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Fourth Edition

Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography

Edited by
Iain Hay



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Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries.

Published in Canada by
Oxford University Press
8 Sampson Mews, Suite 204,
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 0H5 Canada

www.oupcanada.com

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South Melbourne, Victoria, 3205 Australia. Copyright © 2000, 2005 Iain Hay.
Third Edition published by Oxford University Press Canada in 2010.

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Qualitative research methods in human geography / edited by Iain
Hay.—Fourth edition.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-19-901090-5 (paperback)

1. Human geography—Methodology—Textbooks. 2. Qualitative
research—Textbooks. I. Hay, Iain, 1960–, editor

GF21.Q83 2016 304.2072 C2015-907565-3

Cover image: Jasper James/Getty Images

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Printed and bound in The United States of America

1 2 3 4 — 19 18 17 16

Boxes and Figures

Boxes

- 1.1 Oral Qualitative Methods in Human Geography 10
- 1.2 Dualisms Identified between Qualitative and Quantitative Methods 18
- 1.3 Paradigm Shifts and Research Methods in Geography from the Twentieth Century 22
- 2.1 The Research Diary as a Tool for the Reflexive Researcher 35
- 2.2 Sexism in Research 38
- 2.3 How to be Critically Reflexive in Research 42
- 3.1 Something There Is . . . 48
- 4.1 Example of Research Empowering Women 79
- 4.2 Example of Research Empowering Indigenous Peoples 83
- 5.1 The Origins of a Dissertation in Social Geography 97
- 5.2 Beginning a Career in Research on Migration 98
- 5.3 Components of a Research Proposal 100
- 5.4 Research Questions for a Health Geography Study 103
- 5.5 The Research Context 105
- 5.6 Thinking about a Research Methodology 107
- 5.7 Example of a PhD Timetable 108
- 5.8 Research Methodology for a Health Geography Study 108
- 5.9 Introducing the Proposal 111
- 6.1 Considerations in Research Design, Stage 1: Asking Research Questions 118
- 6.2 Considerations in Research Design, Stage 2: Selecting Cases and Participants 122
- 6.3 Considerations in Research Design, Stage 3: The Hermeneutic Research Circle and Checks for Rigour 126
- 7.1 Studying One Person: A Case Study of "Praxis" 137
- 8.1 Asking the Wrong Question: A Tale from Cabramatta 151
- 8.2 Formulating Good Interview Questions 153
- 8.3 Primary Question Types 155
- 8.4 Asking the Tough Questions without Sounding Tough 156
- 8.5 Types of Prompt 157
- 8.6 Interviewing—An Economic Geography Application 159
- 8.7 Oral Environmental Histories 161
- 8.8 Codifying the Rights of Informants 163
- 8.9 Finishing Sentences, Interrupting, and "Rushing-On" 167
- 8.10 Techniques for Closing Interviews 168
- 8.11 Voice Recognition Software and Interviews 171
- 8.12 Symbols Commonly Used in Interview Transcripts 172
- 8.13 Debates about Changing the Words: Vetting and Correcting 174
- 8.14 Field Note Files 175
- 8.15 Coding Interview Data: Five Suggested Steps 176
- 10.1 The Synergistic Effect of Focus Groups 205

