systems (Smolicz, 1994, 1999).

For Znaniecki (1968), personal documents provided the best source of cultural data. His pioneering study with W. I. Thomas, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, first published in 1919, analysed correspondence between peasants who had migrated to America and their families who were still living in Poland. In later research, he asked participants to write memoirs, about their lives as peasants, or living in the city of Poznan, for example (Chalasinski, 1938; Dulczewski, 2000). Smolicz and his colleagues in Adelaide adopted the method of written or oral memoirs, but with some modifications. Participants were asked to write (or speak) about those aspects of their lives and experiences in which the researcher was interested, rather than provide their whole life history. In those studies which used secondary school students as respondents, personal statements were written in response to open-ended guideline questions, which suggested a topic to be discussed, but left students free to respond in their own ways (White, 2003; Lancione, 2009; Maniam, 2011b).

Smolicz (1979) considered that Znaniecki’s humanistic sociological concepts and method were well suited to investigating how individuals of different ethnic communities, as well as those of the Anglo-Celtic majority, viewed the reality of cultural and linguistic diversity in Australia and what it meant to them personally. It was an approach that could lead to understanding individuals’ feelings and aspirations toward English, on the one hand, and Australian community languages, on the other.

**Memoir Analysis**

According to (Znaniecki, 1945, 1963, 1968), humanistic sociological researchers need to be able to clearly distinguish between two sorts of facts, concrete and cultural, which are used in different but complementary ways in the analysis of personal documents like memoirs. In analysing the memoirs of young people of Polish background in Australia, Smolicz and Secombe (1981) developed a concise overview of the sources of concrete and cultural facts to be found in a set of memoirs and the different ways they were used in the humanistic sociological analysis undertaken in their study.

In Smolicz and Secombe’s table (reproduced as Figure 1.0), the term ‘concrete facts’ refers to information which the writers of memoirs or personal documents give about the objective realities of themselves and their daily lives, such as age, birthplace, place of residence and citizenship. In addition, they may give details of the language they spoke at home, their religious affiliation or their participation in sport and recreation. These facts, by their very nature, are able to be checked if necessary against other sources of information. Concrete facts are important in humanistic sociological analysis because they indicate who the writers are, what their cultural context is and what cultural values they actually activate (Secombe & Zajda, 1999).

Cultural facts, are the focus of humanistic sociological analysis because they reveal the personal world of the writers and express their individual thoughts, feelings and aspirations. Cultural facts can be found in two different sorts of statements. The first can be regarded as revealing a cultural fact indirectly. Often writers express their assessments or evaluations of other people or social situations and conditions in general. Since they represent the writers’ opinions and observations about people and things outside themselves, they need to be regarded as ‘second-hand’ information; their content cannot be accepted without reference to other sources. However, underlying such opinions, it is often possible to recognize the attitudes of the writers (Secombe & Zajda, 1999, p.300). A statement such as, ‘Those who enjoy playing sports are show-offs’ cannot be taken as a reliable reflection of social life, but does provide a useful clue to the writers’ negative attitude to sport (Maniam, 2011, p. 227).

Statements based around first person pronouns (I, me, my) are easily recognised as direct cultural facts, where the writers are expressing their own personal thoughts and feelings about themselves and their actions. Such statements cannot be challenged by the researcher, but need to be accepted for analysis as they stand (Secombe & Zajda, 1999). ‘I love the excitement of playing in a team’ or ‘I hate team sports but enjoy the challenge of competing against myself’ are comments that directly reveal each writers’ attitude to team versus individual sports, as well as their respective attitudes to others as social values (Maniam, 2011).

