

Thus did the modernist phase come to an end.

### Blurred Genres

By the beginning of the third stage (1970-1986), which we call the moment of blurred genres, qualitative researchers had a full complement of paradigms, methods, and strategies to employ in their research. Theories ranged from symbolic interactionism to constructivism, naturalistic inquiry, positivism and postpositivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical (Marxist), semiotics, structuralism, feminism, and various ethnic paradigms. Applied qualitative research was gaining in stature, and the politics and ethics of qualitative research were topics of considerable concern. Research strategies ranged from grounded theory to the case study, to methods of historical, biographical, ethnographic action and clinical research. Diverse ways of collecting and analyzing empirical materials were also available, including qualitative interviewing (open-ended and quasi-structured) and observational, visual, personal experience, and documentary methods. Computers were entering the situation, to be fully developed in the next decade, along with narrative, content, and semiotic methods of reading interviews and cultural texts.

Two books by Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and *Local Knowledge* (1983), defined the beginning and end of this moment. In these two works, Geertz argued that the old functional, positivist, behavioral, totalizing approaches to the human disciplines were giving way to a more pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended perspective. This new perspective took cultural representations and their meanings as its point of departure. Calling for "thick description" of particular events, rituals, and customs, Geertz suggested that all anthropological writings were interpretations of interpretations. The observer had no privileged voice in the interpretations that were written. The central task of theory was to make sense out of a local situation.

Geertz went on to propose that the boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities had become blurred. Social scientists were now turning to the humanities for models, theories, and methods of analysis (semiotics, hermeneutics). A form of genre dispersion was occurring: documentaries that read like fiction (Mailer), parables posing as ethnographies (Castañeda), theoretical treatises that look like travelogues (Lévi-Strauss). At the same time, many new approaches were emerging: post-structuralism (Barthes), neopositivism (Philips), neo-Marxism (Althusser),

micro-macro descriptivism (Geertz), ritual theories of drama and culture (V. Turner), deconstructionism (Derrida), ethnomethodology (Garfinkel). The golden age of the social sciences was over, and a new age of blurred, interpretive genres was upon us. The essay as an art form was replacing the scientific article. At issue now is the author's presence in the interpretive text, or how the researcher can speak with authority in an age when there are no longer any firm rules concerning the text, its standards of evaluation, and its subject matter (Geertz, 1988).

The naturalistic, postpositivist, and constructionist paradigms gained power in this period, especially in education in the works of Harry Wolcott, Egon Guba, Yvonna Lincoln, Robert Stake, and Elliot Eisner. By the end of the 1970s several qualitative journals were in place, from *Urban Life* (now *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*) to *Qualitative Sociology*, *Symbolic Interaction*, and *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*.

### Crisis of Representation

A profound rupture occurred in the mid-1980s. What we call the fourth moment, or the crisis of representation, appeared with *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Turner & Bruner, 1986), *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), *Works and Lives* (Geertz, 1988), and *The Predicament of Culture* (Clifford, 1988). These works made research and writing more reflexive, and called into question the issues of gender, class, and race. They articulated the consequences of Geertz's "blurred genres" interpretation of the field in the early 1980s.

New models of truth and method were sought (Rosaldo, 1989). The erosion of classic norms in anthropology (objectivism, complicity with colonialism, social life structured by fixed rituals and customs, ethnographies as monuments to a culture) was complete (Rosaldo, 1989, pp. 44-45). Critical and feminist epistemologies and epistemologies of color now compete for attention in this arena. Issues such as validity, reliability, and objectivity, which had been settled in earlier phases, are once more problematic. Interpretive theories, as opposed to grounded theories, are now more common, as writers continue to challenge older models of truth and meaning (Rosaldo, 1989).

