INTRODUCTION

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MAPPING THE JOURNEY

Social sciences encompass technologies for generating knowledge; as such, they shape and are shaped by cultural ideologies, concepts, conditions, and processes. The use of cartography as a metaphor in the title, and throughout the book, alludes to geographies of power expressed in technologies for generating knowledge. Early maps, as a technology for creating knowledge, served merchants engaged in trade as well as nations engaged in the colonial expansion of empire. In both contexts, maps might be understood as textualization of power struggles—maps have supported both real and symbolic forms of control.

Early maps produced not only redrawn boundaries in the service of empire but also *a language of conquest* that was needed to create new social orders through genocide, enslavement, and colonization. Discourses of conquest and discovery provided a means to reduce entire civilizations to "savages" and to define ancient homelands as "new territories." Regardless of real-world knowledge, maps remained Eurocentric ideological expressions of power for centuries. Indeed, maps began to acquire geographic proportion only in a postcolonial

world. In the Western traditions of science, where the language of "discovery" has been foundational, maps were an early metaphor for knowledge production.

> Traditional epistemology is consistently defined in geographical terms—knowledge is surveyed and divided into fields, topics (from *topos*, or place), provinces, domains, realms, and spheres. Implied in this subdivision of epistemological territory is a mastery or dominance over knowledge, as the terms "subject" and "discipline" make evident. Thus knowledge in the Enlightenment tradition is represented metaphorically as a territory that can be unproblematically encompassed, mapped, and viewed empirically and objectively. Moreover, this knowledge can be framed, by the philosopher, in an objective and literal language—a language that denies any difference between the word and thing, between map and territory. (Mitchell, 2007, p. 2)

The classical map metaphor began to shift in the early 20th century. By the late 20th century, it had transformed into a site of poststructural critique of both classical and modernist epistemology. Poststructural map metaphors highlight the subjective and political experience of mapmaking as well as the constructive processes of reading. If sun and light were the primary metaphors of Classical and Enlightenment epistemes—and biological and mechanical tropes definitive of the Modernist episteme—the map becomes a formative and performative metaphor of postmodern epistemes (Mitchell, 2007, p. 26). The map metaphor in this book emphasizes the ways that social research goes well beyond merely representing social realities and suggests both the impermanence of boundaries and subjective nature of understanding. *Cartographies of Knowledge* examines how forms of knowledge are made true by social science—it challenges both the production of knowledge and the meaning of science.

Cartographies of Knowledge begins with a distinction between methodology (the logical frameworks of research design) and methods (techniques for acquiring data) and presents a critique of method-driven research that is proficient at applying techniques for acquiring and analyzing data but not responsible for politics on which those techniques are premised. Despite rich literature in research methodology, it is possible to learn, and to use, social research methods without *ever* considering their philosophical/theoretical foundations—which has profound implications for the production of knowledge.

To the extent that social sciences treat the philosophical foundations of research as tangential abstractions, contemporary research paradigms carry unnoticed historical commitments within them. The analyses in *Cartographies* demonstrate some of these historical commitments. I argue that, despite

significant efforts to move beyond the philosophical foundations of the natural sciences, techniques of data collection and analysis have kept analytical processes of qualitative research tethered to a 19th-century philosophy of science.[1] This has created odd analytical crosscurrents in social research and truncated the ability of qualitative research methods to apprehend profound changes in social life and routine relations of power and privilege.

A number of big questions run through this book. The first is the fundamental question of *ontology*. Ontologies are theories about the nature of existence. As such, they address the question of what can be known. Yet ontologies are not motivations or causal explanations for how we develop research methods. Indeed researchers' emotional and intellectual investments often induce particular ontological views about the nature of the social world. It may be helpful to consider a primary ontological change in the social sciences. The pursuit of social laws once served as the intellectual compass that oriented the development of social research—scholars, certain that fixed laws governed social life, borrowed analytic frameworks from the physical sciences that had been used to ascertain laws that govern physical matter. Few social researchers today believe that fixed laws govern social life. Social research has been through an ontological shift. However, methods premised on this earlier ontology remain cornerstones of social science research. What other assumptions about the nature of the self and social life remain sequestered in the methods that scholars use today?

Ontological questions are fundamental to social research. All research is anchored to basic beliefs about how the world exists. For example, to what extent is the world objectively real? Socially constructed? What is the relationship of the unconscious to social life?[2] The answers to these, and other ontological questions, constitute the foundations of social inquiry yet dominant social science protocols generally direct researchers away from such philosophical pursuits and toward more pragmatic concerns of systematic data collection—as if data exist independently and need only to be collected properly.

