

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research, Sixth Edition*. Sage. 2016, 323 pp. \$62.40 paper (9781452271002)

D*esigning Qualitative Research* is meant for social science students training in qualitative inquiry and for professors who keep textbooks handy to check trends. The main purpose of this text is to elaborate on the steps involved in qualitative inquiry including ethics proposals, research design, data analysis, and exposition. The authors C. Marshall and G. Rossman indicate that the field of qualitative inquiry has undergone “seismic shifts” (pg. xvii) since the first edition of *Designing Qualitative Research* was published, and that this version of the text is updated accordingly.

In the first few chapters, Marshall and Rossman discuss how to get started with qualitative research. They argue that before any study commences the researcher should test both the feasibility and significance of the proposed research. Marshall and Rossman suggest researchers need to be trained in theory and methods but should also be aware of criteria for quality (or value, or success) in qualitative research. Next, the authors summarize genres of qualitative research, which they divide into major and minor genres. The major genres include ethnography, phenomenology, case studies, and grounded theory. The major genres refer to longstanding frameworks for inquiry, whereas the minor genres in this categorization tend to be newer and more explicitly critical. The minor genres are too numerous to elaborate here but include performance-based, participatory action research, feminist, and critical race inquiries. Next Marshall and Rossman offer a discussion of criteria for quality in qualitative research. They reject notions of validity, reliability, and generalizability, which they associate with positivist and quantitative inquiry, instead focusing on credibility, dependability, and transferability as replacement points of reference.

Other chapters assess how to use theory in qualitative research, how to engage in sampling and recruitment, how to conduct different types of data collection and data analysis, including visual methods, and how to write about empirical materials. In the conclusion, the authors return to debates about criteria for quality in qualitative research, making an argument for why credibility, dependability, and transferability should replace validity, reliability, and generalizability.

These chapters do a good job of covering the basics of qualitative research. However, there are several points in *Designing Qualitative Research* that I disagree with or find lacking.

First, Marshall and Rossman suggest that “the proposal is an argument” (11). The authors mean that during the proposal stage the author should try to figure out what their main point will be by the end of the research. I do not feel it is appropriate to finalize or even formulate an argument prior to collecting and analyzing any empirical material. In qualitative methods courses, I have always taught students that the proposal is a set of best guesses and hunches about conceptual, methodological, and empirical contributions of a research project. It is not necessary or even fruitful to try to come up with an argument before research is conducted. To do so strikes me as deductive and opposite of what qualitative inquiry is mainly about.

Second, Marshall and Rossman only offer a few pages on internet research. I was looking for a lot more on that subject in this new edition of *Designing Qualitative Research*. This is because many students today are interested in internet research, such as online participant observation. Yet there are many ethical and practical issues to be aware of that deserve to be covered in greater depth. Even for projects that do not rely on online participant observation, there is increasingly an online dimension to generic social practices that must be investigated. This means internet research is more and more relevant to all sociologists.

Third, the authors do not mention newer, notable approaches to data production and analysis that are now prominent in Canada and the United Kingdom, including listening guide narrative analysis and institutional ethnography. Fourth, there is a mishandling of some key methodological ideas. Though institutional ethnography is not mentioned, Dorothy’s Smith’s notion of a “problematic” (70) is described. Yet this is done in a way that is inconsistent with Smith’s own approach. Finally, Marshall and Rossman lack a critical understanding of ethical review boards. The authors do not comment on the controlling, prohibitive aspects of some ethics review boards and policies.

Though Marshall and Rossman do review innovations in autoethnography and digital storytelling, in the end I was left wondering whether this text fully explains what the “seismic shifts” (xvii) in qualitative research are and why these shifts are relevant to all sociologists. Nevertheless, scholars from across the social sciences who engage in qualitative inquiry should add this text to their library.

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