Qualitative Methods, History of

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Abstract

The history of qualitative methodological practices concerns development of research practices, objects of inquiry, and analytic strategies in relation to archival, observational, and interview data. There are three unevenly autonomous and connected streams: (1) historical inquiry and historical social science (especially historical sociology), (2) ethnographic research in anthropology, and (3) social science methodologies of interviewing and field research. Despite the diverse domains, qualitative methods have often converged in shared analytic issues, logics of comparison, and epistemological issues. Recently, qualitative methods have been pushed in two contradictory directions: toward increasingly powerful logical formalization and toward 'postmodern' emphasis on historicity and reflexivity.

This brief history traces the development of sociohistorical methodologies employed in relation to data that are either archival or based on direct social observation and interaction, insofar as these methods do not depend on quantitative analysis. The history of qualitative methodologies involves three unevenly autonomous and connected streams: (1) historical inquiry and historical social science (especially historical sociology), (2) ethnographic research in anthropology, and (3) social science methodologies of interviewing and field research. Despite the diverse domains and their differentiation, qualitative methods have often converged in shared analytic issues, for example, the relation between qualitative data and social theories and concepts, logics of comparison, epistemological issues concerning objectivity versus relativism, and questions of analytic methods of deduction versus induction. These developments can be explored in three respects: (1) institutionalization, (2) how objects of inquiry have been construed, and (3) logics and analytic strategies. Recently, debates in the wake of the 'postmodern' turn have created new possibilities for understanding qualitative research, and research more broadly, as a terrain of interdiscursive communication with properties of 'integrated disparity.'

Institutional Emergences of Qualitative Methods

Sociohistorical inquiry emerged long before the rise of the modern academic disciplines. In China, statecraft early on was informed by typologies of social circumstances and transitional possibilities of action specified by the *I Ching*. In the fifth century before the modern era, the ancient Greek Herodotus wrote as much as an observer of the contemporary as a historian. And during the fourteenth century, in the Arab world, Ibn Khaldun wrote in a way that anticipated comparative and historical sociology. These and other relatively sophisticated practices of inquiry coexisted with much more basic efforts of social groups to document their existences through the development of archives, king lists, annals, and chronicles. Thus, the arrangements through which sociohistorical knowledge has been produced are long-standing and diverse.

However, contemporary qualitative inquiry is especially a product of modernity, and of critical and postmodern reactions to the research practices spawned of modernity. Initially, qualitative research was inextricably linked with the gradual emergence of modern national societies and their colonial expansion, most concertedly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Vermeulan and Roldán, 1995). Intellectually, the rise of social and humanistic disciplines can be traced to the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century thinkers such as Giambattista Vico and Johann Gottfried Herder increasingly began to characterize social and historical processes as subject to understanding in their own terms rather than as products of the will of God alone, and Edward Gibbon developed analytic history by use of concrete social explanations (i.e., in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*).

In the nineteenth century, history developed under two aligned tendencies: (1) efforts to differentiate the professional discipline from popular historical writing and (2) attempts to harness sociohistorical inquiry to the 'liberal' project of constituting the State, citizens, and the economy as a viable assemblage for social development. Thus, Leopold von Ranke sought to establish accounts of 'what really happened' on the basis of 'scientific' validation of facts drawn from archival sources, while simultaneously positing the history of political and religious elites as the subject matter that would reveal the meaning of history as a whole, that is, as a manifestation of the will of God. Historians in the United States for the most part embraced a modernist quest for 'objectivity' inspired by Ranke (Novick, 1988), while leaving the ideological and theological underpinnings of Ranke's scientific historicism largely uninspected. By contrast, the exemplary efforts of Max Weber to offer an alternative notwithstanding, historical sociology developed through the middle of the twentieth century mostly in relation to grand evolutionary social theories, at points aligned with anthropological ethnology, which was focused on constructing racialized world evolutionary sequences of social group development. Only after World War II, and especially in the 1960s, did historical sociology develop a methodologically sophisticated array of comparative and theoretical strategies for the analysis of history (Barnes, 1948; Smith, 1991).

