**Interpretive Methodologies and Methods Conference Group**

**Business Meeting 2015**

**Parc 55 Hotel, SF, Hearst Room**

**Friday, 4 September, 6:30-7:30 pm**

**Minutes**

The meeting was convened by Ido Oren (University of Florida), Executive Committee Chair. Approximately 20 people attended.

1. Report from this year's program chair: Doug Dow (University of Texas at Dallas):

IMM was allocated 1 panel. I received 4 panel submissions and 2 paper submissions, plus one offer to serve as chair/discussant. All four panel proposals were co-submitted to Qualitative Methods, and one paper proposal was co-submitted to Migration and Citizenship. IMM co-sponsored one panel with Qualitative Methods. It accepted QMMR’s request to co-sponsor five additional panels that were not submitted to IMM but which fit our program. IMM also sponsored the Methods Café (which does not count toward our allocation) jointly with QMMR.

1. Report on Short Course: “The Methods Studio,” Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 2, 2015, from 1.30-5.30, organized by Dvora Yanow (Wageningen University), Peri Schwartz-Shea (University of Utah), and Sarah Parkinson (University of Minnesota); report from Peri Schwartz-Shea:

IMM held a successful Short Course at APSA 2015. This year’s focus was “The Methods Studio – Workshop + ‘Crit’: Data Access and Research Transparency from an Interpretive-Qualitative Perspective.”

The Short Course enrolled approximately 18 participants – with some attending one or the other of the two sessions (including some walk-ins). The workshop on DA-RT was lively, with a presentation by *Perspectives on Politics* editor Jeffrey Isaac explaining why his journal will not sign-on to DA-RT. Other presenters included Timothy Pachirat (UMass Amherst) and Sarah Parkinson, whose 2013 *APSR* paper served as the case example for discussing some of the problems DA-RT poses for interpretive research—in her case, conducted under such circumstances that archiving data would breach confidentiality agreements made in the field and potentially subject participants to danger. Many of the critical conversations started at the Workshop continued and reverberated throughout the rest of the conference.

The second part of the Studio, the “Crit,” was based on presentations of research plans from three researchers—spanning the ranks from graduate student to assistant to associate professor—focusing on questions concerning interpretive methods and methodological issues in their respective projects. Ideas and citations were suggested by many participants, showing once again the value of the “crit” as a learning device for everyone present.

1. Award presentations

* Hayward Alker 2015 best paper award [presented by Ernie Zirakzadeh, for the committee]

Presented (in absentia) to **David L. Jones**, a Ph.D. student at SUNY Albany, for “Culture in the Court: Explaining Bowers vs. Hardwick through Frame Analysis.” The paper, which was self-nominated, was presented at the 2014 Law and Society Conference. The award citaton is attached as Appendix 1.

* Award Committee: Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, University of Connecticut, Chair; Jillian Schwedler, Hunter College; Nicholas Rush Smith, City College of New York.
* Charles Taylor 2015 book award [presented by Gary Herrigel, for the committee]
  + Presented to **Davina Cooper**, University of Kent, UK, for *Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces* (Duke University Press, 2014). The award citation is attached as Appendix 2.
  + Award Committee: Gerry Berk, University of Oregon, chair; Gary Herrigel, University of Chicago; Paul Amar, University of California, Santa Barbara.
* The Grain of Sand Award was not given in 2015.

1. Members’ announcements

* Book series co-editors Peri Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow reported that two new volumes have been published recently as part of the “Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods.”
* *Analyzing Social Narratives*, Shaul Shenhav (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)
* *Elucidating Social Science Concepts: An Interpretivist Guide*, Frederic Charles Schaffer (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

Additionally, two volumes are expected this coming year:

* Timothy Pachirat, *Ethnography and Interpretation* [working title]
* Lee Ann Fuji, *Relational interviewing for social science research:An interpretive approach*

Another, on grounded theory and its pragmatist roots, by Jörg Strubing (University of Tübingen, who led the workshop part of the Methods Studio in 2013) is due to the editors in the Fall 2016.

* The job market: Some announcements were made concerning job openings of particular interest to IMM members and participants searching for jobs.

