Interpretive Strengths and the Traditional Left and Right

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Abstract
Interpretive Strengths and the Traditional Left and Right

Qualitative methods made substantial gains by claiming to produce more useful knowledge than traditional methodologists. Interpretivist strengths became alternatives for elaborate research procedures as an evaluative standard for research methodologies. To succeed competitively with other methodologies, the qualitativists relied upon developing interpretivism. Cognitive skills had to be utilized capable of combining extensive and disparate accounts of social phenomena. Stakeholders had to be carefully listened to as the basis for the increased useful knowledge the qualitativists were creating. Interpretive strengths were required at many phases in the qualitative research process. The cognitive developments required to produce effective interpretivists are presented in discussions about narrative as the data of qualitative methods. As explained from the narrative perspective, interpretivists must effectively restructure the narrative to produce useful knowledge.

Traditional left and right analysis of interpretive strengths and the qualitative methods movement resembles current discussion about Internet neutrality. The qualitative methodologists achieved their greatest gains by establishing the seemingly neutral goal of increasing knowledge production. After some decades of outstanding success in developing a literature and gaining intellectual and academic acceptance, the interpretivists confront some failures in achieving all their objectives. Government bureaucracies tend to be reluctant to accept qualitative methods and still often believe in isolating their decisions from the stakeholder reasoning the qualitativists encourage. Adequate training of applied social scientists in the cognitive skills of successful interpretivism is another objective yet to be attained. Achieving the objectives of interpretivism requires alliance with the political left. Only the left will attack entrenched bureaucratic values and encourage the educationalism required to teach interpretivist cognitive skills. Unable to attain many goals, the qualitativist movement must be terms as biased to the political left in 2007. A quantitative research design analyzing the cognitive strengths of FaceBox.Com is proposed. This research design appears to substantiate questions about how interpretivists can possibly accomplish all their objectives without being left biased.

Interpretive Strengths and the Traditional Left and Right

When the qualitative methodologists first began making substantial gains against traditional research methodologies, the claim was made that useful knowledge was the reason for methodological innovation. Traditional research methodologies were portrayed as stifling increases in knowledge about whatever was being studied. Experiments and survey research, the most famous examples of traditional research methods, were under attack by the qualitative methodologists. The excellence of traditional research usually was explained in terms of how exactingly each step in the research process was accomplished. Research that did not have unusual methodological orderliness did not deserve an audience according to traditional methodologists.

The qualitative methodologists began exploring how successful traditional methodologists were at attaining perfection at each step in the research process. The qualitativists decided traditional researchers were tempted to rig experiments so as to increase the likelihood they would get exacting results. Since acceptance of research required precise methods, the temptation to prearrange everything was substantial. Successfully completing a series of exacting qualifying steps allowed the traditional researchers an audience but at what price? Research conditions produced social science research results that could leap through the qualifying hoops and be called successful research.

Evaluation of traditional research required methodological strengths before research was allowed an audience. The qualifier clearly was precise adherence to requirements for successful research. Research designs and statistical analysis had to be exact or critics would summarily dismiss research. That meant, practically, that mythological strengths made or broke all research activities. There was very little interest in research findings unless the research was accomplished rigorously. The researcher could not be heard unless he could first validate his research procedures. Research methods were the ordinary technique for silencing all but a few in various social science research areas.

The qualitativists succeeded in establishing their methodological techniques by proving the traditional methodologists could not accomplish methodological rigor without a substantial amount of questionable practices in setting together research designs. The major ethical blunter was that the researcher imposed his ideas on the research design. By organizing each phase of the research project ahead the methodological strength required to gain an audience for his research was achieved. The hurdle to having one's research heard was simply higher than could be accomplished with ethical social science, for most researchers.

Qualitative methods developed out of exploring the ethical problems in silencing an excessive amount of research. The most pronounced problem was an unsatisfactorily meager development in useful knowledge. The successful social science researcher could be accused of working his preconceived ideas into schemes that yielded data and credible statistical analysis. The qualitativists successfully contended, there was little possibility in the organization of traditional methods for much new knowledge to be discovered. A

disproportionate amount of attention was directed at suppressing research that was not methodologically acceptably.

Researchers produced social science research designs that emphasized methodological exactness at the expense of developments of new knowledge. The qualitativists finally succeeded in gaining respectability by arguing that knowledge gains from traditional methods were depressingly weak. The quantitativists informed that social science methods were producing only weak knowledge gains and that some new techniques were required to increase success at knowledge building.

The idea was to change the evaluative standard for social science research from methodological exactness to knowledge building. The qualitativists were concerned with evaluating research on the basis of how substantially new research did advance knowledge. The qualitativist's evaluative standard was recognition that previous research had failed to produce reasonable gains in knowledge.