As for field research, it emerged in relation to modern colonial expansion and capitalist industrial development. Among Europeans, especially from the sixteenth century

onward, knowledge gained from travel became a basis of colonial power sustained by exploratory expeditions, practical sciences, missionary work, and territorial penetration of colonial civil services. Sometimes authors combined traveling for a trading company or state with writing for a popular audience that wished to visit other lands vicariously. But epistemological principles of social knowledge were also at stake. Samuel Johnson's later eighteenth-century trip to western Scotland implicitly demonstrated that cultural differences would require forms of knowledge different from the then emerging rationalized social quantification (Poovey, 1998).

'Exploration' journals became increasingly systematic not only in describing the flora and fauna of the 'discovered' world but also in inventorying the languages and practices of non-Western peoples. Organizations such as the Smithsonian Institute (founded in 1846) coordinated efforts to gather data and circulated inventory questionnaires that could be filled out by nonprofessional travelers. Yet travelers' accounts – often saturated with racist and ethnocentric assumptions – largely served as grist for evolutionary ethnology and philosophical ('armchair') anthropology, for example, in Emile Durkheim's work on religion and James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.

By the late nineteenth century, ethnology and philosophical anthropology still dominated the disciplinary space where modern ethnography was beginning to emerge. Lewis Henry Morgan's field study of the Iroquois, published in 1851, was largely a springboard to his ethnology. Only with the work of Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski did inquiry begin to abandon the ethnological search for transgroup anthropological principles of development and emphasize analysis of social groups in their contemporaneous existences (a shift much bemoaned by the theorists). Boas was a crucial transitional figure. He initially intended his late-nineteenth-century observation and interviewing of indigenous peoples such as the Kwakiutl to advance his studies of perception and speech, to the point that he sometimes became impatient with ceremonial potlatches that wasted research time! Nevertheless, Boas pioneered efforts to create valid information based on direct, systematic field research, and he trained students such as Edward Sapir and Margaret Mead.

During and after World War I, Malinowski even more strongly embraced sustained participant observation oriented toward characterizing a group's present way of life. His Trobriand Islands fieldwork, published as *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, proposed a methodology borrowed from sociology, placing empirical observations within a functionalist framework, yet it also consolidated the modern ethnographic role as that of the expert offering an authoritative account aimed at an emic understanding of the 'other's' point of view. This tension between an objective theoretical framework and emic analysis became a hallmark of modern anthropology, for example, in the French Durkheimian tradition, carried forward by Claude Lévi-Strauss (and in Britain by Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown), and even in the way Clifford Geertz sometimes combined 'thick description' with social systems rhetoric.

Ethnographic study of the exotic 'other' was hardly the only impetus to institutionalization of field research. Famously, Alexis de Tocqueville voyaged to the United States in the 1830s to learn more about the American prison system. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sociology was influenced by similar practical filed observational quests for knowledge about social conditions, for example, in studies of social issues sponsored by the *Verein für Socialpolitik* in Germany, by socialists in England, and among social workers such as those at Chicago's Hull House in the United States.

Building on the Hull House tradition, during the early twentieth century, sociology's strongest institutional development of qualitative methodology came at the 'Chicago school' founded by Robert Park, who took inspiration from Boas and Malinowski to encourage field research (DeVault, 2007). The city of Chicago became an urban laboratory for the direct observational study of social phenomena. Chicago faculty and students produced a stream of monographs such as *The Hobo* (1923) and *The Gold Coast and the Slum* (1929), and their approach found common cause with observational and in-depth interviewing field studies of communities, such as *Middletown* (1929) and the *Yankee City* studies (1941–59), work influenced by anthropological ethnographies (and sometimes carried out by anthropologists).

Beginning in the 1930s, American sociology underwent a broad disciplinary shift toward positivism (Steinmetz, 2007), the increasingly hegemonic position of which shaped the context in which qualitative field researchers operated. Only toward the end of the twentieth century did major positivist and quantitatively oriented departments such as the University of Wisconsin begin to reaffirm the importance of qualitative methods. However, that development occurred precisely because qualitative researchers maintained and developed diverse enterprises during the later half of the twentieth century. In the 1950s, Herbert Hyman formalized interviewing as a methodology, and Chicago students such as Howard S. Becker, Jr, took up the pragmatic and symbolic interactionist Chicago tradition that had been initiated by George Herbert Mead and developed by Everett Hughes. During the 1960s, phenomenological sociology, inspired by Alfred Schutz, and ethnomethodology, promoted by Harold Garfinkel, emerged as alternative approaches that problematized objectivity, realism, and the social activities through which qualitative knowledge is created. Added to this mix during the same decade were the constructivism of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the dramaturgical approach of Erving Goffman (himself trained at Chicago), and a nascent bridge between field research and history via the emerging interest in oral history. These developments, together with the 1960s retooling of sociohistorical inquiry at the hands of scholars such as Reinhard Bendix, E.P. Thompson, and Barrington Moore, set the stage for an efflorescence of qualitative research in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Yet, just when qualitative research flourished, it also underwent differentiation, along with sometimes fruitful methodological crisis. Some symbolic interactionists, ethnomethodologists, and comparative and historical sociologists sought to affirm the scientific legitimacy of their enterprises and gain acceptance among wider audiences by formalizing research methods and strategies, while other researchers took seriously the rejection of scientism consolidated from the 1960s onward by critical theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, hermeneuticists such as Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor, philosophers of history (most notably Hayden White), feminist epistemologists such as Dorothy Smith and Sandra

