

Camic, P.M., Rhodes, J.E. & Yardley, L. (Eds.) (2003) **Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design**. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association (315 p.)

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In the preface to this ambitious book, the editors note that one of its most striking features is that it is one of the first books on qualitative methods to be published by the American Psychological Association. That is striking indeed, if one compares psychology with other disciplines where qualitative research has existed for many years. Anthropology, sociology, education, cultural studies, media research and many other fields have long considered qualitative methods as integral to the development of new knowledge. But psychology, especially in the United States, has lagged behind this general development of qualitative research in the social sciences. The present volume is an attempt to remedy this situation, and as Steinar Kvale observes in the final chapter, entitled *The Psychoanalytical Interview as Inspiration for Qualitative Research*, psychology does not have to look to other disciplines for significant qualitative approaches, for many areas of psychological knowledge were originally developed through qualitative research, even though this part of psychology's history is largely unacknowledged. Freud's psychoanalysis can be understood as one kind of rigorous qualitative research involving interviews over the course of often many years. While anthropologists are aware that fieldwork often demands years of observation, participation and conversation, psychologists, if they have used qualitative methods at all, have tended to do "tourist psychology" as Kvale says, based on brief random encounters, but taking up the psychoanalytic legacy might enable psychologists to obtain deeper insights into the human situation that matches that of anthropological fieldwork.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part of the book introduces qualitative research in general, and discusses different epistemological issues. The second part presents the reader with different concrete approaches to qualitative research. I shall start with the first part. Here, the editors, Camic, Rhodes and Yardley, begin by introducing some of the hard questions in qualitative research, including the difficult one of separating qualitative and quantitative analysis in the first place: what is the difference? Initially they say that quantitative research is concerned with *quanta* (and asks: how much?) whereas qualitative research is concerned with *qualia* (and asks: what kind?). Thus we can say that qualitative researchers listen, observe, interview, discover what something is, whereas quantitative researchers count, measure, calculate and administer questionnaires. If this is the case, then all quantitative research presupposes qualitative, I believe, since we must know what something is, its kind, if we want to measure it. I believe this is a fair way of presenting the matter, and the difference can be illustrated by way of a rather simple example of cups (inspired by Giorgi & Giorgi in chapter 13): We can measure and count cups, how large are they? How many do we have? How much can they contain? Our measurements can be more or less correct. This is quantitative research. But if we want to know what cups *are*, we will have to ask other questions, viz. qualitative

ones: What are cups essentially? What are they good for? How do they function in human lives and cultures? A basic answer could be that they are pieces of equipment for maintaining a body of otherwise disobedient liquid in order that we might drink. This answer is qualitative. It tells us about the qualities of cups, their *qualia*. The cup-example has also been discussed by Paul Stenner (in his “Heidegger and the Subject: Questions Concerning Psychology” *Theory & Psychology*, 8(1): 59-77, 1998). Stenner claims, quoting Heidegger, that quantitative inquiry in this sense cannot be *true*, it can only be *correct*, whereas qualitative research when done properly can be true. Elliot Eisner, in chapter 2 of the book, claims that the same understanding of ‘truth’ goes for pieces of fiction. He quotes the writer Wallace Stegner: “For a work of fiction to be great it has to be true”. It does not, however, have to be correct (if it were, it would not be fiction but fact). I find the distinction between truth and correctness intriguing, and it would be interesting to see it developed in a discussion of the potentials of qualitative and quantitative research, respectively.

Eisner, in chapter 2, understands qualitative research as an art, which is a theme he has worked with for some years. His chapter is inspiring, and it seeks to augment non-scientific forms of knowing, emphasising the pragmatics of knowledge. The core question to ask to qualitative research is, according to Eisner: What can I do with the study? Furthermore, he urges researchers to become *writers*, i.e. artists. Joseph McGrath and Bettina Johnson follow up on the quantitative-qualitative issue in chapter 3, and they include an interesting discussion of forms of causality. Aristotle articulated four forms of causality: formal (quality, essence), final (goal), material (physical make-up) and efficient (mechanical cause), but modern quantitative psychology only focuses on the last form. McGrath and Johnson argue that qualitative researchers in contrast to quantitative ones become able to include the other forms of causality in their research, which will open up to new questions and answers. Finally, Jeanne Maracek closes part one of the book with a chapter, *Dancing Through Minefields*, which tries to say in general what qualitative research is, and what it is not. She ends by arguing that we should give up the phrase “the scientific method”, since it is false that science is unitary (and it is likewise false that it *ought to be so*).

