

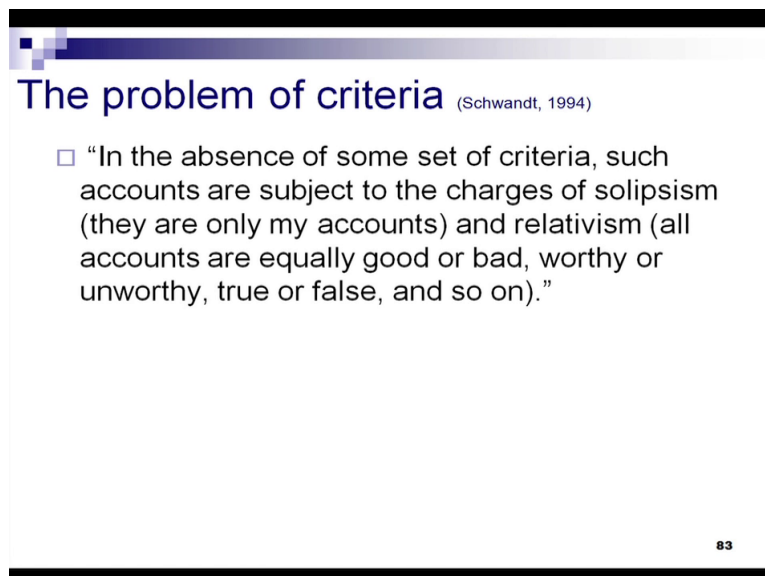
Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 12
Criticisms of Interpretivism and Constructivism

Welcome back to the course titled Qualitative Research methods; my name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with the course and we have been discussing the different paradigms of qualitative inquiry, we have discussed some bit of constructivism, we discussed interpretivism, we will be in this lecture we will wrap up the discussion regarding interpretivism and constructivism as paradigms of qualitative inquiry.

We will discuss the critiques to constructivism and interpretivism, and criticisms that has come up regarding interpretivism and constructivism, so that is what we will talk about now.

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The problem of criteria (Schwandt, 1994)

- “In the absence of some set of criteria, such accounts are subject to the charges of solipsism (they are only my accounts) and relativism (all accounts are equally good or bad, worthy or unworthy, true or false, and so on).”

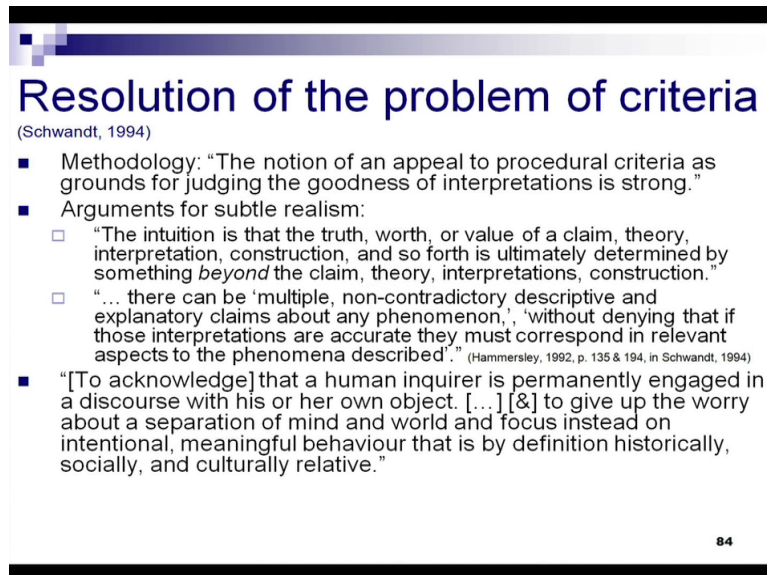
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The first criticism is the problem of criteria, how do we decide, what needs to be interpreted and how, so “In the absence of subset of criteria, as such account are subject to the charges of solipsism, solipsism means the interpretation from the perspective of one inquirer and relativism all accounts equally good or bad, worthy or unworthy, true or false and so on.”

In the absence of some set of criteria we can say everybody’s interpretation is alright, everybody’s interpretation is acceptable, one researcher fields something in a certain way and another researcher feel something different about the same phenomenon and both are okay, so

you know there is a problem of criteria how do we decide which research is more robust, how do we decide which process of creation of knowledge, which process of inquiry is more accurate than the other, what are the criteria that are being used to find out more about the object of inquiry.

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Resolution of the problem of criteria

(Schwandt, 1994)

- Methodology: "The notion of an appeal to procedural criteria as grounds for judging the goodness of interpretations is strong."
- Arguments for subtle realism:
 - "The intuition is that the truth, worth, or value of a claim, theory, interpretation, construction, and so forth is ultimately determined by something *beyond* the claim, theory, interpretations, construction."
 - "... there can be 'multiple, non-contradictory descriptive and explanatory claims about any phenomenon,' 'without denying that if those interpretations are accurate they must correspond in relevant aspects to the phenomena described'." (Hammersley, 1992, p. 135 & 194, in Schwandt, 1994)
- "[To acknowledge] that a human inquirer is permanently engaged in a discourse with his or her own object. [...] [&] to give up the worry about a separation of mind and world and focus instead on intentional, meaningful behaviour that is by definition historically, socially, and culturally relative."