Harding, anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins and James Clifford, and the wave of poststructuralist and postmodern 'turns' heralded by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Some ethnographers became reflexive to the point of envisioning research itself as performative or eschewing study of any 'other' in favor of autoethnography. Ethical considerations about privacy, asymmetry of field research, and exploitation of subjects – raised especially by feminists and within anthropology – cast long shadows on the high modernist quest for objectivity and validity in qualitative analysis (for discussions of a variety of such issues, see Denzin and Giardina, 2007). During the past two decades of the century, these developments, along with the rise of world-systems and globalization theories, led to the formulation of new hybrid qualitative methodologies by such researchers as Michael Burawoy and Philip McMichael that linked the local and the global, ethnographic and historical analysis. The old dream of the ethnologists, of theorizing case studies in relation to general social processes, was reborn, but in a dispensation that rejected ethnological ethnocentrism. On a different front, historical and comparative sociologists have continued to reflect on their own recent history and how they might connect more effectively both with substantive topoi of sociology and with social theory (for a set of pivotal essays, see Adams et al., 2005). In general, then, research using qualitative methodologies has become strongly institutionalized within the social sciences, yet methodological practices and relationships with disciplines remain very much in flux.

The Object of Inquiry, a Brief History

One enduring problem of qualitative research concerns how to construe the object of inquiry, that is, what is studied. At the end of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant raised the philosophical problem of selection, namely, which of myriad events revealed the 'guiding thread' of history. In the nineteenth century, under the influence of teleologies such as those of Hegel and Ranke, historians were generally content to regard their studies as centered on 'natural' objects that had their own coherences in the world itself. However, as Hayden White (1973) has shown, the nineteenth-century European historians established rhetorical coherence through one or another genre of emplotment that offered a metanarratological structure into which to fit events. The alternative possibility, which developed outside of history (and increasingly within it), was to constitute the object of analysis via theory. Thus, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels theorized about capitalism as a dynamic totality changing through its own contradictions over time, and they used their perspective to thematize social events and processes in places as diverse as India, the United States, and Manchester, England. Within academia, the Marxian approach found its counterpart in the later nineteenth-century program of German historian Karl Lamprecht, who sought to displace Ranke's elites as the object of historical analysis with the study of diverse social groups and their interaction.

The Kantian problem of the relation between object and selection was more directly addressed during the German *Methodenstreit* toward the end of the nineteenth century,

especially through the effort of Wilhelm Rickert to posit the objective value of truth in a way that would yield a shared way of looking at the world, and by extension, a shared object. Among mainstream historians during the twentieth century, a sort of ontological historicism emerged, in which shifts in styles (e.g., the emergence of social history) depended on shifting the object of historical analysis, rather than its methods. The major alternative to historicism, which Max Weber spelled out at the beginning of the twentieth century, depended on two central assertions:

1. that because values cannot be warranted scientifically, the objects of sociohistorical inquiry cannot be scientifically determined, even though, once objects are determined, scientific methods can be applied to their study; and
2. that the objects of sociohistorical inquiry are not natural kinds, but rather, infinitely varying sociohistorical phenomena that become objects of inquiry through cultural interest in them.