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|  | **Concrete Facts** | **Cultural Facts** | |
| **Assessments** | **Attitudes** |
| **Sources** | 1. Information given (With little or no comment) in memoirs. 2. Information derived from assessments made in memoirs. 3. Details available to researcher (e.g. information on first degree, schools attended). | Comments and remarks made by memoir writers concerning:   1. their own actions 2. the actions of others 3. institutions, organizations. | Thoughts, feelings, aspirations expressed by memoir writers about themselves. |
| **Uses** | 1. Needed for interpretation of cultural facts e.g. to know whose attitudes and values are being studied and what their social, economic and cultural situation is. 2. Give an indication of what cultural values are actually being activated. | 1. Provide concrete facts about actions of writers themselves and others. 2. Give an indirect indication of attitudes of writers. 3. Supply indirect evidence of group values. | 1. Are a direct source of the writers’ attitudes. 2. Provide indirect evidence of group values. |

### Figure 1.0: Concrete and Cultural Facts in Humanistic Sociological Analysis (Smolicz and Secombe, 1981, p.27).

**Blumer’s appraisal of Znaniecki’s Approach**

Since the publication of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* in 1919, the use of personal documents, diaries, biographical material, and personal reflection as a source of sociological data has been the centre of much criticism. Criticism of what others called the “biographical method” has tended to support the paradigm of empirical research whilst noting the purported lack of “objectivity; lack of representativeness; and their lack of uniformity” (Giza, 1987, p. 13). Other concerns have included the need to establish the authenticity of documents, as well as the significant point that they are not likely to be representative of any society, or any group within it.

Blumer (1939) was the author of the most extensive critiques of this methodology. However, the majority of these criticisms centred on the type of data collected by the humanistic sociologist and the limitations of personal documents for this purpose. Although recognising the “monumental” achievement of The Polish Peasant and its subsequent influence on social scientific research, was critical of Znaniecki’s “reductionist” approach which placed the emphasis on the hopes and the aspirations of the respondents. The collection of data in this manner reduced information to a set of subjective points of view, which failed to relate to the system and the social “process” as a whole.

Znaniecki responded to this criticism in *The Method of Sociology*, by noting the importance of having a set of personal documents or memoirs to analyse.

By asking a number of group members each separately to detail personal active experiences connected with his [sic] participation in the group, we obtain the best evidence concerning the actual reality of the group’s social system, in which evidence the various personal statements partly control, partly supplement each other (Znaniecki, 1968, p. 192).

**Australian Examples of Memoir Studies on Identity**

Florian Znaniecki’s humanistic approach to sociology was introduced into the Australian context and extended by Jerzy Smolicz, from the School of Education at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. When the policy of multiculturalism was adopted by the Australian government in 1973 (Jupp, 1996), there was little systematic knowledge of the nature and extent of cultural and linguistic differences in Australia. Research was needed to understand the languages and cultures of the various immigrant groups and their relationship to the Anglo-Celtic-Australian majority and its dominant culture. The theory and method of humanistic sociology enabled social and cultural life to be investigated from the perspective of human beings as active participants in the dynamic process of creating and maintaining the cultural life of their group (Maniam, 2011; Smolicz, 1979). The investigations were able to demonstrate how each individual responded to his or her context, while at the same time identifying the commonalities and differences across the whole group of respondents.

In this section four Australian studies employing Florian Znaniecki’s memoir approach are discussed. All four studies focus specifically on the issue of cultural identity among participants of various minority ethnic groups living in Australia. The initial study done by Smolicz and Secombe (1981), explored the perceptions of Polish minority young people, who were the children of post-world II immigrants, concerning their education and growing up in Australia, as well as their sense of identity and belonging. One of the male respondents in the study clearly expressed clearly a strong sense of commitment to Polish identity.

Personally I have the hope of never losing my Polish identity. Although I do not feel the least bit prejudiced about Australians (or any other nationality), I would like to marry a Polish girl and bring up my children in the Polish spirit […] I believe that in the company of Australians we should not attach any importance whatsoever to our nationality, whilst in the company of our countrymen we should find joy in our customs, and practise and maintain them (continually, of course, without discrimination). There is a very good chance that our culture will survive in this country, and that it will even develop in the course of time (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 105).

Another male respondent acknowledged his Polish identity, but with much less certainty.