Interpretivism, the Innovation of the Qualitativists

Listening to stakeholders took over from methodological orderliness as the requisite aptitude for successful social science research. Jane Elliott explains, "It has been suggested that allowing respondents to provide narratives accounts of their lives and experiences can help to redress some of the power differentials inherent in the research enterprise and can also provide good evidence about the everyday lives of research subjects and the meanings they attached to their experiences." (Elliott, 2005, p. 17) Useful knowledge was to be based on stakeholder's narratives and not methodological strengths and exactness. D. Soyini Madison discussing the social science researcher's

listening observed, “As you fully engage the art of listening sympathetically, you are actively thinking about what is being expressed, you are not just present in body, but deeply engaged in mind. (Madison, 2005, p. 32)

The difference in technique between traditional quantitative methods and qualitative methods was very substantial. Traditionally, methodological work succeeded or failed on the basis of precise methods. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, introduced much more uncertainty about exactly what research methods were to look like. Neat data collected from experiments and survey was replaced with disjointed collections of accounts from stakeholders. The unusual organization that could describe traditional methods was largely gone as reliance upon narratives replaced experimental data and surveys.

Traditional qualitative studies had relied upon the researcher's sense of orderliness to determine what effective research was. Qualitativists abandoned this evaluative standard decrying the technique's failure in building knowledge. Instead of logically organized quantitative data, the qualitativists approved of in-depth and personal description of phenomena. Social science researchers were interested in involving themselves with learning what those close to the phenomena under investigation believed.

Lyn Richards explains that “qualititative data are messy records.” A researcher usually works qualitative data “because the question being asked does not clearly indicate what data you need to answer it.” Qualitative research could be called a flexible approach to data gathering because you are unsure the direction your conclusion will lead. The researcher needs to understand that “the complexity of the record cannot be

reduced until you know if you will loss valuable information because it was simplified." (Richards, 2005, p. 34)

The aptitude that became crucial in accomplishing social science research was the researcher's ability to create order to out of a substantial amount of subjective interview data, narratives, and discussions.. The qualitativists discussed this special skill as "interpretivist ability." If the social science researcher could examine a vast amount of stakeholder's narratives and establish an orderly discussion that captured the authentic meaning of all the data collected, the social science researcher was said to have ability as an interpretivist. Interpretivists combined verbal accounts into useful knowledge arranging and emphasizing facts so as to substantially improve the amount the audience knew and understood about the social phenomena being studied.

Individual strengths in experimental innovativeness and statistical exposition differed substantially among qualitative researchers. The unique aptitudes of the qualitative researcher's similarly showed significant individual difference. Some researchers have significantly more ability in analyzing a large amount of narrative data and making cogent observations that strengthen the process of knowledge building than others. John Creswell explained that a social science researcher's ability to "turn the story" differentiated the successful from the unsuccessful interpretivist. (Creswell, 1998, pp. 219-222)

Other methodological authorities point to the distance between researchers and stakeholders as the factor that determines the successful interpretivist. Instruction in interpretivism directs the researcher to attempt to maintain closeness with the stakeholders. Guba and Lincoln indicate the successful interpretivist need identify

stakeholder "claims, concerns, and issues." When there are differences in stakeholder perceptions, these methodologists encourage the researcher to question various stakeholder factions about differences in understanding. Attempts are, also, to be made to determine how the stakeholders from respective factions reconcile differences in perspective. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, pp. 678-682)

The successful interpretivist probably must have a substantial ability to tolerate ambiguity. Cognitive psychologists have identified that there are substantial individual differences in ability to tolerate ambiguity. Individual difference in how much closure is required in reasoning exercises has been found to be substantial. Persons with a substantial tolerance for ambiguity are more able to synthesize diverse elements of idea without producing ultimate conclusions. Those with a high tolerance for ambiguity work more effectively in disorderly conditions.

The disconnected and diverse data that the qualitativists work with appears to favor the cognitive skills of those with a high tolerance for ambiguity. To be an effective interpretivist, the researcher needs to evaluate a substantial amount of diverse data without reaching any kind of premature closure. The interpretivist need maintain an open mind towards the directions analysis and conclusions will take. Qualitative social science must succeed in infusing diverse narrative data with explanatory strengths that builds knowledge.

Without interpretivism, the qualitative methodologists would be lost. Unique aptitudes are required to process personal narratives and successfully convert them to acceptable social science analysis. Unless qualitativists are able to magically rely upon people with innate aptitudes for interpretivism, how to improve interpretivist abilities is

very significant. Prospective qualitative researchers need be taught to turn the story, to stay closer to stakeholders, and to be more tolerant of ambiguity. Normative suggestions like these could valuably assist qualitativists in producing researchers with high interpretivist abilities.

Qualitative method's lofty objective of increasing knowledge cannot succeed without trained interpretivists. Simply gathering diverse narrative accounts will not accomplished knowledge building. Effective data analysis is requisite for knowledge building to occur. Only with skillful interpretivism, can qualitative data increase how an audience perceives and understands a social reality.

Interpretivism in the Social Science Research Process

Accomplishing phase after phase of the research endeavor from research proposal to research presentation exactingly is often seen as how social science research is completed. Social science research is discussed as an orderly procedurally oriented activity. When qualitative research is analyzed as a series of procedures, interpretive skills appear valuable at several points in the research process. Throughout the qualitative research project design, interpretive skills are determinants in producing analyzable data that yields satisfactory analysis.