Alternatives to Weber's approach can be traced in history to the Annales School and Marxism, and in the social sciences, methodologically to the objectivism of Emile Durkheim, and analytically to Georg Simmel. Durkheim had provided the general warrant for objectivist approaches in his 1895 *Rules of Sociological Method*. And, in a way that is not widely recognized, Durkheim's structuralism had its equivalent in Simmel's early-twentieth-century identification of social 'forms' (such as 'sociability'), a central inspiration for a number of qualitative symbolic interactionists (Hall, 1999: Chapter 4). Within structural Marxism, the perspective of the proletariat was assumed to offer an objective standpoint for the analysis of capitalism, although during the first half of the twentieth century, this position was rendered problematic by the scholarship of Georg Lukács and critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. If the object of inquiry for structuralist Marxism was a totality, for the Annales School, in the formulation of Fernand Braudel, the totality was the grid of objective temporality, onto which multiple levels of change – ecological, structural, *histoire èvènmentielle* – could all be mapped (Hall, 1980; Burke, 1990).

Ethnographic field researchers during the first half of the twentieth century generally treated their cases as naturally occurring 'primitive' societies subject to 'salvage anthropology.' Yet, asserting the supposed isolation of the natural case became increasingly untenable with the post-World War II emergence of first modernization and then world-systems-theory-approaches, both of which drew into question the autonomy of indigenous social groups. A parallel tension developed within sociological domains of field research. At the moment of high modernism, symbolic interactionists like Herbert Blumer would posit the empirical world 'out there' as the object of 'naturalistic research.' Yet, interactionists shared with phenomenologically oriented researchers and ethnomethodologists the sense that the empirical object of research was 'constructed,' that is, that the meaningful world was constituted by its participants' practices, which logically would include researchers themselves.

In the early twenty-first century, the objectivist–relativist divide in constituting objects of qualitative inquiry persisted, but the cultural and Foucauldian turns in history, the linguistic

turn in anthropology, increased understanding of how ethical and personal safety choices shape data from field research, and the challenges of analyzing social phenomena in relation to the internet all created conditions in which answers to the questions of how research is to be framed and 'what is a case?' had become considerably more nuanced and sophisticated (on the latter issue, see, e.g., essays in Ragin and Becker, 1992). In particular, by 1978, Arthur Stinchcombe argued against comparing cases as total entities one against another, and in favor of searching out the deeply analogous social processes that might be at work in cases that, on the face of it, might not even be considered as members of the same set. In a different vein, George Marcus has tracked the shift in anthropology from the deep study of a delimited ethnographic site to more integrated analyses of developments across disparate venues.

Overall, in today's postpositivist climate, reflexivity rules. Even objectivists and realists increasingly recognize that theoretical orientations and concepts have consequences for how cases are construed, while dialogic relativists, some of whom doubt the existence of any straightforwardly accessible empirical world to be studied, have had to come to grips with the problem of how adequately to 'represent' the (constructed) realities of their encounters with the people about whom they write.

Developments in Logics and Methodologies of Qualitative Analysis

Philosophers have debated the logics of human reasoning for millennia. But the most compelling specification directly relevant to modern sociohistorical inquiry came in John Stuart Mill's 1843 philosophy of scientific method, which specified two methods of nonexperimental research. The method of agreement entailed isolating crucial similarities in a set of diverse cases, yielding the claim that if two aspects co-occur under otherwise diverse circumstances, they are likely to be somehow connected with each other. On the other hand, the indirect method of difference extended the logic of control group experiments to nonexperimental settings, by searching for contingent corelated variations. In effect, two (or more) findings derived from parallel uses of the method of agreement could be placed side by side. If a particular propensity were found only in the presence of another particular propensity, and never when the second propensity was absent, Mill reasoned that one was "the effect, or the cause, or an indispensable part of the cause" of the other.

The application of Mill's logic to sociohistorical inquiry met with opposing visions of qualitative analysis that became crystallized by issues raised during the late-nineteenth-century *Methodenstreit*. Whereas the logic advanced by Mill yielded a nomothetic search for general principles, an alternative, idiographic view suggested that the study of human affairs necessarily dictates emphasis on the individually distinctive, indeed unique, aspects of social phenomena. Whatever the resolution to this question, a second issue concerned whether the special character of sociohistorical phenomena made them necessarily the subjects of a different kind of knowledge than the explanatory search for universal causal laws, namely, a cultural science based on understanding social meanings

and actions. Three broad logics of qualitative methodology – interpretive strategies, ideal-type analysis, and formal analysis – can be traced in relation to these contestations.