Part two of the book lets leading exponents of qualitative research present their own perspectives, which in many cases are perspectives that have been developed by these very authors. Jonathan Potter (ch. 5) is a good example. Potter has been a key figure in the development of discourse analysis in psychology, and thus of discursive psychology. Potter states that discursive psychology is not a method; it is rather a perspective that includes meta-theoretical, theoretical and analytical principles. He then does a fine job of articulating the principles behind. But the initial statement is important, I think, and it is often overlooked in qualitative research. If one merely understands qualitative research as a *method*, then one is likely to just substitute one kind of method, the quantitative, with another, the qualitative, without questioning the basic premise that often lies behind: that we obtain truth through methods alone. That this premise can (and should) be questioned has been argued by such important writers as the newly deceased Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose *magnum opus*, *Truth and Method*, articulated the idea that, in the human and social sciences, we are acquainted with the objects of research prior to any method, and that we should carefully consider the nature of

the object before deciding on which method to use. Some have suggested that a more accurate title of his book would have been *Truth* or *Method*! If we have the cup-example in mind, we can understand the intelligibility of that suggestion: Knowing what the cup essentially is does not really require a method in any interesting sense of the term, whereas measuring and counting cups necessarily does. If one approached the cup with a pure method in mind, would one ever get to understand its “cup-ness”? We could count and measure cups forever without knowing what we were counting and measuring. From a rather different perspective, anthropologist Jean Lave has claimed, in an interview with Kvale, that it is nonsense to say that anthropologists have a method. The only instrument that is sufficiently complex to understand human existence is another human being, she says. The modernist separation of *method* from *theory* claimed that methods determine truth but overlooked the fact that all methods are deeply intertwined with theory and basic assumptions about the subject matter. For that reason it is very welcome to find in the present book that many authors resist the temptation to treat qualitative methods in isolation from the theories that they belong with: Potter discusses discourse theory (and not just discourse analysis), Murray narrative theory (and not just narrative analysis) the Giorgis phenomenology, and Kvale psychoanalysis. Still, many other qualitative researchers repeat the modernist error of thinking, along with the positivists, that methods alone can determine truth.

Next, Michael Murray has a fine chapter on *Narrative Psychology and Narrative Analysis* followed by the chapters by Donald Ratcliff (on video methods), Karen Henwood and Nick Pidgeon (on grounded theory), and Carol Gilligan and co-workers on what they call the *Listening Guide*. The Listening Guide is a method that attempts to capture the polyphonic voices of interviewees. I was not acquainted with this method before, but it appears to be an interesting instrument based on Freud’s clinical method and Gilligan’s own well-known work on relational identity and moral development. Different researchers read the transcripts multiple times tuned into different aspects of the text, and each of these steps is called a “listening”, instead of a reading, in order to underscore the active participation of both the teller and the listener. Then follows Michelle Fine and co-workers’ chapter (on participatory action research with a case example from a prison), and Jessica Hoffman Davis on portraiture as methodology. Here, “the research portrait” is likened with an artistic portrait; both researcher and artist are found to balance elements of context, thematic structure, relationship and voice into an aesthetic whole, Davis argues.

Finally, Peggy Miller, Julie Hengst and Su-hua Wang have an important chapter on ethnographic methods in psychology, where they pick up the thread from Wundt’s *Völkerpsychologie*. This is followed by Amedeo and Barbro Giorgi’s chapter that lays out the phenomenological programme in philosophy and its adaptation to psychology, an adaptation that in large parts is due to Amedeo Giorgi’s decades of work in psychology. This chapter is one of the best, with a clear structure explaining the difficult principles of phenomenology. The Giorgis make the closing observation that science should not be equated with quantification, but with the most precise knowledge possible, and that can rightly stand as the *credo* for the book as a whole. The concluding chapter is Steinar Kvale’s, which has already been addressed, and it contains many significant points about psychoanalytic interviewing as qualitative

research from Freud himself to its influence on Piaget, Adorno (on the authoritarian personality), the Hawthorne studies and market research. Kvale invites therapists, with their unique knowledge of the human situation, to bring some of their knowledge forth in research, and academic researchers could on their side learn from the practical knowledge of therapists.

