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
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Examples of Excellence

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Examples of Excellence

Posted: **Wed Sep 07, 2016 5:36 pm**
by **nrsmith.ccny**
From the moderators: What are examples of ethnographic work that effectively show how research was conducted on a day-to-day basis or which changed over time?

Re: Examples of Excellence

Posted: **Thu Oct 20, 2016 8:33 am**
by **SMajic**

> *nrsmith.ccny wrote:*From the moderators: What are examples of ethnographic work that effectively show how research was conducted on a day-to-day basis or which changed over time?

Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2007. Temporarily yours : intimacy, authenticity, and the commerce of sex, Worlds of desire. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Haney, L. Offending Women: Power, Punishment, and the Regulation of Desire. University of California Press, 2010.

Newman, Katherine S. 1999. No shame in my game : the working poor in the inner city. 1st ed. New York: Knopf and the Russell Sage Foundation.

Re: Examples of Excellence

Posted: **Fri Dec 02, 2016 4:41 pm**
by **separkinson**

> *nrsmith.ccny wrote:*From the moderators: What are examples of ethnographic work that effectively show how research was conducted on a day-to-day basis or which changed over time?

Pachirat, Timothy. 2011. Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Literally about the day-to-day and how changing positions affected the analysis.

However, I worry how, in a discipline where few people use ethnography and where certain forms of transparency are emphasized over others, this "effective showing how research was conducted" could accidentally become a function of: 1.) How present the ethnographer is in her work; and 2.) The author's willingness to present an appendix that is essentially an "Ethnography 101," primer rather than getting at the aspects of their work that structure their inferences (e.g. relationships, power, reflexivity). In other words, I don't think its intellectually productive to fall into a habit of explaining ourselves or our research rather than explaining politics.

Neither Lisa Wedeen nor James Scott detail the day-to-day of how their research was conducted in the same exhaustive, end-to-end way that Pachirat does, though both discuss their methods. These choices are a function of the questions they ask, the focus of research, and the way that they're each deploying ethnographic methodology. It's pretty clear, though, how they conducted their research and I would consider them both exemplars of variations on ethnographic methodology.

Re: Examples of Excellence

Posted: **Fri Dec 09, 2016 10:43 am**
by **Guest**
"Neither Lisa Wedeen nor James Scott detail the day-to-day of how their research was conducted in the same exhaustive, end-to-end way that Pachirat does, though both discuss their methods. These choices are a function of the questions they ask, the focus of research, and the way that they're each deploying ethnographic methodology. It's pretty clear, though, how they conducted their research and I would consider them both exemplars of variations on ethnographic methodology."

-This is really, really smart. The fetish for transparency can reduce the space we have to talk about our insights, rather than our process. The best work in these areas does not reconstruct the research process, it reconstructs the social relations, cultural meanings, and material practices that are the subject.

(I would add Dorinne Kondo's "Crafting Selves" and Iver Neumann's work on Diplomacy to the list of great examples).

Re: Examples of Excellence

Posted: **Fri Dec 09, 2016 6:47 pm**
by **cjones**
I agree with Sarah that Pachirat's approach is not necessarily the ideal, though for somewhat different reasons. First, if that level of day-today, end-to-end self-surveillance is the requirement, it will disincentivize others from using ethnography or even learning about it, particularly those who wish to combine ethnographic with other methods and would not be able to put in that deep level. I would worry that ethnography would become even more rarefied and closed off. Second, I also think it gives the impression that ethnography is an endurance test. It reminds me of an article about why Leonardo DiCaprio winning the Oscar for "The Revenant" was a bad thing for acting:

"In this value system, viewer remarks along the lines of, "I barely recognized him" and "My god, look at how much weight he lost!" and "Was that really him falling off that cliff?" take the place of more nuanced evaluations of the actor's art. Acting becomes a stoic's routine, a form of monk-like self-flagellation to prove devotion to one's craft. Lose that weight. Eat that flesh. Take the punch to the face. Are you man enough?"
http://www.rogerebert.com/mzs/why-leo-w ... for-acting

So I would worry that something similar would occur with ethnography, essentially de-legitimizing more nuanced approaches, and yes, perhaps less immersive approaches, which nevertheless provide absolutely essential insights.

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