Stoller and Olkes (1987) describe how the crisis of representation was felt in their fieldwork among the Songhay of Niger. Stoller observes: "When I began to write anthropological texts, I followed the conventions

of my training. I 'gathered data,' and once the 'data' were arranged in neat piles, I 'wrote them up.' In one case I reduced Songhay insults to a series of neat logical formulas" (p. 227). Stoller became dissatisfied with this form of writing, in part because he learned "everyone had lied to me and . . . the data I had so painstakingly collected were worthless. I learned a lesson: Informants routinely lie to their anthropologists" (Stoller & Olkes, 1987, p. 229). This discovery led to a second, that he had, in following the conventions of ethnographic realism, edited himself out of his text. This led Stoller to produce a different type of text, a memoir, in which he became a central character in the story he told. This story, an account of his experiences in the Songhay world, became an analysis of the clash between his world and the world of Songhay sorcery. Thus did Stoller's journey represent an attempt to confront the crisis of representation in the fourth moment.

Clough (1992) elaborates this crisis and criticizes those who would argue that new forms of writing represent a way out of it:

While many sociologists now commenting on the criticism of ethnography view writing as "downright central to the ethnographic enterprise" [Van Maanen, 1988, p. xi], the problems of writing are still viewed as different from the problems of method or fieldwork itself. Thus the solution usually offered is experiments in writing, that is, a self-consciousness about writing. (p. 136)

However, it is this insistence on the difference between writing and fieldwork that must be analyzed.

In writing, the field-worker makes a claim to moral and scientific authority. These claims allow the realist and the experimental ethnographic text to function as sources of validation for an empirical science. They show, that is, that the world of real lived experience can still be captured, if only in the writer's memoirs, fictional experimentations, or dramatic readings. These works have the danger of directing attention away from the ways in which the text constructs sexually situated individuals in a field of social difference. They also perpetuate "empirical science's hegemony" (Clough, 1992, p. 8), for these new writing technologies of the subject become the site "for the production of knowledge/power . . . [aligned] with . . . the capital/state axis" (Aronowitz, 1988, p. 300, quoted in Clough, 1992, p. 8). Such experiments come up against, and then back away from,

the difference between empirical science and social criticism. Too often they fail to engage fully a new politics of textuality that would "refuse the identity of empirical science" (Clough, 1992, p. 135). This new social criticism "would intervene in the relationship of information economics, nation-state politics, and technologies of mass communication, especially in terms of the empirical sciences" (Clough, 1992, p. 16). This, of course, is the terrain occupied by cultural studies.

Richardson, in Volume 3, Chapter 12, and Clandinin and Connelly, Volume 3, Chapter 6, develop the above arguments, viewing writing as a method of inquiry that moves through successive stages of self-reflection. As a series of writings, the field-worker's texts flow from the field experience, through intermediate works, to later work, and finally to the research text that is the public presentation of the ethnographic and narrative experience. Thus do fieldwork and writing blur into one another. There is, in the final analysis, no difference between writing and fieldwork. These two perspectives inform each other throughout every chapter in this volume. In these ways the crisis of representation moves qualitative research in new, critical directions.

### A Double Crisis

The ethnographer's authority remains under assault today. A double crisis of representation and legitimation confronts qualitative researchers in the social sciences. Embedded in the discourses of poststructuralism and postmodernism (Vidich & Lyman, Volume 1, Chapter 2; Richardson, Volume 3, Chapter 12), these two crises are coded in multiple terms, variously called and associated with the *interpretive*, *linguistic*, and *rhetorical* turns in social theory. This linguistic turn makes problematic two key assumptions of qualitative research. The first is that qualitative researchers can directly capture lived experience. Such experience, it is now argued, is created in the social text written by the researcher. This is the representational crisis. It confronts the inescapable problem of representation, but does so within a framework that makes the direct link between experience and text problematic.

The second assumption makes the traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research problematic. This is the legitimation crisis. It involves a serious rethinking of such terms as *validity*, *generalizability*, and *reliability*, terms already retheorized in postpositivist,

constructionist-naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 36), feminist (Fonow & Cook, 1991, pp. 1-13; Smith, 1992), and interpretive (Atkinson, 1990; Hammersley, 1992; Lather, 1993) discourses. This crisis asks, How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the poststructural moment? Clearly these two crises blur together, for any representation must now legitimate itself in terms of some set of criteria that allows the author (and the reader) to make connections between the text and the world written about.