1. New business

* Data Archiving—Research Transparency (DA-RT): The IMM group has made concerted efforts to articulate the methodological reasons that the initiative, led by “Skip” Lupia and Colin Elman, to have political science journals commit to the announced standards of DA-RT should not be adopted wholesale in its present form. The Executive Committee sent letters to editors of key journals who had not yet signed the initiative, as well as to those who had already signed on, outlining these reasons, supported by four essays published in the Spring 2015 *QMMR Newsletter* (by Timothy Pachirat, Elisabeth Wood and Sarah Parkinson, Katherine Cramer, and Andrew Davison) and the Spring 2015 editorial by *Perspective on Politics* editor Jeff Isaac. In addition to this year’s Short Course, this initiative was the subject of several panels and other activities at the APSA meeting, including a well-attended roundtable organized by John Ishiyama, lead editor of *APSR*, at which Sarah Parkinson, Peri Schwartz-Shea, Joe Soss, and Lisa Wedeen offered critiques. We had a lively discussion of strategies for continuing to make sure that people are aware of the methodological problems with the DA-RT initiative.
* The future of the group: Due to lack of time, we did not have an extended discussion of this agenda item (e.g., should the group seek section status? join forces with the new Political Epistemology section led by Jeff Friedman? go out of existence?). In lieu of discussion, Ido Oren made brief remarks. He said that the need for the existence of the IMM Group is as strong as ever (as evidenced, for example, by the strong demand for the Methods Café and the leadership position group members took with respect to DART). The Group, however, can only continue to exist if its friends and supporters “chip in” and agree to participate in its activities. He urged the friends and supporters in attendance to respond favorably when asked to make contributions, such as serving on award committees.

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**FYI:** Resources for interpretive researchers

**Interpretive Methodologies and Methods (IMM) Conference-Related Group @ APSA**

APSA Connect Page [APSA membership not required, but registration required]: <http://community.apsanet.org/Communities1/ViewCommunities/GroupDetails/?CommunityKey=2d63fe2c-d008-4f65-9e26-99781fb0b047> OR via [www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org)

**Interpretation and Methods (I&M) listserv**

Irregularly active; venue for posting questions, inviting discussion, exchanging information about workshops, conferences, publications, etc.

<http://lists.digital-discourse.org/listinfo.cgi/interpretationandmethods-digital-discourse.org>

APPENDIX 1

**2015 Hayward R. Alker Student Paper Award**

presented to **David L. Jones**, SUNY Albany Ph.D. student

for his paper “Culture in the Court: Explaining Bowers vs. Hardwick through Frame Analysis,” presented at the 2014 Law and Society Conference; self-nominated

**Citation**

The selection committee had a difficult time reaching a decision because all five of the nominated papers were gracefully written and theoretically bold, and addressed important political phenomena. The future of interpretive research looks bright indeed.

Still the members of the committee agreed that among the very strong submissions, Jones’ paper, “Culture in the Courts,” stood out in terms of its theoretical acuity and methodological sophistication.

Stitching together diverse theories of culture (ranging from the more instrumentalist and positivist ideas of “framing” by Snow and his colleagues, to the very different epistemological and ontological notions of Foucault), Jones analyzes the clashing interpretations of politics and society that were expressed before and during recent court decisions regarding homosexuality. He clearly and convincingly shows how American politics are permeated with interpretive moves and counter moves, and documents the practical importance of institutionalizing some interpretive frames over others.

Especially impressive is the careful construction and systematic presentation of the argument. Jones repeatedly translates complex analytic ideas (such as “legal archaeology”) into accessible prose. He creatively draws on a wide variety of cultural outlets, from court opinions, to editorials and news stories in mass-circulation magazines, to speeches and pamphlets by social-movement activists attacking and defending homosexuality. The result is a detailed, colorful portrait of clashing beliefs in America today.

The members of the selection committee invite the audience to join us in celebrating David Jones’ insightful study.

Award committee:

Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh (University of Connecticut, chair)

Jillian Schwedler (Hunter College)

Nicholas Smith (City College of New York)

APPENDIX 2

**Charles Taylor Award for Best Book in Interpretive Methods**

Presented to Davina Cooper for her book

*Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces*

Duke University Press, 2014

**Committee Comments**

The committee found *Everyday Utopias* a remarkably fertile and creative book. Turning away from the dystopian tendencies in critical political science, Davina Cooper asks what we can learn from real utopian practices. Her method is not, however, to examine the conditions for the failure or success of utopian experiments. Rather, she is interested in examining the practical dilemmas that emerge through utopian efforts to either reject or alternatively embrace norms, practices and ideas that have meaning within mainstream political, social and cultural life. The dilemmas in Utopia often provide larger meaning and unlikely possibility for concepts like property, democracy, accountability and learning, which their uses in mainstream contexts (or in critical political analysis) do not reveal.

The results are disarming, matching cases to concepts in surprisingly illuminating ways. Among her cases, Cooper uncovers utopian practices in the state by probing the ways it uses emotional and sensuous idioms. She explores A.S. Neil’s Summerhill School’s democratic pedagogy through its conceptualization and practice of property rights. A women’s and trans bathhouse in Toronto becomes the site to examine the ethics of care as a practice fraught with the quotidian dilemmas that emerge when things break down. And Cooper views Speaker’s Corner in London’s Hyde Park as a contact zone for what she calls “market play” – a site of sampling and tasting, where skills, pleasure and the assessment of produce are shared. By focusing on the conceptual life of unconventional spaces, Cooper shows us how to practice political science in a novel way. Her work imaginatively engages, rather than divides, empirical and theoretical, normative and descriptive inquiry.

Award committee:

Gerald Berk (University of Oregon, chair)

Gary Herrigel (University of Chicago)

Paul Amar (University of California, Santa Barbara)