John T.E. Richardson (1996). **Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences.** Leicester: PBS Books. 203 s.

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This book is not brand new but still worth a review alone for the reason that it focuses specifically on qualitative research in psychology. Since the 1960s, there has been a considerable growth of interest in qualitative research in the social sciences but less so in psychology. The receptiveness and impact of qualitative research in psychology have been modest and sporadic, however it began to win broader acceptance and influence during the 1990s. The aim of the book is to introduce some of the main qualitative research methods and discuss their usefulness in application to problems in psychology. The book takes a moderate self-critical yet supportive stance towards discussing the principles, applications, and implication of qualitative research in psychology. Especially refreshing is the many-facetted treatment of the delicate question of the relation between quantitative and qualitative research in psychology. The book avoids the widespread tendency towards trench digging between qualitative and quantitative research, expressing explicitly that "qualitative research need not exclude quantitative research" (p. 9). On the other hand, the book dismisses a simple pragmatic annexation of qualitative methods as no more than an early stage in traditional 'scientific' research. The book makes it clear that there are genuine differences of principles that separate quantitative and qualitative methods (Woolgar, chapter 3), but also that there are huge differences internally between different qualitative methods (Hammersley, chapter 12).

14 chapters that are separated in three main parts make up the book. Most of the contributors are psychologists; half of them are associated with the Department of Human Sciences at Brunel University, and all are UK based researchers. As such, the book reflects the status of qualitative research in British psychology in the mid 1990s, which in no way makes it uninteresting as viewed from Continental Europe in 2005. Problems such as how to create a language of qualitative research, how to raise the acceptance of qualitative research internally in psychology departments and externally in scientific journals, and how to secure proper training and supervision in qualitative research at all levels are still highly relevant issues.

Part one of the book includes two chapters by Steve Woolgar and Karen Henwood that locate qualitative research within the broader context of current debates about scientific methods and scientific knowledge. The chapter by Steve Woolgar (chapter 2) explicates and challenges the typical assumptions of 'science' and 'scientific method' in the light of recent empirical findings in the field often referred to as 'science and technology studies'. These are the assumptions of a natural, objective, and real world 'out there' that determine scientific knowledge, which is discovered through application of a unitary set of methods, procedures, and quality standards by the mental activity of individual scientists. Woolgar argues that these typical assumptions summed up as an "ideology of representation" (p. 24), need to be

addressed before we turn to discussing the choice of applying quantitative or qualitative research methods. The chapter raises a critique of representational realism and argues for re-conceptualizing the dominant image of the cognizing individual as centre of action, thinking, knowledge, and learning. These arguments are especially challenging to psychology that in its prevailing forms is intimately related to the cognizing individual. The chapter by Karen Henwood (chapter 3) gives an informative description of the principal strands on the quality-quantity distinction that are to be found in qualitative research. It is made plainly clear that qualitative and quantitative perspectives are neither mutually exclusive nor absolute distinct paradigms. There is no one-to-one relationship between quantity and epistemological realism, on one hand, and quality and constructionism, on the other hand.

Part two is the backbone of the book describing four types of qualitative method – protocol analysis, grounded theory, ethnography, and discourse analysis. It is noted by the editor that these methods are selected because of interest and relevance to psychologist (p. 8). It may wonder why interviewing is not included, which to my knowledge is the prevailing qualitative research method in psychology. Each method is introduced in one chapter devoted to the theoretical background and a second chapter devoted to its practical implications. This distinction works well, giving the reader opportunity to focus the reading directly upon either theoretical or practical interests.

The chapters by Ken Gilhooly and Caroline Green (chapter 4-5) focus on theoretical and practical aspects of protocol analysis. More specifically, it concerns verbal protocols that result from instructions to think aloud during a task. Participants are instructed to verbalise overtly all the thoughts they would normally keep to themselves. It is not the participants' task to explain or verify the cognitive strategies behind what they are doing, neither to report their elementary sensations as in the classical method of introspection. Verbal report is a research tool of cognitive science for studying the cognitive content of thinking. The theoretical chapter discusses problems such as the relation between verbal and non-verbal codes, serial vs. parallel thoughts, and how to maximise the accuracy and minimize the reaction of thinking aloud upon the content of thinking. The unquestioned assumption is that thinking aloud mirrors internal cognitive processes of symbolic activity that are the basis of thinking.