The neglect of philosophical foundations in social research results in ontological assumptions that function as untheorized truths. Ontological

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[1]This is a reference to René Descartes, whose philosophy gave rise to logical positivism in the 20th century. Although subsequent scholars, such as those in the First Vienna Circle, elaborated upon logical positivism, the theoretical foundation of logical positivism—indeed of all social science research—can be traced back to the philosophical premises established by Descartes.

[2]Arguably, the most substantial obstacle posed to social research is the unconscious. In order to be ethically responsible scholars, "we cannot be tied to the conceit of a fully transparent self"— our own or others' (Butler, 2005, p. 83). Yet by and large, social sciences have been unprepared to address issues of the unconscious in social life.

assumptions operate as ideologies that construct what can be known and on what terms—they constitute social research through the topics researchers take up. Ontological assumptions are extremely powerful, not just because they shape what counts as valid knowledge, but because they do so in ways that are not explicit and therefore not accountable, and not even easily open to doubt.

The second big question framing this book regards *epistemology*. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that takes up questions about *how* the world can be known—it concerns the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge. As such, it regards issues of belief—assertions and propositions about how the world can be apprehended. How can we produce knowledge about the social world? Under what conditions can we know what we know? Epistemology can be understood as a *justificatory account* of the scientific production of knowledge. To recognize epistemology as a justificatory account of knowledge production is to recognize as well that values, ethics, politics, and power are intrinsically and inseparably infused in the production of knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Yet scholars are seldom well trained in epistemology; rather, in mainstream social science programs, students are likely to study techniques of data collection and analysis but to inherit broad epistemological assumptions that render core aspects of inquiry a matter of common sense. In vernacular usage, common sense refers to sound, uncomplicated judgment. However, Gramsci provided a more critical understanding of common sense as shared knowledge that is so pervasive, so commonly held that it appears only tacitly as shared assumptions.[3]

Commonsense assumptions arise at every step of the research process as seen, but unnoticed, features of research. For example, the concept of evidence as some thing to which one can physically point is just such an assumption. It is an epistemological assumption that is treated as being so obvious that it passes without remark—as a matter of common sense. What other kind of evidence could there possibly be in science? However, for those trained in nonhegemonic social research that critiques epistemology, the notion of evidence is itself extremely problematic.

Processes of research, which are rendered as matters of common sense, are not easily available to doubt or critique. This is true in part because these assumptions are implicit, but also because common sense prepares one to think about the world in particular ways by excluding some topics from consideration, while making others appear obvious (Handel, 1982, p. 56). Historical arguments about the nature and importance of ontology and epistemology are embedded in

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[3]This is consistent also with an ethnomethodological usage of common sense.

commonsense assumptions about the research process. How each researcher conceptualizes the best way to apprehend the social world is clearly dependent upon what she or he believes about the nature of existence. What constitutes data? What constitutes a pattern in data? What does the pattern mean?

Whether or not researchers use the term epistemology, and regardless of whether or not researchers *understand* epistemology, we all draw from it each time we assert (or assume) that something counts as evidence. Every decision that we make about how to create valid knowledge about the world is an ontological and epistemological issue. There are two broad issues at stake in ontological and epistemological assumptions: One is the reproduction of hegemonic scientific discourse; the other is the production of knowledge about the social world. My intent is not to try to eliminate commonsense assumptions but to transform them into more critical modes of engagement.

The third big question for this book regards the fundamental issue of *how social research relates to social justice*. Even advocates for objective social research (as opposed to activist social research) often are concerned with issues of inequality. Researchers concerned with inequality face a broad range of philosophical questions. To what extent is a concern for issues of inequality the same as a concern for social justice? To what extent is a concern for creating inclusive research projects the same as a concern for social justice? Is social research for social justice simply a matter of exposing inequalities? Is it a matter of supplying remedies for inequalities? Of producing knowledge that empowers people to act in their own best interests? Does social research that is sensitive to issues of social justice require an ethic of transparency? Of co-participation? To what extent does social research for social justice require us to expose the machinations of power? All of these questions about social justice are important and deserve to be answered—multiple times and in multiple ways—yet this book does not take up the kind of analyses needed to answer them. Rather, *Cartographies of Knowledge* takes up a more rudimentary approach to social justice by exploring the politics of knowledge production; it addresses foundational issues that must be reconciled *before* these questions can be adequately addressed by a 21st-century social science.