I cannot say anything as one-hundred per cent certain concerning my Polish identity. However, I can say that I am not Australian - nor Anglo-Saxon. Simply, I do not feel Australian. It is a fact that I wasn’t born in Australia, and the fact that I have also lived in other countries, has contributed to this state of affairs. Neither can I say with certainty that I am a Pole, since I have been in Poland no more than six months and only as a ‘visitor’. However, nearly all my family is in Poland cousins, uncles, aunts, etc, while in Australia I have nobody apart from my parents (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, pp. 103-104).

A third male respondent explained his identity in terms of a dual balance between being Polish and Australian.

I feel ideologically committed to both Poland and Australia, feeling culturally at ease in both milieus, and participate in both Anglo-Australian and Polish-Australian social structures (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 110).

The response of yet another male respondent did not give any direct indication of his own sense of identity, but discussed instead what he saw as the pressures of assimilation to Anglo-Australian culture.

I am convinced that it is impossible to maintain two cultures, for finally one of them will become dominant depending on the environment and the impressionability of the child […] I have been observing life in the Polish community here closely now for the last decade and have come to the conclusion that very little will remain of the fine Polish culture of which we have been so proud for generations. The young people do not care for their own language and the majority of them will forget it almost completely, if not in this generation definitely in the next. I believe that only the few material monuments that we have built will remain to tell the story of our short stay here, and the polish surnames, by then sadly deformed, will echo the past (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 106).

However, the usefulness of the memoir method in revealing the writer’s attitudes is shown in this quotation. In his use of the pronoun “we” twice in the passage - “the fine Polish culture of which we have been so proud for generations “and” the few, material monuments that we have left” - he indicates his positive identification with the Polish group and its culture.

These four examples given above highlight the kind of in-depth data which respondents can provide when given the chance to write their own thoughts in their own way. They also illustrate the wide range of views expressed in the findings for the whole group.

Another study done by Chiro in (1998), explored the sense of identity among secondary school students of Italian background in Australia. One student considered she was basically Australian in identity, while recognising the influence of her Italian background and friends:

I do not reject my Italian background but I was born and bred in Australia and feel I am such. Even though I enjoy my Italian friends company so much, everyone is equal to me – no preferences (Chiro, 1998, p. 251).

In a another case, the student’s comment highlights the complex dilemma she is facing in relation to her ethnic cultural identity.

I am still going through an identity crisis and [will] probably never get over it. Australians here call me Italian, and Italians in Italy call me Australian – mainly through their own ignorance – because they are unaware how we have continued the traditions. I consider myself mainly Italian – I speak, think, eat, dress, study, listen, pray Italian – but obviously I also have Australian influences (Chiro, 1998, p. 254)

The study done by Maadad (2009), investigated the maintenance of Arab culture in Australia and identity among Lebanese migrants living in Australia. The comments of two of these respondents put the emphasis on their need to maintain in Australia the key elements of their Arab heritage which were an integral part of who they were.

“Muslima” [being a Muslim women] was always repeated in my family to me and that word did not only cover my religion but also my culture, tradition, language, belief and identity (Maadad, 2009, p.63).

My nationality, religion and Arab culture are a definition for the person I am (Maadad, 2009, p.62).

A third Lebanese respondent explained in some detail a response based on adaptation to Australia, by combining aspects of the two cultures. Her strategy for survival was to be a creative mix of Lebanese and Australian.

The culture that I have now is a combination of Lebanese and Australian. In Lebanon, whenever I visit people they say that I have changed and my Australian friends also keep saying to me that they like my Lebanese culture. So I feel that I have the two combined and I know that this is the only way to be able to survive in a strange culture and not lose your own. Therefore, most Lebanese and others have altered so many things and created new ways of life. My religion is very strong and I don’t pray as often as I should but my faith is never any less or any different. I don’t speak Arabic as much with my children now, and even if I did they reply back in English. I speak Anglo-Arab; that is what I say to my family, one word of Arabic and two in English and the other way around. I know that my religion, my language and my culture are very important to me (Maadad, 2009, p. 64).

