

# Reviews / Comptes rendus

## Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry

by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln  
(3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2008, 427 pages)

It is difficult to find something new to say about a book that has become an essential resource to those engaging in research using qualitative theories, methods, and practice since its first incarnation as part of the larger *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994). Now in its third edition, Denzin and Lincoln's *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* continues to encompass a broad range of topics inherent to qualitative theory and practice. It gives direction to the reader regarding the landscape of qualitative inquiry while at the same time illustrating the interdisciplinary use of these theories and methods.

This third edition begins with an energetic introduction in which the editors present the five phases in the history of qualitative theories. This in itself is no easy feat as the phases can be followed sequentially yet are not easily demarcated as they also co-exist within present areas of study. The authors then present key qualitative methods, including discussion of resistance to qualitative studies, taken from other forms of empirical inquiry such as schools of quantitative theories and methods. In presenting a picture of this strategy of inquiry, issues of contentious discourse, conflicting theories, and subsequent divisions amongst qualitative scholars are also discussed. The introduction then goes on to highlight topics featured in the following 11 chapters with regard to their relevance to both the history and continued development of qualitative methods and practices. The editors explore how qualitative inquiry is situated within the still predominantly objective and/or scientifically based systems of research; they recognize the difficulties one may encounter in pursuing qualitative research as well as the successes of using such strategies. When necessary they revisit chapters from previous editions of the book to make connections that illustrate the changes and advances that have occurred over time. They seek to continue to illustrate who or what is studied in this manner, reflecting on the methodologies best suited to each and why. In doing so, they successfully expose the reader to the vast complexity of qualitative strategies.

The editors bring together contributions from key scholars in qualitative research, providing sometimes divergent topics of study, yet always providing real-life research examples of various methodological approaches. Collectively, the chapters cover research from its beginning stages of research design, to how to undertake qualitative research, and to the ethical

foundations, motivations, and results derived from such research. The flow of topics moves logically as chapter topics progress from discussing initial issues of research design and proposal writing to discussing the use of case studies, narrative, and writing up research findings. The final few chapters then present methods in detail through the use of actual research projects. Each chapter within the book includes an extensive list of references, which is of enormous benefit to readers who want to explore the topics further.

An early chapter by Julianne Cheek, "The Practice and Politics of Funded Qualitative Research," sets the tone for the overall premise of the book as it presents a practical, realistic, and most importantly, a reflexive look at the morals and politics concerning the acquisition and allocation of monies for qualitative studies. Barbara Tedlock's chapter, "The Observation of Participation and the Emergence of Public Ethnography," and Bryant Alexander's "Performance Ethnography: The Reenacting and Inciting of Culture," both addressing the reflexive approach, are interesting to read as one can see the possibility for innovative research methods and fresh ways to present research findings. However, chapters such as John Beverly's "Testimonio, Sublaternity and Narrative Authority" and Kemmis and McTaggart's "Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere" can be a tedious read at times given their layers of dense theory and thick description. However, they provide working examples of research undertaken while one participates *in situ* with a group or cause.

Although the subjects of the chapters may at times seem incongruent with each other, as a whole they present a solid foundation for the main principles of qualitative inquiry. This edition of the book also contains a list of suggested readings, which is presented on a chapter-by-chapter basis. The editors recommend other related articles and chapters for exploration of each chapter's specific topic. The editors also provide a readers' guide, a useful tool that allows the reader to locate the chapter containing methodologies, techniques, or theories that interest them or are pertinent to their own research.

Despite, or perhaps because of, Denzin and Lincoln's exhaustive coverage of all things regarding qualitative strategies, this is not a book for beginners in the field. The authors cover a diverse range of topics and write in a manner that assumes the reader has a working knowledge of terms, language, and methodologies of the qualitative research field. Whether standing alone or as part of the three-volume set, whether read from cover to cover or consulted for specific chapters, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* will provide an abundant source of useful material for both those already immersed in the field of qualitative studies or for those who aspire to become more knowledgeable.

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