

10-1-2018

Reflecting on the Book of Alvesson and Skoldberg' Reflexive Methodology: New Insights and its Importance in Qualitative Studies

Jude L. Tayaben

Benguet State University, La Trinidad, jude.tayaben@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

Recommended APA Citation

Tayaben, J. L. (2018). Reflecting on the Book of Alvesson and Skoldberg' Reflexive Methodology: New Insights and its Importance in Qualitative Studies. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(10), 2261-2263.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3727>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



Reflecting on the Book of Alvesson and Skoldberg' Reflexive Methodology: New Insights and its Importance in Qualitative Studies

Abstract

In this book review, I explicate the importance of reflexive methodology in any qualitative studies. Bearing the standards, process and expected outcomes in applying the levels and principles in your study. I was able to grasp the significant methods of doing this whatever the philosophical underpinnings in once qualitative journey. The authors introduced four elements in reflexive research in details: systematic and techniques in research procedures; clarification of the primacy of interpretation; awareness of the political- ideological character of research; reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority. In so doing this method will surely lead us on how and to what extent becomes successful in applying the process of reflective reasoning and interpretation. This book implies on how it will address the methodological issues on reflexive methods in qualitative studies. The critical reflection as needed that we may learn from this is a very important aspect particularly among in the undergraduate and graduate level engaged in qualitative studies.

Keywords

Reflexive Research, Qualitative Method, Reflexivity, Research Procedures

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Reflecting on the Book of Alvesson and Skoldberg' *Reflexive Methodology*: New Insights and its Importance in Qualitative Studies

Jude L. Tayaben

Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines

In this book review, I explicate the importance of reflexive methodology in any qualitative studies. Bearing the standards, process and expected outcomes in applying the levels and principles in your study. I was able to grasp the significant methods of doing this whatever the philosophical underpinnings in once qualitative journey. The authors introduced four elements in reflexive research in details: systematic and techniques in research procedures; clarification of the primacy of interpretation; awareness of the political-ideological character of research; reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority. In so doing this method will surely lead us on how and to what extent becomes successful in applying the process of reflective reasoning and interpretation. This book implies on how it will address the methodological issues on reflexive methods in qualitative studies. The critical reflection as needed that we may learn from this is a very important aspect particularly among in the undergraduate and graduate level engaged in qualitative studies. Keywords: Reflexive Research, Qualitative Method, Reflexivity, Research Procedures

Introduction

The context of identifying and using reflexivity and reflective process in doing a qualitative research is an important aspect in doing such a method. There are different varieties of reflexivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These include ethnomethodological ethnography as text, social science studies of the natural sciences, postmodern sociology, critical phenomenology and hermeneutics. As espoused by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2018) on the different uses of reflexivity or reflection which typically draw attention to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer. Further, they mentioned that “serious attention is paid to the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written.”

Defining and Describing Reflexive Research

Accordingly, empirical research in a reflective mode starts from a skeptical approach to what appears, at a superficial glance, to be unproblematic replicas of the way reality functions, while at the same time maintaining the belief that the study of “suitable (well-thought-out) excerpts from this reality” can provide an important basis for a generation of knowledge that opens up rather than closes and furnishes opportunities for understanding rather than establishing “truths” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018, p. 11). This book will drive us—readers and qualitative researchers—to being conscientious and keen in paying attention to the details of what we are doing in the conduct of studies. From conceptualization to

methodological to empirical analysis and discussion of results to dissemination and publication—all are important parts of using the method. As the authors said in regards to multiple realities, “It opens up the generation of knowledge” and the “opportunities for understanding” the phenomenon. In defining and reflecting, the description of reflective method found in this book was indeed well thought out and leads us to suit whatever method we use in the conduct of qualitative studies.

Another aspect of their (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018, p. 11) description of reflective methods, it has two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection. Interpretation comes to the forefront of the research work. This calls for the utmost awareness of the theoretical assumptions, the importance of language and pre-understanding, all of which constitute major determinants of the interpretation. The second reflection turns attention “inwards” towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context.

It is crucial, no matter what qualitative methods we use, to carefully interpret data gathered.

Lastly, an important reminder when doing reflective method is studying the main thrust of that approach by *trying to stimulate critical reflection and awareness in the first instance as regards to qualitative research*. Empirical material—interpretations referring to “reality”—remains important, but we must proceed with care and reflection, pondering a good deal more upon what the empirical material means and why we make these particular interpretations before forming any opinions of reality as such (Alvesson & Skolberg, 2018, p. 12). Indeed, having those critical reflections in everything we do in qualitative research will benefit both the researcher and the participant in the process and outcomes. I always require my mentee doing qualitative studies to always submit field diaries which will serve as reflection notes. These reflection notes are needed as a guide and reminder: telling your strengths and weaknesses; it is most important in the process of analysis and interpretation of data and as a way to prevent biases as a researcher.

The Four Elements in Reflective Research

The authors discussed in detail the four currents of methodology and philosophy of science which they regard as important sources of inspiration: empirically oriented currents, hermeneutics, critical theory and postmodernism. These four orientations indicate the reflective areas in which a researcher should be engaged—regardless of the specific methods he or she prefers. In summary, the orientations of methods may consider the following as their reference in the discussions: systematic techniques in research procedures; clarification of the primacy of interpretation; awareness of the political-ideological character of research and, lastly, reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority.

As qualitative researchers, we always bear in mind these methods in reflecting, a continuous reflecting before, during and after doing a research. What is striking here is the last element which focuses on the representation of the problem interest and something about authority or power. The questions which you may ask include: *Who owns the data? How about the issue of interpreting the data? Who has “more” authority in interpreting data? Is it the researcher alone or with the participant?*

The authors mentioned how to do reflective research studies. This is to pay attention to its importance, consider processes and the possible effects of doing and applying reflection from the start of a study. Also attend to the conceptualization of your research interest (proposal) and the appropriate methods, empirical analysis, and the interpretation and the discussion of data.

From their text (p. 16), the authors indicated the different ways of structuring our thinking on methodological issues and pointed out some types of reflexive research by giving more weight to certain research questions and the knowledge interest. They explain what to keep in mind when applying this reflexive research. Some researchers (maybe new or old) have to point out this significant component in qualitative research by accepting the insights written in this book. Importantly, it is on how it will influence us in doing so. At the end of a research endeavor, in everything we do, it will always require us to continuously reflect on whatever positive outcomes and guidance may unfold.

Conclusion

Most parts of this book are imperative. This will serve as a basic tool of doing reflection or being reflective in the sphere of qualitative studies. Maybe to others it is very textual, with fewer examples, but this is a good book for starters like me as a guide to doing reflective research from time to time. Thus, it is essential for us young researchers to be mindful in the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative methods we used. Consider reflexive methodology as an anchor in our philosophies that we believe in and the methods we use. This book primarily works on the methodological issues and framework in doing qualitative studies, especially among the undergraduate and graduate levels.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Skoldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (3rd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology: Epistemological preliminaries*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Author Note

Jude L. Tayaben, PhD, RN is currently teaching research methods, nursing informatics and adolescent health in the undergraduate of the College of Nursing, Benguet State University, Philippines. His research interests are nursing instruction, informatics, adolescent health, disaster and climate change, including qualitative methodological issues. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: jude.tayaben@yahoo.com.

Copyright 2018: Jude L. Tayaben and Nova Southeastern University.

Article Citation

Tayaben, J. L. (2018). Reflecting on the book of Alvesson and Skoldberg' Reflexive Methodology: New insights and its importance in qualitative studies. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(10), 2261-2263. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss10/2>