Probably the only way to learn qualitative methods is by doing qualitative research. If qualitative research is a craft or even an art, then the whole point of writing a textbook on qualitative methodology becomes suspect. One does not become a craftsman by reading about one's craft. Even less does one become an artist by studying art theory or aesthetics. Scientific research, however, has often been seen as completely distinct from the fields of craftsmanship and art. In scientific research it has often been suggested that a formal method and abstract rules exist that will guarantee truth. The logical positivists thought that such a formal method involved designing experiments that would enable one to verify statements through direct sense experience. Popper thought that one should make bold conjectures and try to falsify them. With the rise of a new kind of philosophy of science, however, where the name of Kuhn looms large, it became clear that no single, formal, syntactic method is involved in scientific progress. There is no clear-cut answer as to what to do when 'theory' and 'data' are in conflict, for example. Should one revise the theory (as Popper argued) or should one discard the data due to bad instruments of measurement? People sometimes give up the theory, and sometimes (perhaps more often) the facts. What is important for good researchers is knowing what to do in such situations, and this does not involve formal methods, but a kind of non-formal knowledge, which is more situated, based on experience and unfortunately extremely difficult to convey in written form. Therefore I believe that the knowledge one has to have in order to be a competent researcher resembles what one should know in order to be a moral human being. This kind of knowledge was called *phronesis* by Aristotle. This kind of knowledge does not take a stand against formal rules, because rules are clearly important in moral life as well as in science. But *phronesis* is concerned with when and how to *apply* formal rules to concrete situations, and here no formal rules can help us, because then we would have to keep on stating rules forever. We must admit an interpretive moment of action, which cannot be captured in the language of rules, methods and representations. The competent researcher needs much more than syntactic rules, methods and text-book representations, because, as Kuhn emphasised, subtle forms of *seeing* and *acting* are involved in scientific practice.

Should one then give up the practice of representing scientific research in text-books, and instead urge students to enter laboratories and other sites of scientific practice? Yes and no. If the argument for the non-formalizability of scientific practice is valid, then it becomes very important for students to enter the laboratories to observe and learn. But the analogy with moral knowledge might help us here, because Aristotle, who stressed that moral knowledge unlike mathematics cannot be taught in text-book form, still spend his time writing and teaching about ethics and politics. What was his point, and did he not contradict himself? No, because he understood the importance of articulating what we already know on a pre-reflective level. For that reason he thought that only people that were morally good to a certain extent were able to understand his lectures. People without the proper moral character wouldn't know what he was talking about. One should first learn the *practice* of morality before one could

understand the *theory*. Similarly one could argue that good text-books on research methods are able to articulate what good researchers already know, but one must already know some research if one is to profit from the knowledge conveyed. Fortunately, in the case of qualitative methods we all know some of it, because we all have some experience with conducting conversations, asking questions, observing people doing things, and extracting the meanings from complex social interchange. This is a fundamental human skill that is to be cultivated if one wants to become a competent qualitative researcher.

I am certain that the present textbook will stimulate students to learn, and researchers to improve, the craft or art of qualitative research. It articulates well what competent researchers do, and the best thing about it is that it exemplifies consistently throughout the chapters: It does not just say what one should do, but the different authors nearly always give examples of good research. Such casuistry removes some of the air of paradox related to writing theoretically about something that is a practice (i.e. craft or art), viz. qualitative research. The many examples let the readers step in the researchers' shoes, and one becomes the researcher vicariously. Some of the chapters are almost "how-to" chapters (such as the Giorgi chapter), while others give more of a birds-eye view of qualitative research. All in all it is a very impressive book, well-edited and all the chapters are thorough and well worth the reading.