The latest study done by Maniam (2011) employed the memoir method in the form of personal statements to investigate the sense of cultural identity among 111 Adelaide secondary school students from six different schools. Because these respondents consisted of one class of students from each school, they included those of mainstream Australian background (61), as well as those with European (34) and Asian (11) and other origins (5). The example below is typical of the way many of the mainstream respondents explained their identity.

I would consider myself an Australian mainly because I was born here and live here and support our country. I don’t feel different from any other students. If they chose to come here then they must want to be in this country as well, which is a good thing. I consider myself Australian because that is the only country I have ever lived in (Maniam, 2011, p. 268).

A few respondents, however, completely rejected the idea of their identity being linked to an ethnic or cultural group. One explained his position as follows.

I am Australian. I have no distinct cultural background thus I will never have any inclination to be in a distinct group of people of the same ethnicity as me as there isn’t one. I am happy that I am of no distinct ethnicity, as I will never be influenced by any racial connection to anything. Thus I have an unbiased view on everything as I am not very patriotic either. Strong connection to ethnicities cause tension. It is stupid (Maniam, 2011, p. 273).

Another 13 students (all recent immigrants) related their cultural identity to their home ethnic group and not to Australia. One of the students commented on his pride in his particular cultural identity, as well as his discomfort when he was identified in a more negative way by his Australian peers.

I’d say I am a Chinese and of course obviously I am a Chinese. I have got yellow skin, black hair eyes, etc. I am proud of it. However, I do not feel so comfortable when someone [called] me Asian even I knew they are just joking but yeah I usually don’t mind (Maniam, 2011, p. 276).

Several other students talked about their identity being attached both to Australia and another cultural group.

I feel like I am a German-Australian as my mother comes from a German family and this has heavily influenced my life. I am different to others due to the suffering my grandparents experienced during WWII. I feel my family has brought me up to be understanding of others and their beliefs (Maniam, 2011, p. 280).

My heritage is Greek and I was brought up with a rich cultural experience of what it is like being Greek (i.e. attended Greek school from year (1-6), went to church regularly, Greek dance and functions as a youth and had many friends who were of Greek or European background. Australian. Also proud to be an Aussie as I was also brought up and went through the education system in Australia. I enjoy the culture and follow AFL [Australian Rules Football] football. So I am a proud Greek-Australian (Maniam, 2011, p. 281).

Another few number of students expression about their culture identity included two or more cultural groups, in addition to the Australian, for example:

I was born in Australia so I am Australian although my grandparents were not born here. Luckily my father’s father is English so I got an English name [otherwise] the rest of family is Croatian/German. I do not feel different (Maniam, 2011, p. 284).

I'm eighth generations on my mum’s side and have French English Irish ancestry so I would call myself French - English - Irish- Australian. Being in a dominantly Caucasian school I feel fairly normal (Maniam, 2011, p. 285).

These examples illustrate the readiness of the students to discuss such personal issues and the wide range of views they expressed. They provide important evidence of the very different ways students in Adelaide secondary school classes identify themselves.

**Conclusion**

From the time of the publication of *Polish Peasant* by Thomas and Znaniecki in 1919, up to the present the method of memoirs and personal documents has proved particularly useful as a method to be implemented in the context of social science investigation in the area of cultural studies. All the major studies which employed this method have provided deep understandings of cultural groups and their adaptations. The examples in this paper which derive from Australia point strongly the importance and relevance of the method for studies in a multicultural society like Australia.

An important factor to be considered in the use of memoir method is the development by Smolicz and Secombe, (1981) of the concrete and cultural facts analysis model in Figure 1.0 This model provided a systematic answer to Blumer’s (1939) criticism of the lack of academic rigour in the analysis of personal documents. The use of concrete facts provide a clear picture regarding the respondents’ personal backgrounds and contributes to the interpretation of cultural fact statements (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, 2000), On the other hand, the recognition of the nature of cultural facts in revealing the consciousness of the participants gives the researcher an important tool for analysing individual attitudes and group cultural values. The studies discussed above demonstrate how Znaniecki’s memoir method, with the adaptation of Smolicz’s model of analysis, continue to be a most effective approach to qualitative social scientific research.

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