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/

Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

https://www.qualtd.net/viewtopic.php?f=21&t=155

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Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Sat Oct 01, 2016 9:04 pm**
by **jawilliams**
What are your recommendations for best practices in interpretive social science?

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Mon Oct 03, 2016 2:57 pm**
by **JSchwedler**

> *jawilliams wrote:***What are your recommendations for best practices in interpretive social science?**

I worry about the idea of "best practices," not because there aren't better and worse practices, but because "interpretive methods" are very diverse and I am concerned about a one-size-fits-all set of standards against which diverse approaches will be assessed. But I'm honestly not sure that transparency is a problem for interpretive methods, because positionality and reflexivity (for example) are so central to the endeavor. I think an author's reflections and decisions on those issues can perhaps be made more explicit in scholarship (and it already often is explicit), both in the body of work and in acknowledgements and annotated footnotes. I think the larger problem is that those who do not do or fully understand interpretive methods do not know *how* interpretive work is already transparent. But if I had to articulate one "best practice" for interpretive methods, it might be to be explicit (within practical and ethical boundaries) about how the researcher gained access, what trade-offs she considered or made, and so on. Let the reader understand how the work was done, and utilize footnotes to elaborate as necessary.

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Thu Oct 06, 2016 10:58 am**
by **Guest**
I appreciate the possibility to reflect on “best practices” in interpretative methods. When interpretative analysis or inquiries are generated from direct interactions, conversations, discussions and encounters with

individuals, I find that on-going conversations over long periods of time, especially throughout moments of rupture, conflict, deadlock, produce critical nuances in findings and arguments. This dialectic should be disclosed to those involved in the discussion – at least at some point in the research - for an understanding of how meaning was derived from particular dialogue, discussion, or disagreement.

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Mon Oct 17, 2016 11:14 am**
by **essimmons**
I think Jillian raises an important set of questions and agree that clearly explaining how the work that we do is transparent is critical. Sometimes this means taking more time that we might like in our work to explain, as Jillian notes, how we got access to research sites and how we made choices in the research process. Taking the time to explain our methods to scholars who don't use them can help make interpretive social science more accessible to the discipline more broadly. Kathy Cramer's APSR piece is, I think an excellent example of how taking a little more time to explain how and why we did what we did can make our work more accessible.

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Thu Nov 24, 2016 5:48 pm**
by **Bill Kelleher**

> *JSchwedler wrote:*
>
> *jawilliams wrote:***What are your recommendations for best practices in interpretive social science?**

I agree with Prof Schwedler for the reasons stated at , viewtopic.php?p=700#p700

'Best practices' can be discussed, but to aim at establishing 'methodological steps' to be followed for 'verification' is misleading. Because empathizing is a highly personal act, it is not repeatable by another person. Yet, empathic interpretations can be criticized by other professionals, and a consensus reached as to an agreed upon interpretation.

William J. Kelleher, Ph.D.

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Thu Dec 01, 2016 9:05 am**
by **willh906**
How should we address the normative dimension of our research? Like many of us, I study politics because I care about bringing about a more just world, and promoting justice or securing equality are prime motivations for identifying questions to answer. While 'justice' or 'equality' are universal [enough] goods, achieving them hardly is. My concern is that by being upfront with these values I risk appearing 'biased' toward certain research outcomes, despite efforts to mitigate this criticism through research design.

To some extent we all select our projects based on what we think is the best ways of addressing a problem in the world. Clearly the need for normative clarity is not an exclusively interpretivist burden. Regression analyses or opinion surveys are also motivated by claims about what is important or deserving of study and, crucially, how it should be studied. I am fine with being upfront about my normative claims, and I encourage us all to be more forthcoming about why we study what we study. Rather, I worry that in explicating our normative grounding we might open up the possibility of a positivist critique of our work being beyond the purview of acceptable 'political science.'

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Thu Dec 01, 2016 1:34 pm**
by **Bill Kelleher**

> *willh906 wrote:*How should we address the normative dimension of our research? ... Rather, I worry that in explicating our normative grounding we might open up the possibility of a positivist critique of our work being beyond the purview of acceptable 'political science.'

You are in good company. David Easton addresses these same concerns throughout his main book, *The Political System*. The Physics Envy promoters completely misunderstand Easton, whom they use as one of their intellectual leaders. I discuss this in the paper I will present in the WPSA conference in Canada, 2017.

William J. Kelleher, Ph.D.

Re: Best practices in interpretive Social Science?

Posted: **Sat Dec 10, 2016 5:13 am**
by **willh906**

> *Bill Kelleher wrote:*
>
> > *willh906 wrote:*How should we address the normative dimension of our research? ... Rather, I worry that in explicating our normative grounding we might open up the possibility of a positivist critique of our work being beyond the purview of acceptable 'political science.'
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>
> William J. Kelleher, Ph.D.

Thank you, William. I will look into this source and wish you well on your presentation in BC.

Hw

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