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Reviews & Research of Note

# Two book reviews that focus on methodology critiques

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Research determines the future direction of all subjective disciplines. If academia ignored research, knowledge would become stagnant, and so would the infrastructure of our society. The issue of research, its boundaries, and techniques becomes more complicated in the area of social sciences simply because “no social science can ever be ‘neutral’ or simply ‘factual,’ indeed not ‘objective’ in the traditional meaning of these terms” (Myrdal, 1969). Questions, therefore, abound as to the meaning of science, approaches to understanding reality, and techniques of collecting data and validating claims. Debates formulate over concepts pertaining to ontology, epistemology, and methodology leading to dilemmas over philosophical, theoretical, and practical choices available for social science researchers. Two books reviewed in this issue try to make sense of this muddling and problematic process and reduce the unavoidable chaotic research journey. Both books reconstruct the process of research – “to analyze research strategies in a way that link researcher and researched ...” (Morgan, 1983: 41).

The first book, *Designing Qualitative Research*, by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, considers the various angles of qualitative methodologies that assist people in interpreting their external reality and reflecting on their experiences to create new knowledge. This 5th edition encompasses challenges and concerns of both conventional and “younger” research disciplines (i.e., gender, ethnicity, race, and sexuality), along with arguments pertaining to ethics and reflexivity. In her review, Yu Fu outlines the rationale of the book. She comments on the ability of the authors to engage with the latest issues like reflexivity, feminist theories, and cultural studies. She mentions that the authors discuss the process of strategic planning and moral implications of research design, time, personnel and financial issues, and elements of a successful research proposal. Different techniques of generating and analyzing qualitative data are also included. Yet, Yu Fu feels the book limits its readership by not actively engaging with various research philosophies pertaining to ontology and epistemology, both of which are of interest to novice researchers (i.e., doctoral students and researchers).

The second book, titled *Methodology: Who Needs it?* authored by Martyn Hammersley, considers the current state of methodology in social sciences and contrasts it with the authors’ concept of an ideal state for methodology. The book engages in the history of methodology, role of the social scientist, and newly generated interest in issues like criticality (i.e., critical research) and ethics. In her review, Nirupama Akella provides a comprehensive



overview of the entire book. She discusses the content of each chapter, remarking on the author's ability to explore various methodological issues effectively. However, she feels the book fails to discuss the "mixed research methods and triangulation, which embody the quantitative and

qualitative aspects of application, as well as the epistemological value of knowledge." Furthermore, she ends on a drastic note that "the book does not add anything" excitingly new or "suggest a novel way of thought and attitude towards methodology."

### References

Morgan, G. (1983). *Beyond method: Strategies for social research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Myrdal, G. (1969). *Objectivity in social research*. New York: Pantheon Books.