Cartographies of Knowledge explores the liberatory potentials of social research by contesting the conventional oppositional binary between the philosophical and the practical. There is a tendency among persons concerned with the immediacies of inequality to dismiss philosophical concerns as belonging to the "ivory tower" of academia. However, in very important ways, this binary way of thinking counterproductively separates the techniques of data

collection from the philosophical foundations that direct the very possibilities of knowledge production.

If issues of ontology or epistemology seem remote or too erudite to be practical, consider the vast changes in social research that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s from feminist and critical race critiques of social research methods. Scholarship demands not only a thoughtfulness about who or what we study but also insight into the tools we use for conducting research—regardless of whether we care about social justice—yet even more so if we are committed to research that supports social and economic equality. To the extent that contemporary social science holds an emancipatory promise, it is a promise that cannot be fully realized unless it can account for the most intractable forms of privilege that social life produces. At the same time, social science must be able to grasp new forms of social relationships and knowledge that emerge through technological and global changes.

Concerned both with effective research and issues of social justice, I locate the politics of knowledge production in relation to conceptions of subjectivity, agency, and experience. It is important to underscore that I do not attempt to *link* methodology or methods with an external theory. Rather, I work to *excavate* the theoretical foundations that already exist in social research paradigms in order to more fully understand their implications as resources for understanding culture, knowledge, power, and privilege. It is a beginning effort to explore the possibilities and potentials that arise from taking up the uneasy and problematic tensions among methods, methodology, and theory in the service of social research and social justice.

FAMILIAR INTELLECTUAL GEOGRAPHIES

The impetus for *Cartographies of Knowledge* came from three paradigmatic quandaries that arose quickly in my academic career: one regards ethics, power, and knowledge; one regards the study of routine relations of power and privilege; and one regards the relationship between social theory and social research. This nexus of these analytical problems form the intellectual foundation that both motivated and framed my thinking about this book, so they warrant some discussion.

Although discussions of research ethics are generally limited to the concerns of institutional review boards (IRBs), as a graduate student working on my dissertation, the IRB was the least of my ethical concerns. I interviewed a number of people who could not afford housing. In particular, I interviewed a

53-year-old woman who suffered from several serious illnesses and had recently gone through a divorce. As a result of these circumstances, she was unable to work, was living on Social Security, and was sleeping in her car. The combination of the car and Social Security made her both unusually wealthy, and particularly vulnerable, among people on the streets. She was the person everyone went to when they needed a lift to a clinic or money for medicine. At the same time, she was easy prey on the streets—her age, gender, visibly poor health, and comparative wealth marked her as an easy target. Although I did what little I could for her at the time, ultimately I left her to sleep in her car and went home to type up my field notes. If this were my experience with only one person, it would have been hard enough, but I spent long hours talking with people who were much less fortunate than the woman I describe.

I sought advice both from textbooks and a variety of senior scholars. In feminist scholarship, I found critiques of prevailing standards of ethical responsibilities regarding insider/outsider research (Zinn, 1979), critiques of ethnographic processes (Rosaldo, 1993; Smith, 1999), and more general critiques concerning the design of feminist methods (DeVault, 1999; Harding, 1991; Olesen, 1994; Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1983). This literature was both valuable and important but not adequate for addressing the pragmatic, ethical, and methodological quandaries that I faced.

Senior scholars consistently advised me to remember that I was in the field *to collect data* and that I needed to set better boundaries between me and the people I interviewed. Over and again, scholars reminded me that I could not fix the troubles I saw. Of course, I knew that I could not end systemic, chronic poverty—I could not even find affordable housing for one woman. I also knew that I was facing the opportunism of a broader system that actively rewarded researchers for turning away from the suffering encountered in the field. However, I faced more than "simple" careerism.

In the face of seemingly unsolvable conflicts, I began to think seriously about the vision of power I was asked to embody for the pursuit of knowledge. I eventually came to understand that social research ethics were not just a set of rules to protect the people researchers study. It seemed to me then, as it does now, that learning to be a scholar was a process of learning to be accountable to a different set of ethics than those I might use in daily life. Consider that as a researcher I was potentially accountable to the IRB for an ethic of doing no harm, informed consent, and so forth; I might even be called to acknowledge and analyze my research as a subjective process. But I was not ever accountable—in any way—for easing the suffering that I saw, for compensating people for their time,

or for contributing to the communities in which I worked. This is striking in two ways. First, it is notable that feminist developments in the ethics of social research have remained marginal to IRB protocols for more or less 50 years.

