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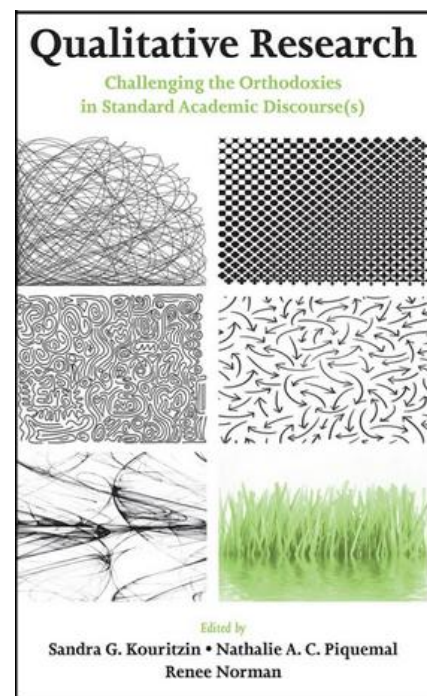
Kouritzin, Sandra G.; Piquemal, Nathalie A.C. & Norman, Renee (Eds.) (2009). *Qualitative Research: Challenging the Orthodoxies in Standard Academic Discourse(s)*. NY: Routledge.

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March 23, 2010

The cover of *Qualitative Research: Challenging the Orthodoxies in Standard Academic Discourse(s)* features six images patterns that manage to appear both chaotic and organized at the same time—five are black and white line drawings, and the last looks like bright green grass growing over water. Visually interesting and thought-provoking, they are a perfect metaphor for the unorthodox qualitative methods described in the text. The 18 chapters in this volume describe vastly different topics and methods, but they share a common message: qualitative researchers should make their work accessible to the reader while also taking risks with its format.



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Challenging the orthodoxies for these authors generally means representing data in formats that differ from traditional research articles, including poems, journals, plays, and novels. Many will ask: but is it research? This issue is timely and perhaps becoming less unorthodox and more accepted in the mainstream in light of a recent *Educational Researcher* issue (November 2009) and later, individual pieces such as one by Holley and Colyar (2009), devoted to discourse on narrative research on narrative analysis.

A useful feature of the book appears at the beginning and lists the key concepts and research approaches from the chapters. This summary could serve to aid a teacher of qualitative research methods who wished to use selected chapters to illustrate various elements of unorthodox qualitative research. An investigation of this summary also reveals another guiding theme of the book: it is about making metaphors and blending disciplines and concepts that may not seem complementary at first glance, such as research and musical composition, geography and poetry, and language loss and motherhood.

The book is divided into two sections: Part I is entitled “The Doctoral Journey: Reflections on Disruptions and Interruptions” and Part II focuses on “After the Journey: Reflections on the Afterlife of Research.” Many chapters not only discuss unorthodox methods, but are also untraditional in their structure. Various chapters are shot through with poems, and one chapter includes an excerpt of research-as-play. These researchers often construct metaphors to describe the phenomena they or their students investigate, such as comparing educational space to a fluid to describe a collective class qualitative research project.

The more successful chapters describe some universal challenges, such as tensions in dissertation committees, which are often magnified when researchers use unorthodox methods. The goals of the text are clearest in the chapters from the editors, although there are several other notable chapters, many of which strike a balance of description of methods, process, and reflection. As a doctoral student who studies preservice teachers, I was most drawn to the

chapters in the first section of the text about the doctoral journey and those which related to education or identity. Readers from different career stages or areas of interest may feel differently, but I will share here the chapters that emerged as the strongest for me as a reader.

Included in this group of notable articles are Suhanthie Motha's description of her use of participant teas—rather than traditional qualitative observations and interviews—where she and the participants responded to the casual setting and each other and which added a new dimension to the author's positionality. Marion Crook's article on her dissertation-as-novel on a Native American culture includes excerpts and raises important questions about how we tell participants' stories; Renee Norman's piece on her work with women's autobiographical writing—including her own—was more compelling than other pieces that also addressed analysis of the researcher's own writing.

Crook is a published novelist and Norman's biography in the text notes that she is an award-winning poet, writer, and teacher, and this adds an interesting new dimension to considering unorthodox qualitative research, particularly the use of narrative: to put it bluntly, talent matters. It is not enough to be creative and take risks; the challenge of making the work more accessible to the audience is only fully realized when the final piece is skillfully constructed. Another piece that is well constructed is Bernard Andrews's article, "Transforming Multiple Research Perspectives, which aligns the history of educational research with the process of composing music and concludes with a description of Integrated Inquiry; however, much of the methods described are much more traditional than the rest of the text. Andrews's article would be an ideal, brief introduction to qualitative research throughout history for a new student of these methods.

In additional notable chapters, Karyn Cooper considers the role of emotion in research and narrative, building on a narrative fragment of her brother, who was institutionalized as a child. Erika Hasebe-Ludt's use of research journal excerpts provides interesting insight into her thought

process as she considers intertextuality in research; this chapter would be useful to teach about writing research journals in a qualitative research course.

The chapters that are less successful describe the process of conducting and writing up research in excessive detail and lack a broader application to the work of others. Some unorthodox work can inform the work of more traditional researchers, but reading some pieces can feel—for lack of a better term—like navel gazing. Many authors play with text, constructing words like re-search, re-membering, and restor(y)ing. While this strategy is interesting at first, it begins to feel overused, as it appears often in various pieces. Finally, some work feels slightly misplaced. One piece looks at the use of questioning as a teaching tool, but the topic and the methods used to study it, narrative inquiry and hermeneutics, do not seem very groundbreaking as described.

Chapters include questions to consider at the end, which would make the book or parts of it a good choice for use in qualitative research classes. The questions are occasionally weak, however, and could be supplemented or adjusted. Another interesting addition may have been an annotated bibliography of readings to extend the conversation that this book begins.

Like the editors, most of the authors are from Canada, which begs the question: is this kind of unorthodox presentation of research findings more prevalent in Canada as opposed to the United States? In any case, what is different about this book, as compared to most texts used in qualitative research classes, is that it's not just about the research, but about the process. More specifically, it's not about how to code or analyze qualitative data or write up one's findings, but about how people respond to doing it and how and why they do it in creative and unusual ways.

Those six images on the cover do not show a clear, straightforward path, but that is what makes them interesting. There is a life lesson here: we—especially in academe, and especially when it comes to research—are

always surrounded by people who want to do things a certain way. Some people will push against those norms. This book is for those people.

References

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About the Reviewer

Janine Davis is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Virginia. Her work as a secondary English teacher led to her current research, which investigates the ways that preservice teachers develop and present teaching personae.

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