

DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

3rd Edition



CATHERINE MARSHALL
GRETCHEN B. ROSSMAN

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Preface to Third Edition

Qualitative research methodology is maturing now, and this third edition addresses the advances and challenges presented by provocative developments and new applications. The book originally met the need for advice on designing such research, given the complexity, the flexibility, and the controversies of qualitative approaches. That need persists: Doctoral students, research managers, policy analysts, and researchers anticipating multimethod team research will find clear and direct guidance in our book. Now, qualitative designs are used in health behavior, education, urban planning, public relations and communications, sociology, psychology, management, social work, nursing, and more.

Originally, *Designing Qualitative Research* was written because qualitative reports were intriguing but mystical. Earthy, evocative ethnographies seemed to just appear by magic. Researchers and students had no guidance for imitating such work. A few researchers provided chapters or appendixes recounting their procedures. Texts extolled the philosophical stances and the cultural premises for qualitative research. We wrote this book to fill the void,

to provide specific advice on design. Then, and now in this third edition, we benefit from the research experience of those who first documented their systematic design and also from the probing questions of our doctoral students. Thus, we provide readers connections to the classics of ethnography as well as presenting the issues and design dilemmas of researchers with new questions for the new century. Furthermore, this edition demonstrates how to incorporate qualitative methodology with the challenges posed by postmodernists, feminists, and those who demand that research be directly useful to the researched.

The third edition provides vignettes to illustrate the methodological challenges posed by the intellectual, ethical, political, and technological advances affecting qualitative research design. New vignettes include, for example, researchers' political stance toward promoting democracy while conducting evaluations of community development, and critical theorists' puzzling over reporting research without colonizing those who allowed them into their lives. Because qualitative design is not linear, different pedagogical strategies are required; the vignettes, we hope, assist readers in transferring our words about design to applications in their own research.

Nothing keeps us attuned to qualitative research dilemmas more than the challenges our students present in classes and dissertations. We wish to thank the hundreds who have continuously pressed for innovative approaches and research questions fresh from real-life problems; many have graciously agreed for us to use their questions in vignettes. Finally, we, and our readers, benefit from the contributions of reviewers in scholarly journals and in anonymous reviews as well as from critical suggestions from our own students. In particular, we appreciate specific editorial contributions of Cindy Gerstl-Pepin and Dara Tomlin Rossman as we incorporated our substantial revisions for this new edition. We hope our efforts will continue to provide a practical guide, assisting researchers as they craft sound, thoughtful, and sensitive qualitative research proposals.

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Introduction

Qualitative research genres have become increasingly important modes of inquiry for the social sciences and applied fields such as education, regional planning, nursing, social work, community development, and management. Long dominated by techniques borrowed from the experimental sciences, the social sciences now present a sometimes confusing array of alternative research methods. From anthropology come ethnomethodology, ethnoscience, and the more familiar ethnography. Sociology has yielded symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School. Philosophers would have us engage in concept analysis, and interdisciplinary work has spawned sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, life histories, narrative analysis, and clinical methodology. The critical traditions and postmodern perspectives bring feminist research and critical ethnography as well as action and participatory research—often explicitly ideological with emancipatory goals, intended to radically change fundamental social structures and processes and to reconceptualize the entire research enterprise.

Each of these disciplinary traditions rests on somewhat different assumptions about what constitutes proper inquiry within the qualitative, or interpretive,