Northcutt and McCoy consider the research flow in qualitative analysis in their book, *Interactive Qualitative Analysis.* Table One is taken from Northcutt and McCoy's discussion about how to attain an overview of the research flow that occurs when a researcher conducts a qualitative analysis. In Table One, these authors discuss studying a

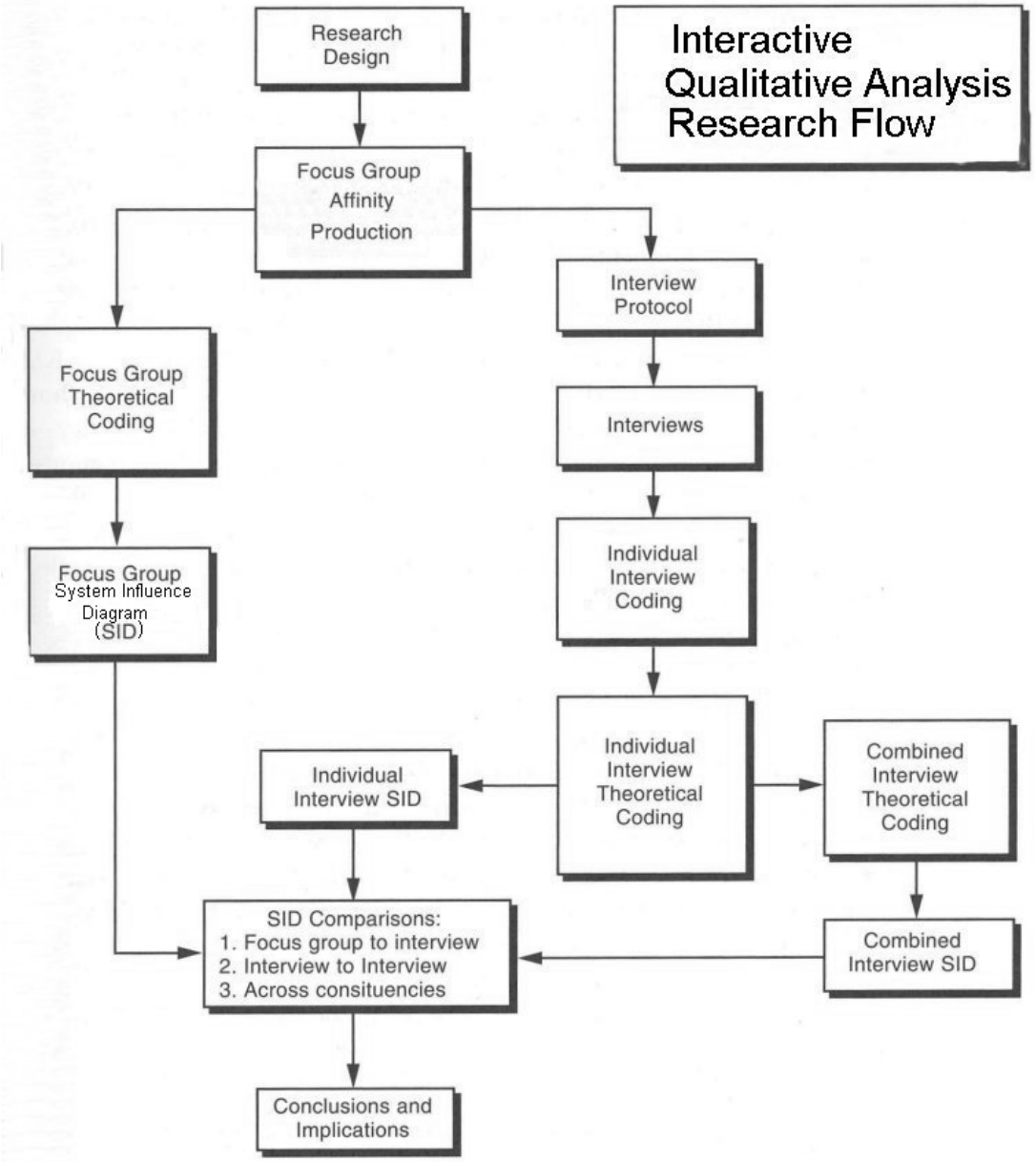
phenomenon by examining affinities that the individuals being studied exhibit toward phenomena related concepts.

The technique elaborated is basically focus groups with additional one-on-one interviews. When focus groups plus interviews are used, the qualitative researcher meets those persons in his study in these two situations. First, all those people in the study meet together in a focus group and discuss the phenomenon being studied. The second phase of this technique involves in-depth personal interviews with those who are participating in the research.

Eventually, the social science researcher combines data gathered from group discussions and one-on-one interviews into his research findings. The focus group together with individual interview technique is an excellent sample of qualitative research's data gathering techniques. A substantial amount of disparate data results from this data gathering technique. Focus discussions and individual interviews comprise the data produced for analysis by this qualitative technique.