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Resolution of the problem of criteria are, the first is methodology, "The notion of an appeal to procedural criteria as grounds for judging the goodness of interpretations is strong." As long as we use some widely accepted method for getting the data from what we are studying, for obtaining the inputs from the object of enquiry, our arguments regarding the interpretation can be strong and as long as we use some set methods for interpretation.

The criteria can vary from researcher to researcher as long as the study of methods is thorough and the selection of the method used to get the data is based on some logic, the problem of criteria can be addressed. Arguments for subtle realism "the intuition is that the truth worth or value of a claim, theory interpretation, construction and so forth is ultimately determined by something beyond the claim, theory, interpretations and construction."

That "there can be multiple non- contradictory, descriptive and explanatory claims about any phenomenon, without denying that interpretations are accurate they must correspond relevant aspects to the phenomena described." So which means that if we are describing a phenomenon, we are using a standard method for describing for getting the information, methods don't describe phenomena.

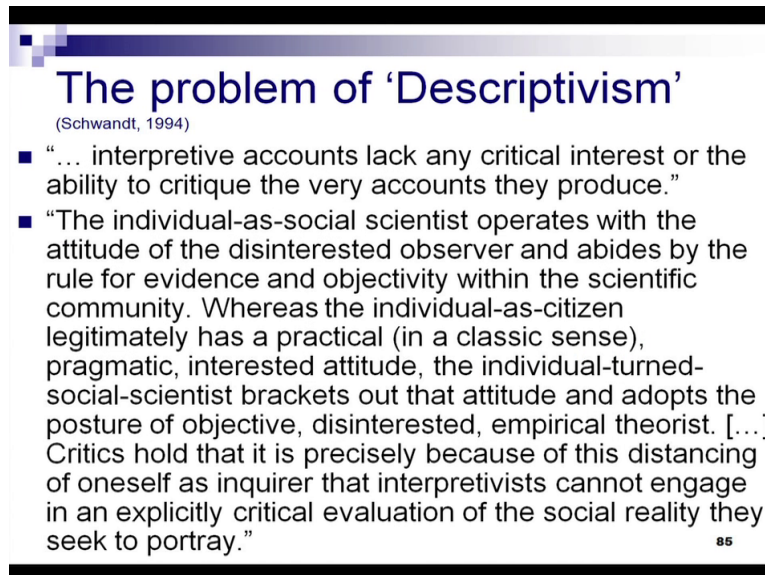
It is the analysis and the subsequent interpretation of the analyzed information that helps us describe phenomena, so when we, you know, we appeal to settle realism that as long as the descriptions match the reality as long as the value of a claim as long as the applicability of the theory is determined by something beyond the claim or is connected to what is real, what is believable.

And as long as it is in some way consistent with the interpretations of others who have studied the same phenomenon, as long as it is not contradicting the interpretations of others who have studied the same phenomena from different perspectives, based on different criteria, as long as the contradictions do not occur or serious contradictions are not there and everything explains the reality in one way or another, we can make it case to address this problem of criteria for studying the observed.

The Third way in which this is addressed is “to acknowledge that human inquirer is permanently engaged in a discourse with his or her on object and to give up the worry about a separation of mind and world and focus in instead on intentional, meaningful behavior that is by definition historically, socially and culturally relative.” So we accept that the inquirer is constantly in conversation, the inquirer is constantly interacting with what is being observed and it is this interaction that is giving a rich unique flavor to the interpretation.

And we accept this and we bring it out in the way we describe the phenomenon, so you know we don't need gated, we don't talk about complete separation of the observed from the observer, we discuss the relationship and we also discuss, we also describe the impact this relationship, can have on the meaning that is described or that is shared on the meaning that is created, as long as we acknowledge that this relationship is having some impact on the meaning that is created, the problem of the criteria not being addressed is taken care off.

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The problem of 'Descriptivism'

(Schwandt, 1994)

- "... interpretive accounts lack any critical interest or the ability to critique the very accounts they produce."
- "The individual-as-social scientist operates with the attitude of the disinterested observer and abides by the rule for evidence and objectivity within the scientific community. Whereas the individual-as-citizen legitimately has a practical (in a classic sense), pragmatic, interested attitude, the individual-turned-social-scientist brackets out that attitude and adopts the posture of objective, disinterested, empirical theorist. [...] Critics hold that it is precisely because of this distancing of oneself as inquirer that interpretivists cannot engage in an explicitly critical evaluation of the social reality they seek to portray."

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Second is a problem of descriptivism and again I'm sorry for the large amount of text, I think it's very important for you to see how the Schwandt excuse me, in this field have discussed these issues so the problem of descriptivism talks about the fact that "interpretive accounts lack any critical interest or the ability to critique the very accounts they produce." So that is the problem and they say that you know, there is no critical interest it's all about describing.