Second, this lack of accountability was striking because the enlightenment ideals of social progress and betterment were said to have shaped the formation of the social sciences. Certainly, the social sciences have a long and rich history of research of making visible the plights of marginalized people—yet this is quite different from having a rich history of helping to create a level playing field. One might argue that visibility is the first step toward equality; however, the social sciences have intellectual histories that are voyeuristic at times and colonialist at others. I began to think about research ethics not as a set of norms to which one must conform but as a set of conditions that produce the subject position of social researcher—the position from which it becomes possible to produce credible knowledge.

A 19th-century philosophy of social science directed scholars to treat the people they studied as objects—which we did through most of the 20th century. For this reason alone (and of course, there are many others), it should not be surprising that marginalized people developed a deep distrust of social researchers and social research (cf. Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Steinberg, 2007). The notion that scholars should mirror the physical sciences by treating people as objects was critiqued in the 1960s and, by and large, has been abandoned; but in the late 20th century, I found myself wondering about other cultural distortions embodied in the practice of social research. How do other aspects of a 19th-century vision of power remain embedded in contemporary research practices?

In *Cartographies of Knowledge*, I examine how commonsense assumptions embedded in the foundations of qualitative social research embody historical relations of power. Throughout the book, my analyses bring these assumptions to the surface for consideration. This critique joins with, and extends, recent feminist scholarship on social research methodologies (cf. Harding, 2007) by challenging the foundation's knowledge construction in mainstream, qualitative research.

The second intellectual quandary that inspired this book arose from the challenges that I faced when designing a study to apprehend routine relations of power. For example, the routine, or commonsense production of whiteness, as an *unmarked* category, leaves little or no empirical evidence in daily interaction or in media—precisely because it passes without remark. How do social researchers analyze what passes without comment? I consistently found that social science research methods could help me to examine oppression and

domination, but were poor tools for understanding the forms of privilege and power that routinely pass without remark in daily life.

A social scientist needs evidence—indeed a particular kind of evidence, something in a specific context to which one can point. While researchers can prompt interviewees to talk about whiteness (cf. Bonilla-Silva, 2003), analyzing whiteness in media and in unprompted conversation or interaction poses an arguably insurmountable challenge within the existing paradigms of science. All *routine* relations of power and privilege pass without remark—this is the measure of how deeply routinized such relations are in a culture.

Social researchers know that whiteness, as an unmarked category, has profound importance in social interaction and in media representation—yet it consistently escapes empirical analysis. Social science is not prepared to enable scholars to examine the effects of what isn't expressed. On the one hand, a reader must ask, should it be? On the other hand, this problem directs us back to an analysis of the politics of knowledge production. If social research is not yet capable of fully accounting for human experience, there must be something in our assumptions that alienates research processes from aspects of human experiences. In *Cartographies of Knowledge*, I demonstrate the strengths and limits of qualitative frameworks for being able to analyze routine relations of power. In this respect, my analyses join contemporary critical race scholarship on methodology (cf. Bernal, 2002; Denzin et al., 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2003a; Osha, 2005; Smith, 2004; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007; Twine & Warren, 2000; Zuberi, 2001; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008).

The third quandary that shaped *Cartographies of Knowledge* regards the relationship between theory and method. As a sociologist, I quickly encountered a schism between empirical studies of talk in the social sciences and theories of language/discourse in the humanities. When writing my first book, *Making Sense of Race, Class and Gender: Commonsense, Power and Privilege in the United State*s, I wanted to analyze commonsense assumptions embedded in social interaction and in popular media. The techniques available to me, as a sociologist, all concerned language use in a localized context: ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and variations of sociolinguistics. All of these analytical frameworks treat the speaker (or writer) as an autonomous individual, free to speak or write as she or he chooses—without considering how both history and culture shape the possibilities for speaking at any moment in time. By contrast, theoretical studies of language (e.g., the variety of styles of discourse analysis) in the humanities illuminate broader structures of language by pursuing the historical and cultural productions of meaning. Consequently these analyses tend to focus on how

personal agency is constrained. Theory is not bound to the concreteness of language use in daily life—it does not examine the specific practices through which people variously reproduce and subvert broader cultural discursive paradigms.

This distinction between theories of language and studies of talk, between theory and method, and between social science and the humanities seemed to me both artificial and unhelpful. Language use regards *both* individual agency and social constraint. Studies of agency must be grounded in local, material contexts, yet knowledge/power always exceeds the immediate moment. Knowledge/power is never a local event, although it has local expressions. Knowledge/power needs to be understood through its ability to travel across time and space.