First, early in the twentieth century, Wilhelm Dilthey proposed a historicist hermeneutics that would seek to understand history as embedded in the life meanings of the people who participate in it. This basic approach has its parallels in both ethnography and sociological field research. Elaborations of analytic logics were especially concentrated in sociology. In the 1940s, Alfred R. Lindesmith developed the method of 'analytic induction' as a procedure for successively refining hypotheses in relation to cycles of field research, an approach that Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss subsequently reinterpreted as 'grounded theory.' And in the 1950s, a now-classic essay by Howard S. Becker reflected on 'problems of inference and proof' in the analysis of the substantial amounts of field notes and other documents. By the 1960s, 'participant observation' (Platt, 1983) and in-depth interviewing became increasingly institutionalized as legitimate approaches to inquiry, with their own epistemological rationales, challenges (notably how to construe and know subjectivity of the other person), research procedures, and handbooks, such as those of Buford Junker, Severyn Bruyn, and John Lofland and Lyn Lofland. Ultimately, epistemologically, as Isaac A. Reed (2011) demonstrated, the broadly interpretivist logic at the heart of much qualitative research has become a fruitful basis by which to probe the deep cultural structures of both positivist and realist approaches to inquiry.

Second, working at the same time as Dilthey, Max Weber consolidated a *Verstehende* approach that was both comparative and interpretive. He did not deny the possibility that sociohistorical inquiry might discover general regularities of the sort Mill sought to identify, but he regarded individualizing knowledge as the central value interest of sociohistorical inquiry. Therefore, he combined explanation and understanding, by using generalized ideal types that would be 'adequate on the level of meaning' and thus serve as meaningfully coherent analogs to the patterned character of empirical cases, yet, nevertheless, allow for comparison beyond individual particularities. Weber's methodology became central to the renaissance of historical sociology consolidated in the 1960s. In the 1990s, Geoffrey Hawthorn and David William Cohen, among others, developed Weber's logic of the 'mental experiment' into 'counterfactual analysis.'

Third, Mill's methodological effort became the touchstone for subsequent formalizations of qualitative logic. The most important elaboration has been the Qualitative Comparative Analysis pioneered by Charles Ragin, which builds on Mill's principles by using set theory and Boolean algebra to identify multiple configurational patterns within an array of systematically described cases.

In different lines of development, with the late twentieth century turn toward narrative and the study of discourse (partly inspired both by ethnomethodology and poststructuralism), scholars such as Larry Griffin theorized ways in which narrative accounts might become subjected to formal analysis that would yield descriptions of discrete social processes. And researchers more generally have begun to use one or another of various software programs for organizing and analyzing qualitative data – for example, Atlas.ti, Ethno, and NVivo. These

and related developments of formalization – as well as techniques of 'triangulation' that compared findings gained from diverse methodologies and the use of mixed and multiple methods more generally – increasingly blurred the lines dividing qualitative from quantitative analysis. With logical development, powerful new analytic techniques, and mixed methods came increased acceptance of qualitative research, but also critique. Three major recent developments stand out.

First, Stanley Lieberson (in Ragin and Becker, 1992) questioned whether formalization alone could resolve logical difficulties of comparative studies with small numbers of cases. For qualitative researchers, however, his critique may not be so devastating as would seem at first blush, because nested and intersecting comparisons and rich uses of data can be used to safeguard against the narrow errors of logic that Lieberson so effectively documented.

Second, a more convoluted set of issues arose a decade later in a review symposium in the *American Journal of Sociology*, where Loïc Wacquant (2002) critiqued the methodologies and logics of three widely read urban ethnographies – by Mitch Duneier, Elijah Anderson, and Katherine Newman. Responding in the symposium, the authors discussed by Wacquant characterized his readings of their work as tendentious and ideologically driven. The manifold (and often riveting) challenges and disagreements in this exchange are less important for general issues of qualitative methodology than the often shared bases of critique. Notably, all participants in the symposium treated morals, values, and ideology as both insidious in their capacity to underwrite reductionist metanarratives and important to understand – both in the subjects and reflexively – in the practices of research. The most serious methodological divides among symposium participants concern: (1) what credence should be extended to subjects' accounts versus explanation in relation to wider social contexts – revisiting a long-standing anthropological debate over emic versus etic ethnography; (2) whether to embrace theoretically driven or more grounded research (the latter position especially strongly defended by Anderson); and (3) whether, in order to enhance validity, the subjects of research ought to be guaranteed anonymity or, with their permission, have their identities revealed – and relatedly – offered the opportunity to read a researcher's accounts about them (practices championed by Duneier in both his book *Sidewalk* and his response to Wacquant). The symposium's *frisson* shows that enduring issues in qualitative methodology remain unresolved, and subject to alternative conventional resolutions. Thus, in relation to Duneir's use of real names, although historians would not think twice about doing so in their studies, a sociologist criticized such a practice in a review of the author's 1987 sociological history of Jim Jones, *Peoples Temple*, and the 1978 mass suicide at Jonestown. On a different front, the divide between grounded and theoretically driven approaches is firmly ensconced in enduring alternative styles and logics of social inquiry.

