

Limb, Melanie & Dwyer, Claire (Eds.) (2001). **Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers. Issues and Debates.** London: Arnold.

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The aim of this book is to give the student of geography an image of qualitative research, not only of the final product but the messiness of doing research. The authors are mostly human geographers, sociologists, or anthropologists. The contributions bear witness to the many parallel developments within social science. Thus the terms “everyday geographies”, “feminist geography”, “poststructuralist geographies” etc. will be familiar to any social scientist today. The different chapters of the book reflect a reaction to what is called: “the mechanistic approach of positivism”. It is fascinating how currents in one academic discipline can spill over and fertilize another field and tradition. For instance cultural geographers and anthropologist have probably seen clearer than most psychologists, the importance of the concept of “social space”.

Though most of the cases in the book come from “cultural geography”, thematically they could equally well have come from “cultural psychology”.

Throughout the book there is great concern with how research is put into action: how research is used and misused. For instance Tracey Skelton, tells about doing her Ph.D., and how her research could be used for racist purposes. She tells us how this gave her a crisis of production, since why publish one’s research if it can be used for disagreeable purposes? Her answer was that it is better that conscientious researchers with second thoughts about their work publish rather than leave the scene to other social scientists of lower moral. Her discussion of what the researchers themselves learn about being in the field and interacting with different people is very interesting, indeed, and illustrates the book’s concern with all aspects of the process of producing qualitative research.

In general there are some interesting accounts about making meaning in other peoples’ talk. For instance Peter Jackson takes the reader through a tour de force of interpreting one’s qualitative data. He states that interpretation should not only pay attention to what is actually said but moreover to silences, beaks, exclusions etc. This is often overlooked in much non-discursive qualitative methodology. He gives examples of interpretation of going from an initial list of meta-themes derived through transcript analysis to discursive repertoires derived through grouping and regrouping. In another highly readable account of interpretation of text, Mike Craig writes about the double hermeneutics of both having to determine the meaning of what others said and of conveying this meaning to others.

All in all it is a quite interesting book, without being outright outstanding. The book could easily have been more radical. This criticism may seem unfair since when scientific professions cross there will be something in it, which is new and surprising for some, and boring and overrun for others. There are views and illustrations in the book, which are frankly trivial to a psychologist. For

instance, when Robina Mohammad writes that what is viewed depends on the perspective of the perceiver, and illustrates with the famous gestalt-like figure of the old woman and the young girl. Or when Susan Smith proposes the interesting view that qualitative research is a mode of interference. She then turns to pragmatism and psychoanalysis to find theories accounting for people's representations of the world implicated in how it is conceived and constituted. Mead and Freud are hardly the first places a modern psychology would look to find answers to such matters. Another example is the chapter by Audrey Kobayshi. She describes a study on Japanese emigrants in Canada. Even though the subject matter and its presentation are intriguing, it never gets to the point where it becomes theoretically groundbreaking. Kobayshi points to the link between social constructivism and materialism, but the ramifications of such a connection are sadly never elaborated. However, the strength of the book is that it shows the dilemmas and problems arising from the messiness of qualitative research instead of pretending it to be an orderly, linear affair.