The schism between social theory and social research that I encountered prevented a full analysis of knowledge, power, and agency. At the time, I addressed this problem by taking a heterodox approach that drew from both ethnomethodology and poststructural discourse analysis—other strategies have been effective as well (cf. Van Dijk, 1993; Watson & Seiler, 1992; Williams, 1999; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Yet the conceptualization of theory and methods as dichotomous binaries remains at the heart of social sciences. The continuing theory and method binary regards more than disagreements about the kinds of problems social theory or social research can solve. The theory/method binaries of existing paradigms and standards have made particular kinds of problems impossible to legitimately investigate. Indeed many researchers attempt to overcome limitations by combining analytic induction, symbolic interaction, and ethnomethodology with analytical frameworks drawn from the humanities. Ultimately, the robustness of social research is dependent upon its ability to allow for a variety of analytical paradigms and explorations. However, the social sciences generally remain reluctant to consider the methodological limitations that are bound to notions of evidence and discourses of science.

My experience in social research brought me to *Cartographies of Knowledge* committed to the belief that the possibilities of democratic knowledge production require analyses that can move beyond the limiting methodological, theoretical, and disciplinary positions that present dichotomous binaries such as theory/method, macro/micro, and structure/agency. In this respect, *Cartographies* contributes to scholarship that challenges traditional boundaries between method and theory in the social sciences (cf. Bjelic & Lynch, 1992; Cannella & Lincoln, 2004; Clarke, 2009; Cruz, 2006; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Lal, 2008; Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Saukko, 2003). *Cartographies of Knowledge* explores and critiques qualitative strategies for producing scientific knowledge within and across the social sciences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Scholars' abilities to conduct effective social research—with an eye toward social justice or not—requires a thorough grasp of the theoretical frameworks that direct particular techniques of data collection and analysis. We must understand more than the mapmaker's immediate tools of paper and pen, yet journals and grantors consistently reward scholarship that focuses on findings while completely neglecting the philosophical foundations of research. In dominant research practices, the underlying philosophy of science operates implicitly and unaccountably. This has profound consequences that will be explored throughout the book.

At this juncture, it may be useful to consider the simple observation that ethnomethodology and symbolic interaction are each understood as interpretive forms of research. Interpretive research takes "*human interpretation* as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world" (Prasad, 2005, p. 13). While scholars often use analytic induction with symbolic interaction and ethnomethodology, analytic induction is not an interpretive framework; nor must researchers use it with interpretive frameworks. Analytic induction stands on its own as a legitimate qualitative method—arguably the most common qualitative method. Consequently, it is particularly important to consider that qualitative research that does not account for the importance of human interpretation in social interaction arguably limits understandings of human behavior to a behaviorist framework of stimulus–response.

It has been a long time since social scientists have accepted a stimulus–response framework for social interaction. Social researchers broadly believe that people do not simply respond to what others say or do but to their *interpretation* of what has been said or done. Therefore it is important to consider the various ways in which standard analytic induction functions as an interpretive framework that is not made to account for its interpretations. To the extent that the social sciences do not acknowledge analytic induction as an interpretive framework, analytic induction is made to appear as an objective (realist) process for apprehending social facts. Yet nothing is less real than "realism." In mapmaking, the most simple distortions can have the most profound and lasting impact.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Cartographies of Knowledge is not intended as a "how to" book, nor is it intended as a definitive exegesis on qualitative research. Rather I intend, and

trust, that it will offer some thought-provoking insights with regard to com-monsense assumptions that researchers learn to make—and, into how these assumptions map a particular kind of social world by bringing particular rela-tions of power into view while obscuring others.

The framework of the book distinguishes between the range of techniques used for interpreting data and the techniques employed to produce credible social science claims. By breaking research into these dual functions of inter-pretation and authentication, the differences among analytic induction, sym-bolic interaction, and ethnomethodology come into sharp relief. At the same time, the assumptions embedded in processes of authentication are so system-atic that the analyses may feel surprisingly consistent at places.

Many scholars in the social sciences have tried to achieve sound analytic strategies for apprehending both routine relations of power and the intertextu-ality of social life by drawing from theoretical frameworks. While this impulse has produced, and continues to produce, important insights, the analyses of *Cartographies* demonstrate why these strategies are not enough. Any mature science needs to include a broad range of strategies and tools in order to be fully capable of responding to contemporary issues. Consequently, it may be useful to read the ensuing chapters, while thinking about potential paradigm shifts in the social sciences. To the extent that maps can never be identical with what they represent, it is important to keep in mind that distortion remains an implicit feature of all maps—including the metaphoric one being constructed in this book.

FURTHER READING

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