



## Zadra, Cinzia

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### EWR 20 (2021), Nr. 4 (Juli/August)

Jasmin Donlic / Irene Strasser (Hrsg.) **Gegenstand und Methoden qualitativer Sozialforschung**Einblicke in die Forschungspraxis

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We live in an age of deep crises; the latest one, the Covid-19 pandemic, still grips us while we aspire to go through it without questioning paradigms, survey methodologies and approaches to knowledge. However, it is an exciting time to evaluate the qualitative methodology and explore its potential in advancing new investigations and critically countering the reservations still held against qualitative investigations. Above all, these reservations are embedded in the funding priorities attributed to so-called 'evidence-based research'. In the learning sciences and developmental psychology, qualitative methods are recognised for their ability to offer rigorous scientific solutions, adequately tracing human phenomena in time and space, and exploring these in an alternative way to traditional experimental research.

Many publications, especially in the German language, have led to new reflections and proposals and have testified to the growing maturity of qualitative methods in collecting, analysing and interpreting data, emphasising the need to tackle complex problems in human sciences creatively and innovatively. This volume, edited by Jasmin Donlic and Irene Strasser, fits into this strand of publications with originality and personality, placing qualitative research approaches within an academic dimension that is also attentive to its practical dimension.

Students and young researchers confronted with qualitative methodologies are often faced with over-specialisation, making it challenging to identify benchmarks and design curricula for teaching research methods. Donlic and Strasser highlight the extent to which students desire to approach new tools and a genuine interest in doing unusual qualitative research. They argued for the need to reiterate the rationale for qualitative research to run in parallel with the need for clarity about the aim, design and conduct of research. In this productive book, qualitative research intercepts academic practice and claims responsibility for not being satisfied with mere access to different methodologies and investigates their application to multiple contexts. This publication does not propose a mere examination of methods but also presents a multiplicity of projects to which they have been applied. Research design, context, subjects and processes allow one to come close to theoretical approaches, using methodologies by understanding research activity as a situational, creative and generative action. Therefore, it is not the demarcation and definition of methods that characterises this work but, above all, a research disposition, a critical relationship, a reflexive attitude always ready to question the relationship between the researcher and the subject and to understand people's feelings, thoughts and actions.

This volume's contributions fall within the fields of psychology and education sciences, which focus on the protagonists' voice and their interpretation of facts and phenomena. The most striking perspective of this work by Donlic and Strasser is certainly that which sheds light not only on a methodological choice but on the desire to pay attention to authentic voices, going beyond the ongoing debate on credibility.

Often publications dealing with qualitative research are erroneously and unseriously classified as research that does not use statistical methodologies, as ethnographic studies of a cultural or intersubjective nature. Donlic and Strasser recall that qualitative research is based on the assumption that questions not only research methods but who we are, the world we live in, and how we inhabit it. They do this by focusing on human life, looking at the details of discourse and phenomena, at the bodies of subjects in contexts in order to open up new cognitive paths and participate in the construction of a more authentic reading and analysis of phenomena.

The contributions in this volume lead readers of diverse backgrounds through multiple debates that are bound together by a critical premise: They highlight the fundamentals embedded in these practices, suggest new ways of looking at and approaching objects of research, new ways of thinking as well as organising research design, collecting and analysing research data, allowing us to have a different sensitivity to the phenomena and protagonists of research and, to change our attitude in order to bring to surface individual cases and unheard voices. In this way, the contributions manage to bring out not so much the answers to our research questions, but above all the political and ethical dimensions of the research, because the research presented all subtend an attitude that is a search for knowledge and at the same time committed and ethical knowledge, sensitive to the mechanisms of power and social change, based on reflexivity and relationality.

The contributions that this collection offer unfold in different research contexts. As the title of his contribution summarises, Jo Reichertz focuses attention on the non-neutral gaze that allows us to find traces of connection between the different paths of development of qualitative methods.

The examples from the mature research practice of Larissa Krainer and Ruth Lerchster bring to light the practice of listening as an attitude.

This is followed by interesting proposals such as Martina Merz and Helene Sorgner's expert interviews in the specific field of physics.

Marion Sigot dedicates her reflections to young women with learning difficulties within a participatory research process that also places ethical aspects in the foreground.

Young adult migrants are the protagonists of Sara-Friederike Blumenthal's and Stephan Sting's contributions. They use grounded theory to collect and analyse data and trace their interpretations and misunderstandings through an empirical example.

The investigation of Katharina Hametner, Markus Wrbouschek und Natalie Rodax deepens the epistemological core of the documentary method intertwining it with the experiences of racism suffered by Turkish migrants in Austria.

Hans Karl Peterlini presents an original contribution to the phenomenological approach, focusing on the use of phenomenologically oriented vignettes as a research tool and providing a method for interpreting them.

Action research applied to education for sustainable development is the subject of Franz Rauch's contribution, while Anna Schober presents an original contribution to visual culture and the use of images.

Monika Kastner and Peter Schlögl reflect on the design and methods of analysis of two projects in the context of educational research.

Martina Ukowitz's contribution focuses on the potential of qualitative research within a transdisciplinary and participatory dimension conducted together with actors from different backgrounds.

Finally, Imke Alenka Harbig, Andreas Leopold Scherpf und Nicola Janina Spannring, with a qualitative research project of a transdisciplinary nature and the visual presentation of qualitative data, conclude this well-calibrated collectanea with a warm and innovative heart.

Cinzia Zadra (Bozen)

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