The research flow described in Table One identifies where in the research process interpretivist skills are required in amassing and analyzing qualitative data. From Table One, focus group activity requires interpretive skills. The phenomena affinity patterns that Northcutt and McCoy wish to study require manipulating the focus group in the direction of meaningful results. Without raconteur skills the qualitative researcher could not move group discussions in the direction of meaningful and useful discussion. While the focus group, itself, is the source of affinity analysis, the researcher must use interpretivist skills to get the desired data. Without interpretivist abilities, only a questionable amount of amorphous content would emerge from a focus group.

TABLE ONE
A FLOW DIAGRAM OF QUALITITATIVE RESEARCH



(Adapted from Northcutt and McCoy, 2005, p.43)

Consider the problem in the focus group phase of Table One from the perspective of training researchers to conduct effective focus groups. Were one going to send several researchers using focus group techniques into the field, one would be required to educate the prospective researchers about interpretivism. Training these researchers would need to emphasize consciousness in turning the story, closeness to stakeholders, and tolerance for ambiguity. Getting researchers ready to conduct focus groups would require improving the research staff's abilities in these areas. This training would be purposive with the objective of producing better qualitative research in this focus group phase of the research activity as presented in Table One.

Table One next presents the need for interpretivist skills in coding both the focus group sessions and the one-on-one interviews. Focus group sessions and interviews are usually transcribed and later coded. Coding requires the social science researcher to identify some important themes and observe how often these themes occur. To a substantial extent, the ideals of the qualitative researcher are accomplished as the researcher listens to the people involved in the research projects as data is created. The data creation process, however, could not occur without the researcher using his interpretivist skills.

Northcutt and McCoy's techniques encourage people participating in the study interactively contributing to coding schemes by identifying affinity patterns in the social phenomena being studied. The affinity techniques explained by these authors well-exemplified qualitative ideals of more extensively deriving data from the stakeholders in the phenomena being studied. Choosing to use an affinity patterns techniques is really a

substantial commitment to the qualitative objective of listening to stakeholders in attempting to learn about a social phenomenon.

Usually, affinity techniques are complementary to conventional coding techniques in the analysis of focus groups and individual interviews. This means the researcher has even more disparate data to analyze and must even more scrupulously resist any temptation to have premature closure of idea. The entire processes of complementary coding that Northcutt and McCoy discuss establish a very substantial requirement in interpretivist skills. To succeed with the research design in Table One, the researcher would need to have substantial interpretivist aptitude.

A Systems Influence Diagram (SID) is used at various places in Table One's flow diagram. The SID is called a "mindmap" and is a visual representation of an entire system of influences and outcomes. According to Northcutt and McCoy, "The graphic representation of relationship paints a vivid picture of systems dynamics for both investigator and participants and lends itself to analyzing how modifications might change the nature of the system." (Northcutt and McCoy, 2005, p. 48) The SID mindmap is an excellent example of the cognitive processes required of the interpretivist.

The research flow diagram in Table One nicely presents how the researcher must combine focus group and individual interview data. The qualitative researcher must plan substantial effort to bring together and analyze these two data sources. The flow diagram in Table One presents combining these two SIDs. Recognizing those ideas to be emphasized and those ideas to be relegated require interpretivist abilities. This phase of the research endeavor requires the researcher be adept at turning story, at closeness to stakeholders, and having a substantial tolerance for ambiguity.

Narrative and Other Qualitative Research Techniques

Focus groups are, of course, only one of many qualitative techniques. John Creswell discusses phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, biography, and the case studies as exemplary of contemporary qualitative research techniques. (Creswell, 1998, pp. 4-12) Other qualitative techniques that other researchers have identified include cognitive anthropology, symbolic interactions, historical research, heuristics research, and studies of artifacts. (Creswell, 1998, p. 6) The similarity among these data collection techniques is that they all rely upon the social science researcher organizing the data he has so as to improve knowledge about the phenomena with his audience. In all of these research techniques, interpretive skills are the common denominator.

Roland Barthes, a French semiologist and literary critic, produced an inclusive definition of narrative:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances - as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the orderly mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mine, painting ... stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is or has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives ... (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 1)

Narrative, as discussed by Czarniawska, represents generic qualitative data. Reviewing all the possible qualitative social science research techniques, one is able to subsume them all under the narrative heading. The qualitativists explain narratives as the

source of data from which they then devise social science research. Development of the qualitativist movement purposively led to the inclusion of many more data sources. The qualitativists have had the objective of making more types of research qualify as acceptable social science. The qualitativists have encouraged a substantial number of people who think of themselves as social science researchers. The days when only experiments and surveys could be considered social science research are gone thanks to the contributions of the qualitativists.

The Australian sociologist Bronwyn Davies has conducted research that exemplifies difficulties qualitative researchers have in interpreting qualitative data. Davies' study was about how children acquired gender identification. Her qualitative study included 7 four- and five-year old children. She spent many hours with each child during a one-year period reading and discussing children stories with each child.

