



# Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes (Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods)

By Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, Dvora Yanow

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Research design is fundamental to all scientific endeavors, at all levels and in all institutional settings. In many social science disciplines, however, scholars working in an interpretive-qualitative tradition get little guidance on this aspect of research from the positivist-centered training they receive. This book is an authoritative examination of the concepts and processes underlying the design of an interpretive research project. Such an approach to design starts with the recognition that researchers are inevitably embedded in the intersubjective social processes of the worlds they study.

In focusing on researchers' theoretical, ontological, epistemological, and methods choices in designing research projects, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow set the stage for other volumes in the *Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods*. They also engage some very practical issues, such as ethics reviews and the structure of research proposals. This concise guide explores where research questions come from, criteria for evaluating research designs, how interpretive researchers engage with "world-making," context, systematicity and flexibility, reflexivity and positionality, and such contemporary issues as data archiving and the researcher's body in the field.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow's *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* is not a "how-to" book nor is it a philosophical meditation on the differences among methodologies, though both of these elements are present. Rather it is a book about "the good" and "the other," the criteria we use to evaluate what counts as "research" in social science, and the politics of categorization. . . . It is an important and eminently readable book that deserves a wide readership among researchers, grant reviewers, journal editors, and graduate students."

-**Thomas J. Catlaw**, for *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*

"Schwartz-Shea and Yanow answer all the questions that pester and unnerve fieldworkers, in language that is understandable and with examples that make all the complex meanings clear. Their book will help both novices and experienced researchers find their way to believable and unassailable results."

?**Howard S. Becker**, author of *Tricks of the Trade* and *Writing for Social Scientists*

"*Interpretive Research Design* offers essential guidance for students and scholars who want to reach beyond the confines of positivist inquiry. In clear, engaging prose, the authors explain how to develop the key elements of an interpretive study and communicate them effectively to reviewers and readers. The authors, both leading figures in contemporary debates over methodology, offer perspectives on research that are consistently insightful and occasionally (wonderfully) provocative."

?**Joe Soss**, University of Minnesota

"*Interpretive Research Design* is a streamlined, clear, and important discussion of a topic of crucial concern across the social sciences. Bringing together interpretive principles and practice, this welcome book reminds us that scholars who study not rocks or genomes but people and communities require a commensurate understanding of science. Both interpretivists and non-interpretivists who seek greater familiarity with the tradition must read?and ponder deeply?Schwartz-Shea and Yanow's lucid discussion to learn what good interpretive social science looks, sounds, and feels like."

?**Edward Schatz**, University of Toronto

"Schwartz-Shea and Yanow clearly demonstrate the stakes, value, and reasoning behind interpretive research in the field. Both interpretivist and non-interpretivist political scientists desperately need this volume to achieve their potential for excellence in research: it guides interpretivists in their efforts to conduct sophisticated yet accessible research on critical topics across the range of subfields in the discipline, and it allows non-interpretivists to recognize equal excellence in interpretivist and positivist modalities and insights."

?**Cecelia Lynch**, University of California, Irvine

"*Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* is an indispensable handbook that should have a place on the bookshelf of every politics, policy and public administration scholar whose work is informed by an interpretive approach. More importantly, in regards to shaping the future development of these social scientific disciplines, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow's text should have a place on every Research Design and

Methods syllabi. That way, regardless of their methodological persuasions, students will become as familiar with the practice of interpretive social science research as they are with alternative approaches."

- **Richard Holtzman**, Bryant University, Smithfield

#### About the Author

**Peregrine Schwartz-Shea** is Professor of Political Science at the University of Utah. **Dvora Yanow** is Guest Professor in the Communication, Philosophy, and Technology sub-department, Faculty of Social Sciences, at Wageningen University. Together, they are co-editors of Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn and created and run the "Methods Café" at both the American Political Science Association and Western Political Science Association annual meetings. They are also researching Institutional Review Board (and other ethics review committee) policies and their relationships with field research.

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