10.2	A Sample Introduction to a Focus Group Session	214
10.3	Examples of Phrases Used in Focus Group Facilitation	216
10.4	Example of How Focus Group Results Can Be Written Up	220
11.1	Identifying the Archives	227
11.2	Approaching Archival Research	229
11.3	Digital Images	232
11.4	Assessing Evidence in Historical Geography	233
11.5	Questions to Ask of Documentary Sources	233
11.6	Changing Archival Practice: A Cautionary Tale	238
11.7	Researching in a Private Archive	241
12.1	Types of Questionnaire Questions	251
12.2	Guidelines for Designing Questionnaires	254
12.3	Guidelines for Designing Online Questionnaires	257
12.4	Examples of Invitations to Participate in Questionnaire Studies	258
12.5	Strategies for Maximizing Response Rates	267
14.1	Conversations to Join When Doing Foucauldian Discourse Analysis	291
14.2	Sydney as the "Gay Capital of the South Pacific": Choosing Texts for Discourse Analysis	295
14.3	Strategies for Investigating the Social Circumstances of <i>Authorship</i> in Which Discourse Is Produced	298
14.4	Strategies for Investigating the Social Circumstances of the <i>Source Material</i> in Which Discourse Is Produced	299
14.5	Strategies for Investigating the Social Circumstances of the <i>Audience</i> in Which Discourse Is Produced	300
15.1	Blurring Boundaries	317
15.2	The Gendered Field Site	321
15.3	Reading Community: An Observer as Participant	323
15.4	Gaining Access to a Field Site	324
15.5	Field Relations in an Observational Study	327
15.6	Talking and Listening: The Embodied Observer	328
15.7	Completing the Circle: Cultures, Theory, and Practice	331
17.1	The Importance of Attitudes to Relationships within PAR	353
17.2	Key Stages in a Typical PAR Process	354
17.3	Some Strategies and Techniques Used within PAR	355
17.4	Some Ways to Promote Participation in Geographic Research	360
17.5	Selected Geographers and Some of Their PAR Projects	361
17.6	An Example of Participatory Publishing	364
18.1	29 November 2003. After-School Program Observation Notes, Children's Urban Geographies Research	382
19.1	Removing the Writer—Third Person and Nominalization	398
19.2	Writing-In—Alternative Representations	408
19.3	Writing Fortress LA	410
19.4	Rethinking Redfern—Writing Qualitative Research	412
19.5	Auto-Ethnography: A Method for Reflexive Writing	414
20.1	For Successful Public Presentations	426
20.2	Using Structure to Communicate	427
20.3	For Success with PowerPoint	429
20.4	The Power and Credibility of Qualitative Research	431

Figures

- 7.1 Intersecting Domains of Inquiry 132
- 7.2 Case Study Selection, Sub-Units, and Context 136
- 7.3 Cyclical Modes of Exploration in Case Studies 139
- 10.1 Relationship between Focus Groups, Group Interviews, and In-Depth Groups 204

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Preface

Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography provides a succinctly written, comprehensive, and accessible guide to thinking about and practising qualitative research methods. On the basis of reviewer suggestions and changes in the field, this fourth edition has been revised and expanded to include three new chapters. The first of these examines feminist and Indigenous approaches; the second, visual methods; and the third, new media in qualitative research. The book is aimed primarily at an audience of upper-level undergraduate students, but feedback on ways in which the previous editions have been used indicates that the volume is of considerable interest to people commencing honours theses and post-graduate study, and indeed, some professional geographers with many decades of research experience have let me know—quietly in some instances—that they have learned a great deal from the previous editions. Chapters have been written with the dual intent of providing novice researchers with clear ideas on how they might go about conducting their own qualitative research thoroughly and successfully and offering university academics a teaching-and-learning framework around which additional materials and exercises on research methods can be developed. The text maintains its dedication to the provision of practical guidance on methods of qualitative research in geography.

Without realizing it at the time, I started work on this book in 1992 when I was asked to teach Research Methods in Geography at Flinders University in South Australia. I developed lectures and extensive sets of notes for my classes. I also referred students to helpful texts of the time, such as Bernard (1988), Kellehear (1993), Patton (1990), Sarantakos (1993), and Sayer (1992). All of these books came from disciplines other than geography or referred to the social sciences in general. It disturbed me that despite the renewed emphasis on qualitative research and the teaching of qualitative methods in the discipline, no geographer had produced an accessible text on the day-to-day practice of qualitative research.

In the meantime, during their regular visits to my office, publishers' representatives asked what sorts of books might be useful in my teaching. I repeatedly mentioned the need for a good text that dealt with qualitative research methods in geography. That message came back to haunt me when I was asked whether I would like to write a book on qualitative methods for Oxford University Press. I declined but offered instead to try to draw together the expertise and energies of a group of active and exciting geographers from Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand to produce an edited collection.

Of course, during the period when I planned the first edition of this book and fulfilled the terms of the publishing contract, a new group of research methods texts emerged! This group included Flowerdew and Martin (1997), Kitchin