From her studies, Davies made some observations about how feminist ideas begin in children. She relied upon how children interpreted a story about a princess's rescue from a dragon by a prince for her social science analysis. She found that four children understood the princess was the hero. Davies explained, "the four children who understood the feminist interpretation of the story had employed mothers, and their fathers assumed a greater than average share of domestic duties." The three children who saw the princess as intending to get her prince back and saving her future marriage “had mothers who were housewives, although two of them were well educated." (Czarniawska, 2004, pp. 89-90)

All qualitative research intends to allow the social science researcher to accomplish more effective observations about the social reality. Arising as the qualitativists have out

of discontent with the quantitativists, the requirements for qualitative data are not great. Narrative is a useful concept for appreciating the diversity of qualitative data. Qualitativists have defined many data gathering techniques as acceptable, but all rely, to some extent, on a narrative provided by stakeholders of the social phenomena being studied. Qualitative researchers believe that this narrative from stakeholders being studies assures that the researcher does not imposed his ideas on the final product. The objective of more effectively describing social reality may be better accomplished by relegating the researcher's ideas to insignificant. The dominant ideas in the social science analysis are to originate with the stakeholders.

Discussing narratives is recognition that all qualitative research is a restructuring of original narratives about social phenomena. The concept of narrative assures that qualitative methods rely upon the important contributions of the interpretivists. The restructuring that takes place in creating more effective explanation from disparate accounts from many people relies upon the special cognitive aptitudes of the interpretivist. The creative aggregation that interpretivists accomplish on all sorts of narratives yields coherent social science analysis. The cognitive abilities the interpretivist has qualify these individuals as effective social scientists.

Narratives have all sorts of cognitive organization. Undeniably, cognitive differences between a graphical representation, an image, a history, and a grounded theory intensive interview are substantial. Narrative is a useful concept because the idea reinforces the similarities in cognitive principles among all these diverse modes of expression. However dissimilar these narratives, they are meaningful expression of the sentiments of those nearest the social phenomena being studied.

While the expressive mode of different persons may vary substantially, all narrative reports how those concerned with a social phenomenon explain what they perceive. Each narrative is an attempt to cognitize experience and to differing extents succeeds in being a reasoned organization of the phenomenon in question.

Narrative analysis is consistent with the emphasis qualitativists place on listening to the stakeholder. The concept of narrative includes the idea that those close to a phenomena attempt to organize their understandings of the social reality. The concept of narrative reinforces the qualitativist's avowed intent to draw knowledge from stakeholders. The qualitative researcher needs to journey into the cognitive efforts of those directly involved with the social phenomena he is studying. Narratives are invaluable in introducing the researcher to the cognitive efforts of those who are the source of his data.

Are Interpretivist Methods Neutral?

Since the development of Internet, neutrality issues in methods have appeared more significant. In the early days of the World Wide Web immediately after Internet was transformed forever by the introduction of the browser enabling remarkable graphic displays, some authorities claimed these developments in information technology were revolutionary. By 2007, discussion about the significance of information technology innovation has become less profound, and now, the issue has become net neutrality. As anyone who has followed technological developments knows, many people have attempted to answer whether Internet is inherently biased to the left or right. Experts

continue to discuss whether Internet is or is not a factor shifting many global political issues to the left.

From the net neutrality discussion, social scientists are aware of issues about whether new techniques are biased either left or right. Interpretivism needs similarly to be discussed in terms of neutrality. When social science researchers advocate interpretivist methods, are the techniques that they are proposing objectively neutral in their scientific evaluation? Can one discern a political direction likely to result from advocating interpretivist methods?

The present-day acceptance of qualitative methods occurred because of a general dissatisfaction with what the quantitativists were accomplishing. There was a perceived loss becomes the quantitativists were not being quick enough in developing new knowledge. Old techniques were seen as both suppressive and nonproductive. Beginning in the late 1960's, qualitative research methods began to blossom, and the extensive number qualitative techniques now available began being accepted.

There were significant concerns about a value free impartiality for scientific inquiry in the rise of qualitative social science. From a methodological perspective, qualitative methods could be imagined as neutrally oriented. The objective of producing more useful knowledge than quantitative studies is not inherently either left or right.

Neither the traditional political left nor right exactly identifies with the basic objectives of qualitative research. A scientific movement advocating more knowledge production does not clearly favor either the political left or the right. The need to know is important in politics, and both left and right appear to have similar needs to have

adequate information. Producing useful knowledge can be a commendable objective capable of winning adherents in both the political left and right.

During a rise of the qualitativist movement, one could say no political faction had the upper hand and dominated. The general dissatisfaction with the quantitativists was substantial enough that almost everyone – left and right - accepted some new techniques were required to maintain the prestigiousness of social science. The qualitativist movement offered social science an opportunity to revitalize after a dismal period of lackluster social science accomplishment.

After several decades of substantial development, left-right political issues pertaining to qualitative methods are not the same. By 2007, the qualitativists had achieved many objectives in methodological innovation. The qualitativists cannot, however, claim to have attained all their goals, and failures in attaining qualitativists objectives can be observed. The qualitativists have produced an extensive literature explaining their methodological perspective, yet introduction of qualitative techniques into applied social science is substantially less than the qualitativists would have anticipated.