### The Fifth Moment

The fifth moment is the present, defined and shaped by the dual crises described above. Theories are now read in narrative terms, as "tales of the field" (Van Maanen, 1988). Preoccupations with the representation of the "other" remain. New epistemologies from previously silenced groups emerge to offer solutions to this problem. The concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned. More action-, activist-oriented research is on the horizon, as are more social criticism and social critique. The search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations (Lincoln, 1993).

### Reading History

We draw four conclusions from this brief history, noting that it is, like all histories, somewhat arbitrary. First, each of the earlier historical moments is still operating in the present, either as legacy or as a set of practices that researchers still follow or argue against. The multiple, and fractured, histories of qualitative research now make it possible for any given researcher to attach a project to a canonical text from any of the above-described historical moments. Multiple criteria of evaluation now compete for attention in this field. Second, an embarrassment of choices now characterizes the field of qualitative research. There have never been so many paradigms, strategies of inquiry, or methods of analysis to draw upon and utilize. Third, we are in a moment of discovery and rediscovery, as new ways of looking, interpreting, arguing, and writing are debated and discussed. Fourth, the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral, or objective, positivist perspective. Class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape the process of inquiry, making research a multicultural process. It is to this topic that we next turn.

### ◆ Qualitative Research as Process

Three interconnected, generic activities define the qualitative research process. They go by a variety of different labels, including *theory*, *method* and *analysis*, and *ontology*, *epistemology*, and *methodology*. Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the gendered researcher, who speaks from a particular class, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways. That is, empirical materials bearing on the question are collected and then analyzed and written about. Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community, which configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act.

Behind all of these phases of interpretive work stands the biographically situated researcher. This individual enters the research process from inside an interpretive community that incorporates its own historical research traditions into a distinct point of view. This perspective leads the researcher to adopt particular views of the "other" who is studied. At the same time, the politics and the ethics of research must also be considered, for these concerns permeate every phase of the research process.

### ◆ The Other as Research Subject

From its turn-of-the-century birth in modern, interpretive form, qualitative research has been haunted by a double-faced ghost. On the one hand, qualitative researchers have assumed that qualified, competent observers can with objectivity, clarity, and precision report on their own observations of the social world, including the experiences of others. Second, researchers have held to a belief in a real subject, or real individual, who is present in the world and able, in some form, to report on his or her experiences. So armed, researchers could blend their observations with the observations provided by subjects through interviews and life story, personal experience, case study, and other documents.

These two beliefs have led qualitative researchers across disciplines to seek a method that would allow them to record their own observations

accurately while still uncovering the meanings their subjects bring to their life experiences. This method would rely upon the subjective verbal and written expressions of meaning given by the individuals studied, these expressions being windows into the inner life of the person. Since Dilthey (1900/1976), this search for a method has led to a perennial focus in the human disciplines on qualitative, interpretive methods.

Recently, this position and its beliefs have come under attack. Poststructuralists and postmodernists have contributed to the understanding that there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed. Subjects, or individuals, are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why. No single method can grasp the subtle variations in ongoing human experience. As a consequence, as argued above, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience that have been studied.

Table 1.1 depicts the relationships we see among the five phases that define the research process. Behind all but one of these phases stands the biographically situated researcher. These five levels of activity, or practice, work their way through the biography of the researcher.

#### Phase 1: The Researcher

Our remarks above indicate the depth and complexity of the traditional and applied qualitative research perspectives into which a socially situated researcher enters. These traditions locate the researcher in history, both guiding and constraining work that will be done in any specific study. This field has been characterized constantly by diversity and conflict, and these, David Hamilton argues in Volume 1, Chapter 3, are its most enduring traditions. As a carrier of this complex and contradictory history, the researcher must also confront the ethics and politics of research. The age of value-free inquiry for the human disciplines is over, and researchers now struggle to develop situational and transsituational ethics that apply to any given research act.

