Qualitative Transparency Deliberations

hosted by the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University on behalf of the APSA Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research
https://www.qualtd.net/

Changes in Research Design during Fieldwork

https://www.qualtd.net/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=130

Page **1** of **1**

Changes in Research Design during Fieldwork

Posted: **Wed Sep 07, 2016 5:35 pm**
by **nrsmith.ccny**
From the moderators: Ethnographic research designs may change during the process of fieldwork as ethnographers confront new or unexpected information, questions, or challenges. What do ethnographers like to see about how scholars initially designed their research studies and how those designs changed during the practice or research? What are effective ways to show such changes in published work?

Re: Changes in Research Design during Fieldwork

Posted: **Thu Oct 20, 2016 8:12 am**
by **SMajic**

> *nrsmith.ccny wrote:*From the moderators: Ethnographic research designs may change during the process of fieldwork as ethnographers confront new or unexpected information, questions, or challenges. What do ethnographers like to see about how scholars initially designed their research studies and how those designs changed during the practice or research? What are effective ways to show such changes in published work?

A well-written and detailed methods discussion/section usually explains this issue. As well, unexpected information, challenges, etc are also in themselves "data", and in works I have read, this data is often discussed in the presentation of the findings.

Re: Changes in Research Design during Fieldwork

Posted: **Thu Oct 20, 2016 3:01 pm**
by **Guest**
[quote="nrsmith.ccny"]From the moderators: Ethnographic research designs may change during the process of fieldwork as ethnographers confront new or unexpected information, questions, or challenges. What do ethnographers like to see about how scholars initially designed their research studies and how those designs changed during the practice or research? What are effective ways to show such changes in published work?

[/quote]

Interpretive scholars operate under the assumption that their research designs are not static, but instead evolve over the course of their fieldwork. In research proposals and publications, scholars should acknowledge the fluidity of their research design and approach, while also articulating what their expectations are/were, and why they are focusing on a particular research question/issue/area--thus articulating the stakes involved in asking certain questions and studying certain groups/behaviors/etc. - Tanya B. Schwarz, University of Notre Dame

---

Re: Changes in Research Design during Fieldwork

Posted: **Thu Dec 01, 2016 6:51 pm**
by **separkinson**

> *nrsmith.ccny wrote:*From the moderators: Ethnographic research designs may change during the process of fieldwork as ethnographers confront new or unexpected information, questions, or challenges. What do ethnographers like to see about how scholars initially designed their research studies and how those designs changed during the practice or research? What are effective ways to show such changes in published work?

I would honestly be puzzled to read a piece of ethnographic research that didn't acknowledge some kind of changes or unexpected information/questions/challenges that emerged in the field! I would be pretty suspicious of a scholar who said they went to the field and found exactly what they expected. Part of the leverage that ethnography grants is the way that it allows scholars to probe, to uncover, and to reorient. If you find exactly what you wanted to find in the first place, you might not be looking hard enough.

I do like to see the research "arc" described somewhere in an ethnographic piece (but understand that this will be limited in an article versus a book). This arc might include: what the researcher initially set out to study and what they wound up studying; how the researcher's position and positionality opened up new opportunities and foreclosed others; how the development of relationships proceeded; how the researcher carved an intellectual pathway through archives, human artifacts, or built environments; how particular themes came to the researcher's attention; what types of expectations interlocutors may have levied on researchers. For example, because I was often relationally situated close to families, I experienced increasing emotional and temporal demands from my interlocutors over time. All of this shaped my access, levels of trust people had in me, and the types of things we discussed.

I also like to see scholars admit challenges; often I see conflict work that claims to be ethnographic but that looks too "clean," unimpeded, or socially removed considering the setting (I think about how government surveillance affected my work, for example, something that I address in various parts of the dissertation). I want to know what experiences might be influencing someone's inferences and how they might have changed over time; for ethnographic work, even changing the neighborhood where one lives or starting to visit a new cafe can shift one's line of sight.

While I don't think it's particularly incentivized in political science--mostly because it does emphasize a change to the research design--I've started noting when the evidence I use in a particular article emerged as part of a larger or differently-oriented project. To be honest, I learned this technique from publishing in an interdisciplinary medical journal, which required authors to note if the project was an "offshoot" of another (I think this had something to do with medical ethics). But, it prompted me to think about how some of my

favorite projects have blossomed in unexpected ground, so to speak, and how the ability to explore those social processes enriched my overall understanding of my research context as well as the way that I understood the "main" project. Emphasizing that these projects were actually "offshoots" felt like a relief; I didn't initially go to Lebanon to study healthcare access or factional discourse, but the way that those themes emerged from research on organizational change might be interesting and informative to others (or at least I want to think so) and I think it's worth discussing more in our written work.

All times are UTC-04:00
Page **1** of **1**
Powered by phpBB® Forum Software © phpBB Limited
https://www.phpbb.com/