There has been considerable resistance to introducing qualitative techniques into applied social science. Organizing a transformational moment in social science methods is still fraught with some problems. How to train methodologists to accomplish interpretivist analysis has not exactly been resolved satisfactorily. The qualitativist movement in social science research may well remain primarily an intellectual and academic pastime. As yet, predicting the extent applied social science will accept qualitative methods is difficult to determine. Difficulties in accomplishing qualitativist's

ideals appear to be the significant factor in any discussion about the continued neutrality of quantitative methods.

The recent experience in the United States with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) exemplifies the substantial resistance to qualitative methods that exists in applied social science. FEMA notoriously attempts to distance itself from those clients in need of the agency's service. An important tenant of FEMA's disaster leadership is crisis direction from the established organizational hierarchy. FEMA accepts the prevalent believe in America that crucial leadership must be accomplished in well-recognized and respected centers of authority. Usually, American buearucratic leadership resides in the Northeast Corridor. FEMA's disaster management conforms to this belief in American bureaucratic organization.

To suggest that FEMA should go among agency's stakeholders to devise relief action plans for disasters situations is unheard of presently. FEMA, now, has no ability to listen effectively to those directly affected by disasters. The idea of accommodating stakeholder groups into the planning structure of FEMA would be resisted substantially. The norms and practices that govern the workings of FEMA were established decades before the advent of the qualitativist movement in social science. Consequently, the FEMA bureaucracy evidences little or no influence from the qualitativist social scientists.

A second factor the qualitativist methods people confront after decades of academic developments is how to train people to accomplish qualitative methods in applied social science. Convincing that qualitative method has developed beyond an intellectual and academic level is not easily substantiated with evidence about training researchers. How the manager of a social science research project is to train a staff to accomplish

qualitative methods is unresolved. Without an ability to educate an adequate number of trained qualitative researchers, qualitative methods lose out in situations where choices must be made between alternative methodological techniques. If the personnel to implement qualitative methods schemes do not exist in adequate numbers, qualitative research designs cannot be incorporated into applied social science.

How do social scientists educate research staffs in the cognitive skills necessary to accomplish qualitative methods? Presently, the criticism is sometimes heard that qualitative methodologists are attempting to keep their perspectives in exclusive intellectual and academic groups. The possibility of understanding "qualitative" methods as "better academic methods" has not very effectively been resisted. In any case, qualitative methods have not shown substantial interest in devising practical techniques for diffusing the cognitive skills associated with effective interpretivism.

Were one to attempt to identify efforts to train qualitative methodologists, several normative ideas stand out. Effective interpretivists are asked to learn to turn an effective story, involve themselves with stakeholders, and be reluctant to establish premature closure with regard to complex ideas. Interpretivism relies on these cognitive abilities, but almost nothing has been done to encourage development of techniques to teach research staffs how to be successful interpretivists, themselves. How difficulties in moving qualitative methods from the intellectual and academic environment to applied social science will be resolved is uncertain.

The problems that qualitative methods now confront, after several decades of successes, appear to impose a left political bias on qualitative social science. Political victories against entrenched bureaucratic ideas, such as evidenced by FEMA, have not

occurred. Qualitative methods remain an intellectual and academic alternative to established bureaucratic techniques. The political events that will begin bureaucracy's sympathetic listening to stakeholders have yet to happen. If the qualitativists are to attain acceptance of their techniques and objectives in applied social science, victories for the traditional political left are going to be required.

Training problems hinder producing an adequate supply of competent interpretivists. Without enough trained interpretivists qualitative methods cannot succeed. Training dilemma's similarly contributed to a left-oriented qualitative method. Teaching new cognitive skills cannot be accomplished without some transformations in educational norms. Educating prospective researchers to resist establishing closure in weighing ideas they are analyzing requires a substantial investment. Effective abilities in organizing ideas to more effectively convey a story are, also, only taught through difficult liberal educational methods. Converting a perspective applied researcher's cognitive skills so as to allow effective interpretivism cannot be effortlessly accomplished. This training problem in the production of effective interpretivists could not be accomplished without significantly reorienting the learning environment to the left. Far more innovation is required to accomplish these objectives than can be imagined possible with right oriented politics. Successful traditional left politics would be needed to produce enough skilled interpretivists to make qualitative methods prevalent in applied social science.

While the objectives of qualitative methods are now widely approved, several decades of academic and intellectual success have still not produced political changes that would encourage widespread acceptance of qualitative methods ideas in applied social science. For an academic movement that originally envisioned itself as largely

value free, present refusals appear to resolve neutrality discussions negatively. Interpretivism and qualitative methods can only be imagined to have lost their former claim to represent methodological neutrality.

If the qualitative methods movement is ever to attain their lofty objectives, substantial political victories for the left are going to be required. The resistance some establish bureaucracies have shown to interpretivism convinces that qualitative methods cannot exactly be thought of as politically neutral. Bureaucratic resistance and beliefs about keeping decision making removed from the stakeholders of an agency cannot be surmounted without attacking some venerable ideas about the established order. Traditionally, left politics have created the impetus for shifts away from established procedures in government. Since interpretivism and the qualitative methods movement basically rely upon left politics to attain their unfinished agenda, the issue of neutrality must be decided negatively. Interpretivism probably can be discussed as biased to the political left in contemporary political discussions without much loss of validity in one's observations.