TABLE 1.1 The Research Process

Phase 1: The Researcher as a Multicultural Subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>history and research traditions</li> <li>conceptions of self and the other</li> <li>ethics and politics of research</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Theoretical Paradigms and Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>positivism, postpositivism</li> <li>constructivism</li> <li>feminism(s)</li> <li>ethnic models</li> <li>Marxist models</li> <li>cultural studies models</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Research Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>study design</li> <li>case study</li> <li>ethnography, participant observation</li> <li>phenomenology, ethnomethodology</li> <li>grounded theory</li> <li>biographical method</li> <li>historical method</li> <li>action and applied research</li> <li>clinical research</li> </ul>
Phase 4: Methods of Collection and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interviewing</li> <li>observing</li> <li>artifacts, documents, and records</li> <li>visual methods</li> <li>personal experience methods</li> <li>data management methods</li> <li>computer-assisted analysis</li> <li>textual analysis</li> </ul>
Phase 5: The Art of Interpretation and Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>criteria for judging adequacy</li> <li>the art and politics of interpretation</li> <li>writing as interpretation</li> <li>policy analysis</li> <li>evaluation traditions</li> <li>applied research</li> </ul>



## Phase 2: Interpretive Paradigms

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All qualitative researchers are philosophers in that “universal sense in which all human beings . . . are guided by highly abstract principles” (Bateson, 1972, p. 320). These principles combine beliefs about ontology (What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and methodology (How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?) (see Guba, 1990, p. 18; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 14-15; see also Guba & Lincoln, Volume 1, Chapter 6). These beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it. The researcher is “bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which—regardless of ultimate truth or falsity—become partially self-validating” (Bateson, 1972, p. 314).

This net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a *paradigm* (Guba, 1990, p. 17), or interpretive framework, a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). All research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some of these beliefs may be taken for granted, only assumed; others are highly problematic and controversial. However, each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions that are asked and the interpretations that are brought to them.

At the most general level, four major interpretive paradigms structure qualitative research: positivist and postpositivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), and feminist-poststructural. These four abstract paradigms become more complicated at the level of concrete specific interpretive communities. At this level it is possible to identify not only the constructivist, but also multiple versions of feminist (Afrocentric and poststructural)<sup>8</sup> as well as specific ethnic, Marxist, and cultural studies paradigms. These perspectives, or paradigms, are examined in Part II of Volume 1.

The paradigms examined in Volume 1, Part II, work against and alongside (and some within) the positivist and postpositivist models. They all work within relativist ontologies (multiple constructed realities), interpretive epistemologies (the knower and known interact and shape one another), and interpretive, naturalistic methods.

Table 1.2 presents these paradigms and their assumptions, including their criteria for evaluating research, and the typical form that an interpre-

TABLE 1.2 Interpretive Paradigms

Paradigm/Theory	Criteria	Form of Theory	Type of Narration
Positivist/postpositivist	internal, external validity	logical-deductive, scientific, grounded	scientific report
Constructivist	trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, confirmability	substantive-formal	interpretive case studies, ethnographic fiction
Feminist	Afrocentric, lived experience, dialogue, caring, accountability, race, class, gender, reflexivity, praxis, emotion, concrete grounding	critical, standpoint	essays, stories, experimental writing
Ethnic	Afrocentric, lived experience, dialogue, caring, accountability, race, class, gender	standpoint, critical, historical	essays, fables, dramas
Marxist	emancipatory theory, falsifiable, dialogical, race, class, gender	critical, historical, economic	historical, economic, sociocultural analysis
Cultural studies	cultural practices, praxis, social texts, subjectivities	social criticism	cultural theory as criticism

tive or theoretical statement assumes in the paradigm.<sup>9</sup> Each paradigm is explored in considerable detail in Volume 1, Part II, by Guba and Lincoln (Chapter 6), Schwandt (Chapter 7), Kincheloe and McLaren (Chapter 8), Olesen (Chapter 9), Stanfield (Chapter 10), and Fiske (Chapter 11). The positivist and postpositivist paradigms have been discussed above. They work from within a realist and critical realist ontology and objective epistemologies, and rely upon experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, and rigorously defined qualitative methodologies. In Volume 3, Chapter 7, Huberman and Miles develop elements of this paradigm.

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. Findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of grounded theory (see Strauss & Corbin, Volume 2, Chapter 7). Terms such as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* replace the usual positivist criteria of *internal* and *external validity*, *reliability*, and *objectivity*.

Feminist, ethnic, Marxist, and cultural studies models privilege a materialist-realist ontology; that is, the real world makes a material difference in terms of race, class, and gender. Subjectivist epistemologies and naturalistic