Chapter 6 by Nick Pidgeon outlines the origin of grounded theory that was first developed by Glaser & Strauss, and places the approach in contemporary debates on science and scientific methods in psychology. The original positivist empiricist epistemology of grounded theory, most obviously identified in the notion of 'discovering grounded theory from data', is questioned, and a constructivist revision is suggested. Some practical aspects of grounded theory, with focus on gathering, coding, and analysis of qualitative data, are described in the chapter by Nick Pidgoen & Karen Henwood (chapter 7). The description is clear and reveals good examples on how the grounded theory approach has been used by psychologist.

In chapter 8, Christina Toren describes the theoretical background of a contemporary approach to ethnography 'at home'. The described approach is open, phenomenological

reflective, free of predetermined hypothesis, and based on participant observation. This approach is suggested useful in application to problems of understanding processes through which subjects are constituted in societal relations. As such, it poses a challenge to psychology that typically takes the individual in society for granted as the basic unit of analysis. Janet Rachel in chapter 9 on the practical implementation of ethnography sets focus on her experiences of doing an ethnographic study of a computer design office. The chapter gives a lively personal account of the essentially relational and reflexive practice of ethnography.

Jonathan Potter's introduction (chapter 10) to discourse analysis is just as much an introduction to constructionism. The chapter is kept in a clear question-answer style that gets across the basic principles of constructionism and its relation to the 'method' of discourse analysis. The introduction to discourse analysis sets focus on the notion of interpretive repertoires – the flexible local use of interpretive resources, which differentiates from the more Foucaultian notion of 'discourses'. Chapter 11 by Rosalind Gill explicates the rejection of language as simply a neutral means of reflecting a neutral world. Through the analysis of a magazine interview on the decision to become a vegetarian it is illustrated how the text draws on diverse interpretive resources in order to render vegetarianism sensible.

Part three is coined the evaluation of strengths and limitations of qualitative methods in contemporary psychological research. Martyn Hammersley (chapter 12) examines the relationship between qualitative and quantitative research along a spectrum ranging from paradigm loyalty to methodological eclecticism. The well-performed argument is that the distinction between categories of qualitative versus quantitative research is rather artificial, and that the differences within each category are more significant than those between them. It is concluded that we need a more subtle set of distinctions relating to different facets of the process of doing research. The chapter itself takes up this challenge nicely e.g. with a delicate outline of distinctions between empirical generalization and theoretical inference. Estrelle King's chapter 13 is coined the question of reflexivity in qualitative research, a topic that was discussed in this newsletter (nos. 35-36) by Annelise Goldstein and Lene Tanggaard. They both stressed the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research, but disagreed upon principles and implications of reflexivity. Tangaard taking a situated practice perspective argued for reflexivity upon examining the subject positions in the interview situation. Goldstein invoking a psychoanalytic perspective argued for reflexivity upon the researchers self and his/her reactions in the interview situation as a source of information. Estrelle King, like Goldstein, sets focus on the use of the self in qualitative research through an affective reflexivity. However, the theoretical perspective is not psychoanalytic, but a post-structuralist perspective on the self as social fragmented and always in flux, which seems much closer to the situated practice perspective advocated by Tanggaard. I can warmly recommend this chapter to anyone interested in the debate upon reflexivity in qualitative research interviewing. The final chapter by Jonathan Smith (chapter 14) addresses what seems to be a rather randomly selected number of evolving issues for qualitative psychology. The discussion on qualitative psychology as a science has nothing new to add neither to the field of qualitative psychology nor to what is already written in the book. The same can be said

about the discussion on how to assess the validity and quality of qualitative research. The challenge of reflexivity is an intriguing and yet unresolved problem in qualitative research, as such relevant, but still treated more comprehensible in other chapters. Finally, the question of software packages for qualitative analysis is touched upon. This is a topic notoriously known for its short-lived relevancy.

I find this book recommendable both as an advanced textbook and as a source of inspiration for researchers thinking and working with qualitative research. The book is generally well edited with a good coherent structure. My only queries are that the quality of the chapters is somewhat uneven, and that the method chapters devoted to practical implications are generally too compact and sketchy written to really help the novice researcher in the research process. Moreover, the book could have paid closer attention to the fundamental challenges posed to mainstream psychology by most of the qualitative research methods described in the book, and to the exception of protocol analysis as a research method closely related to mainstream cognitive psychology.