A Qualitativist Research Design Requiring Interprevist Skills

Several of the assumptions this paper has made about interpretivism can be more carefully examined if they discussed using a contemporary research design proposal. The research design this paper suggests involves a project to analyze the strengths of Internet's FaceBox.Com. This research idea develops out of an interest in the proliferation of recent similar Internet ideas. FaceBox.Com encourages the user to upload pictures, music, and video creating a profile of himself. The web site's software

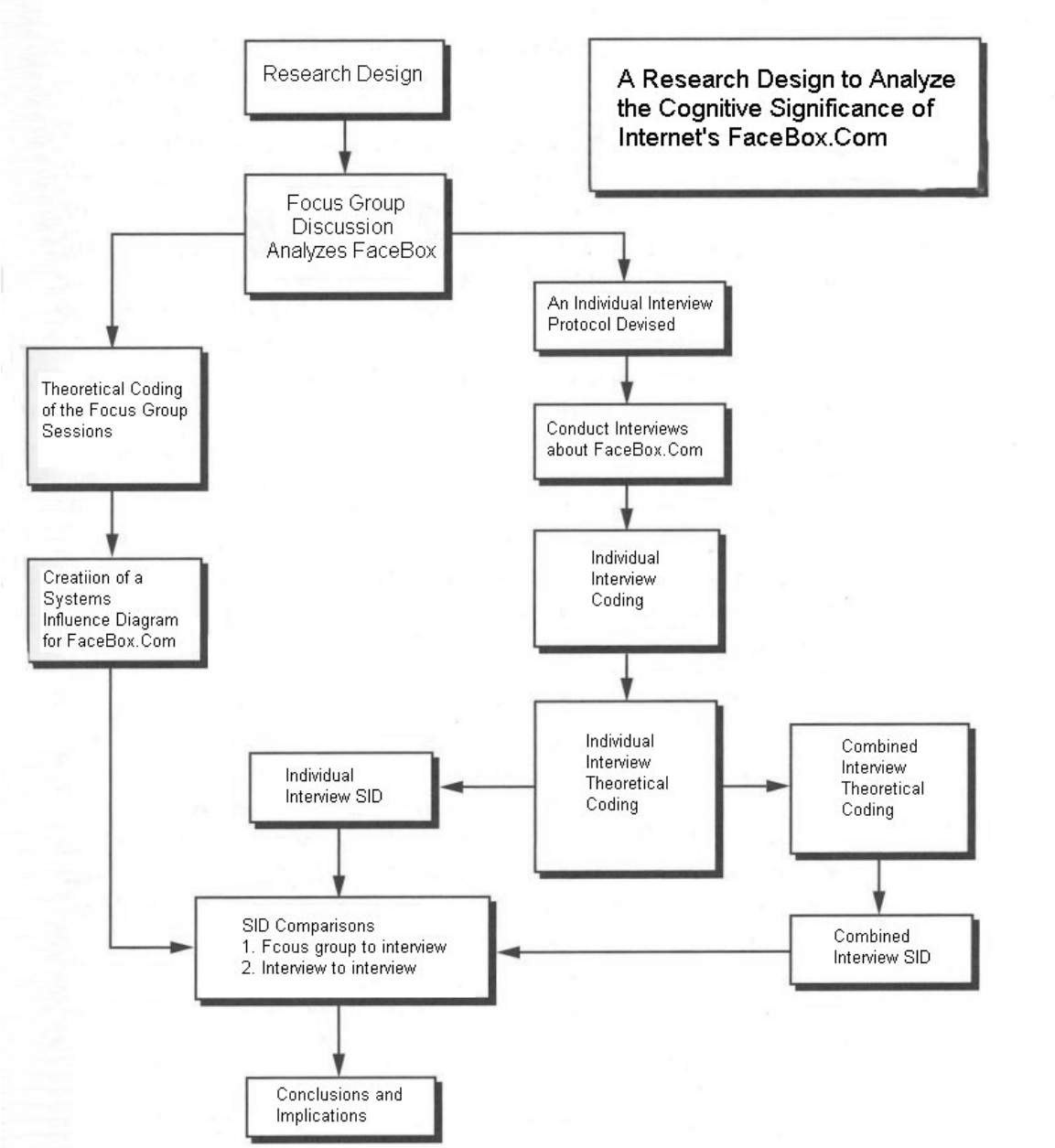
then encourages interaction among various people uploading to FaceBox.Com. This Internet idea is exemplary of several similar ideas recently developed.

FaceBox.Com has a substantial amount of a theoretical significance for appreciating political bias and interpretivist techniques. Stakeholder issues in qualitative methods occurred to the researcher when the FaceBox.Com idea is discussed. While the norms of qualitative methods encourage social science researchers staying close to stakeholders, no one is certain if this can be accomplished electronically on-line. FaceBox.Com is an intriguing idea to the qualitative methodologists because this Internet idea could have some potential for getting together groups of stakeholders.

