

Book review

**Carol Grbich: *Qualitative Research in Health*, 1999,
Allen & Unwin Ltd, St.Leonards, Australia, 312 pp.
ISBN 1-86448-568-X**

The book "*Qualitative Research in Health*" offers a practical introduction to the main theories and methods of qualitative research in the health sciences and is structured in four parts:

- part one "Theory and design";
- part two "Techniques of data collection";
- part three "Methodological approaches";
- part four "Interpretation, analysis and presentation of data".

Part one (of the books) comprises three chapters and tries to emphasize the approaches to the use of theoretical perspective in qualitative research: historical trends, quantitative-qualitative debate and ethical issues.

The first one consists of three chapters and explores definitions, historical trends and contemporary orientation in health research in a bold attempt to answer the question "What is qualitative research?". Chapter two "Theory in research approaches of the use of theoretical perspectives" looks at four general approaches to the use of concepts in qualitative research: driven, generating, postmodern and feminist approaches. Chapter three "Research design issues" examines the historical debates and current dilemmas surrounding research design.

The second part provides a detailed examination of "interviewing" and "observation" process which represent

the two major data-collection techniques. The part begins with chapter four "Interviewing" that attempts a broad sweep of the factors involved in this process with a high attention of "focus", "nominal" and "Delphi" techniques of interviewing. Chapter five "Observation" examines participant observation from the perspectives of researcher roles, processes, procedure and data gathering.

Part three focuses on a number of methodologies that have been used frequently in health research. Chapter six "Library-based methods" includes documentation, historical method (checking the documentation's authenticity) and discourse analysis (the study of language and written documentation). This is followed in chapter seven "Field-based methods" by an exploration of other approaches: ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, biography, memory work and case studies. Chapter eight "Action-based methods" explores evaluation and action research, exposing the different ways in which researchers are currently using evaluation.

The last part consists of three chapters that explore the major issues involved in interpreting, analyzing and presenting the data that have been collected. Chapter nine "Interpretation and analysis" examines the major issues in interpretation: framing the

Book review

data, the interpretive focus and the role of the reader. Chapter ten “Computer-assisted analysis” provides an overview of many of the qualitative computing packages available, a comment from program users and a critical assessment of what these may be doing to data. The final chapter eleven “Presentation of data” looks at ways of presenting qualitative data using visual displays, quotes, layering and alternative modes such as poetry, drama and dialogue.

The Grbich’s book “*Qualitative Research in Health*” presented a brief overview of the history, theoretical

bases, concepts, methodologies, processes, techniques and approaches to qualitative research with particular reference to its use in the area of health. This book is an ideal introduction for students, researchers and teachers, with useful reference for all the professionals across the health sciences.

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