"The individual as a social scientist operates with the attitude of the disinterested observer and abide by the rules for evidence and objectivity within the scientific community. Whereas the individual as citizen legitimately has a practical pragmatic, interested attitude, the individual turn social scientist brackets out that attitude and adopts the posture of objective, disinterested, empirical theorists."

Who is removed from the object of inquiry, who's trying to study the object of inquiries from a disinterested, supposedly objective perspective. So "Critics hold that is precisely because of this distancing of oneself as inquirer that interpretivists cannot engage in an explicitly critical evaluation of the social reality they seek to portray." Critics say that you are trying to describe things, you are also trying to describe the relationship you have with you observed.

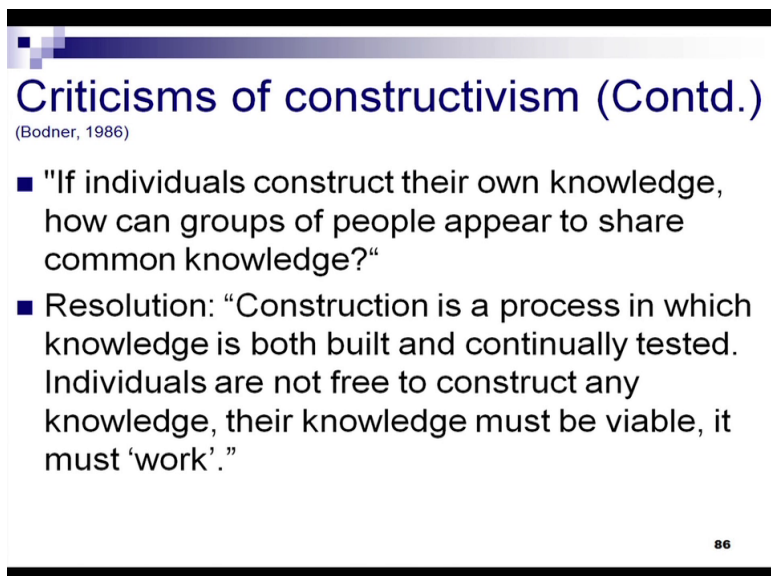
You are also engaging with the observed, will that not change the natural behavior of the observed and that is one big critic of this whole approach to interpretivism and constructivism. That how can you describe something that you are involved with, how can you describe something that you have a relationship with, how can you, you know, you need

to distance yourself from the inquired and if you distance yourself then you can't describe the relationship.

But if you are connected then the relationship changes because of the connection, so what you do so that is one criticism that is there. So that is again addressed by the fact and I haven't put the resolution here, but this is address by putting out by this the last point in the previous issues, which is to acknowledge that human inquirer with permanently engaged, so we are discussing when we describe something then be late out.

And what our engagement with the or our engagement as social scientists, as qualitative researchers, with the object to study is becomes a part of the description that we putting forth as the new knowledge that has been created and that intern and to the body of knowledge that already exist, okay.

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Criticisms of constructivism (Contd.)
(Bodner, 1986)

- "If individuals construct their own knowledge, how can groups of people appear to share common knowledge?"
- Resolution: "Construction is a process in which knowledge is both built and continually tested. Individuals are not free to construct any knowledge, their knowledge must be viable, it must 'work'."

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So again you know that is that is the other aspect in the third criticism is, "if individuals constructor own knowledge, how can groups of people appear to share common knowledge? and we go back to this whole idea of solipsism, so its the knowledge that you create, knowledge that I create, knowledge that somebody else creates, so you know the knowledge that is created in pockets and how do we share it.

The resolution is that, you know how to address this issue, how do we address is criticism, we address it by saying that "construction is a process in which knowledge is both built and continually tested," so reflexivity is a response. Knowledge is not only created, knowledge is

also being tested and the interpretation, the creation of knowledge is continually been tested and for its fit into the context from which it was created.

“Individuals are not free to construct any knowledge their knowledge must be viable, it must work,” so this is one of the ways in which, you know this is address knowledge is not just created in isolation, knowledge is just not created in thin air, it is created as part of a social structure and it has to be constantly tested by virtue of its relation with that social fabric, the contextual not the social fabric but the contextual fabric that it has come out off.

And it has to be and it is modified it is engaged with what is, what has been studied and it becomes a part of that contextual, it eventually becomes a part of that contextual fabric. And that is when we say that this knowledge is really, the verify or this is true knowledge only when the line between what was old and what is new is diminished, it becomes very blurred and you don't know where the old knowledge has ended.

And the new knowledge has begun, that is when we say that it has really that new knowledge, has really been created so it adds to the context from which it was created and that is one way of resolving this problem. This lecture was very short and but I wanted this to be a separate lecture, so that the students can grasp what ever had been done earlier, I would suggest that you listen to this lecture, after listening to the previous lectures in one go.

So you listen to the previous lectures with then when you're listening to this please revisit the lectures on interpretivism and constructivism that was put up before this lecture and then you listen to this lecture and that will sort of form a complete whole about the paradigms, from which we paradigms used for qualitative inquiry, so that is all we have time for thank you very much for listening, we will continue with some more inputs on qualitative inquiry in the next lecture.