The possibility for moving an idea like FaceBox.Com from theoretical research to applied social science appears authentic. Could a public agency like FEMA established stakeholders group using FaceBox.Com? Many of the requisites for successful interaction with stakeholders exist in the FaceBox.Com idea. The proposed research project, used as example here, has theoretical significance since the results and conclusions would be informative about the potential of FaceBox.Com in future research designs.

Table Two presents a diagram of a research design intended to study FaceBox.Com. The basic idea of the research design is almost pure qualitativist. This research design encourages the researcher to listen to those in his study. The researcher's own ideas about FaceBox.Com are relegated by this research design and the opinions and ideas of those people who comprise the study are guaranteed importance.

TABLE TWO
A RESEARCH DESIGN FOR A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FACEBOX.COM



(Adapted from Northcutt and McCoy, 2005, p. 43)

The research design utilizes a focus group followed up with individual interviews to assure listening to people participating in the study. Beginning with focus group sessions, the researcher imagines that those in his study will take over and define the significant issues that pertain to the usefulness of FaceBox.Com. Following the focus

group sessions, an interview schedule is to be devised and participants in the focus group sessions are to be individually interviewed. These data gathering techniques produce two sources of data, the focus group discussions and the individual interviews.

The interpretivist coding of this data requires several phases of analysis. Following the focus group sessions, the interpretivist accomplishes theoretical coding of what has taken place in the group discussions. Important themes that occur in the focus group sessions are identified and observations about frequency and intensity recorded. The theoretical coding of the focus group probably would succeed in identifying the major perceptions the study group has about the potentials of FaceBox.Com.

The researcher next constructs a Systems Influence Diagram about FaceBox.Com from the focus group sessions. This means that the interpretivist must cognitize how the focus group connects various features in FaceBox.Com with their likely influence. These diagrams that interpretivist devises are very useful in perceiving how group members imagine FaceBox.Com would work sociologically. These SIDs would be an important in the final analysis of group of ideas regarding FaceBox.Com's potential.

Next, the researcher would need to code the individual interviews. Two types of individual interview coding are required for this research design. Ordinary coding records how respondents reacted to the interview schedules. The individual interviews would, next, be coded for theoretical content in a similar manner to the theoretical coding used for the focus group sessions. The researcher would want to know about major themes, how often they occurred, and with what intensity.

Systems Influence Diagrams for the individual interviews would next be created. Ideally, SIDs would be created for each individual interview and for the combined

individual interviews. Excellent qualitative research techniques require all these SIDs. Although by now the interpretivist data is the beginning to look messy, qualitative research likes to have all the disparate data possible to cognitize beliefs about FaceBox.Com.

Comparisons may be made of the various SIDs created by this research project. Focus group SIDs need be compared, and comparisons are required between individualist SIDs and group SIDs. As the researcher, using his interpretive skills, combines all these mindmaps of the likely potential FaceBox.Com, qualitative analysis is accomplished.

In the final phase of the research project proposed here, the researcher writes up his conclusions and discusses the implications of of his findings. If the research project is successful, the interpretivist will have drawn upon the reasoning of those who have participated in his study and have substantially more useful ideas about the potentials of FaceBox.Com. From a practical perspective, interpretivist will have created useful knowledge about how FaceBox.Com can be constructively used sociologically.

The technique this paper has suggested for determining if interpretivist methods are politically neutral in 2007 is to ask if similar research designs are now accepted in applied social science. Could a bureaucracy like FEMA conduct such a study that evaluated the possibilities of using FaceBox.Com to reason with disaster victims? Since the answer to this questions is probably no, this paper concludes that interpretivist methods are left biased. Interpretivism is a valuable research technique, but some left oriented political victories are going to be required before this technique is implemented by applied social science.

The second test of political bias this paper has applied regards problems training interpretivists to conduct this research. There are several interpretivist skills required to make the proposed research project a success. The interpretivist need work together with the people in the study conducting an effective focus group session. Researcher skills clearly could make the difference in a well lead focus group session and a focus group session that proves nonproductive. Theoretical coding of both the focus group sessions and the individual interviews requires the interpretivist to successfully identify themes and their intensities. Creating the SIDs for the focus groups and individual interviews is another interpretivist requirement. A substantial amount of interpretive strength is required to produce the mindmaps of what happened in focus groups and individual interviews. Finally, combining all this data into conclusions and implications is going to require that the interpretivist avoid premature closure in reaching conclusions about FaceBox.Com.

How do you train a staff to accomplish these objectives? There is a real difference between analyzing these tasks from an academic intellectual perspective and thinking about training people to do this analysis for you. If interpretivist methods are ever going to become a norm of applied social science, substantial effort must be expended in training people to accomplish these objectives. Educationally, the situations required to develop these skills can only be created following left oriented political wins. Interpretivist methods are left biased because they can not accomplish much beyond the intellectual and academic level without left oriented transformations in educationalism,

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