Third, in *Reinventing Evidence in Social Inquiry: Decoding Facts and Variables* and in a symposium on 'Varieties of evidence and method in cultural sociology' (Berezin, 2014), Richard Biernacki (2012) strongly criticizes research practices that code texts in relation to observer's categories. A number of approaches to content analysis used in qualitative research,

he argues, efface meaning and yield analytically incoherent results. Biernacki's critique does not resolve the status of measurement in relation to meaning, but it sounds an alarm about an issue that qualitative researchers need to give serious attention.

The developments in logics and methodologies of qualitative analysis over the long term have not settled fundamental issues. However, they have brought increased sophistication to the practice of qualitative research. Moreover, they have increasingly raised issues of wider importance. Specifically, the Millsian logic of comparison, the relation between values and knowledge production, meaning and the problem of measurement, how to construe the character of theoretical concepts in relation to variables, cases, and social phenomena are issues that *quantitative* methodologists took very seriously some decades ago. But more recently, their focus has been more on improvement of statistical techniques. Because *qualitative* methodologists in recent decades have sought to confront these issues, their efforts now bear a salience for methodology more generally.

Postmodern Reflexivity in the Shared Domain of Qualitative Methods

By the end of the twentieth century, there had been substantial differentiation and development of qualitative methods, as well as experimentation in both research role relationships in field research and the form and rhetoric of texts reporting qualitative research more generally. Yet, these methodological shifts typically transpired within relatively autonomous schools where one or another approach was alternatively embraced, reinvented under a new flag, or syncretically revised in relation to alternatives. The differences between inductive and deductive historical sociologists, like those between mainstream symbolic interactionist field researchers and those who had taken the postmodern turn, often loomed as important as the disjuncture between quantitative and qualitative research more generally.

Under these conditions, a fruitful development has been the specification of typologies that describe alternative practices of inquiry in terms of the shared or contrasting cultural logics of their research methods, rather than assuming an equivalence between particular qualitative methodologies and various schools or genres (e.g., symbolic interactionism, cultural history). Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, and Charles Tilly developed typologies of historical and comparative sociology, and John R. Hall (1999) used discursive analysis to elaborate a general typology describing eight core cultural logics of research practice. In these terms, the three methodologies most favored in field research and historical sociology are historicism, contrast-oriented comparison, and analytic generalization. However, beyond these methodologies is a wider array of possibilities, including practices such as 'configurational history' that are often employed without benefit of formalization, and other practices, such as 'universal history,' that persist despite postmodern condemnation of 'metanarratives.' Typologies of qualitative analysis might seem to harden the boundaries between alternatives. However, the outcome of discursive analysis is the opposite, for it reveals

a condition of 'integrated disparity' among research practices that share cultural logics in ways not previously understood, and it clarifies the conditions and potential for translation of research knowledge produced through radically alternative research practices (Hall, 1999: Chapter 9). Thus, although qualitative research is shot through with contemporary tensions between positivism, realism, relativism, and constructivism, qualitative researchers may find that general recognition of sociohistorical inquiry as a reflexive enterprise will create ripe conditions for a new era of sophistication about qualitative research, with implications for research practices more widely. But to consider those possibilities moves beyond history into the realm of as-yet contingent possibility.

See also: Ethnomethodology, General; Field Observational Research in Anthropology and Sociology; Grounded Theory: Methodology and Theory Construction; Health Research, Qualitative; Interactionism, Symbolic; Interpretive Methods: Macromethods; Interpretive Methods: Micromethods; Qualitative Methods in Geography; Science and Technology Studies, Ethnomethodology of; Symbolic Interaction: Methodology.

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