Book Review: A Companion to Qualitative Research: Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology
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journal, however, it should be noted that this book does not take a discourse-based approach to the field of language and identity.

What the book does offer is a history of the treatment of language and identity issues, detailing the key figures and the relationships between individual thinkers, ideas, and approaches. This historical discussion begins in Chapter 3, which is where some more focused discussion on what is meant by language and identity issues becomes clearer. While the discussions are at times very brief, a broad range of ideas and histories are covered in this chapter that reveals the interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter.

Despite the title, the book focuses most on the relationship between language and national identity. Joseph traces the origins of nationalism and what has often been seen as a natural association between linguistic and national identities to show ‘[w]here nationalism really exists is in politics and economics, and what we see in language is only the reflection of that real nationalism’ (p. 124). This is clearly illustrated in Chapter 6, where the author presents a convincing argument that the recent public discourses of declining English standards and the development of Hong Kong English are one and the same phenomenon (p. 147). The latter sections are not as fully developed, and understandably, some questions are left in the air, such as the question of how the mainland Chinese government might successfully convince Hong Kong people to share Beijing’s version of Chinese identity. There are some nice resonances with the earlier chapters that lend insight into the specific situation in Hong Kong. For example, the discussion of lack of memory contributing to a sense of shared identity in Chapter 5 returns in this chapter in discussing the potential role of a hypothetical demise of English in Hong Kong in the formation of a Hong Kong linguistic identity.

The topics covered at times seem to be rather idiosyncratic in nature, from linguistics of names to the effect of globalization on English, while the connections between these ideas are not always clear. However, the discussion is never uninteresting. The strengths of this book lie in the historical approach to the field, discussions of comparative contexts and ideologies, in-depth case studies and critical analyses/evaluations of the literature throughout. The discussion, in particular, of how cultural myths that color the understanding of identities can lead (and have led) to dangerous results offers a strong argument for the need for a linguistic-based conceptualization of identity.

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A Companion to Qualitative Research is a highly valuable collection of nearly 60 papers on various aspects of qualitative research authored by leading
European scholars. Aimed at presenting ‘a representative overview of the current landscape of qualitative research’ (p. xiii), the book fairly comprehensively covers both theoretical and practical considerations in qualitative inquiry. As the editors point out in their preface, the *Companion* is intended for students dealing with qualitative studies in various disciplines, teachers of qualitative inquiry, and qualitative researchers. The book is not a course book or a recipe for conducting research projects but it is certainly an invaluable resource for its intended audience.

After the editors’ introduction as the only chapter in Part 1, the eight chapters in Part 2 introduce major qualitative research traditions in an innovative manner. Each of the chapters gives a general overview of a research style through introducing the leading figure(s) who founded or significantly contributed to the particular style: Anselm Strauss; Erving Goffman; Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks; Paul Willis; Paul Parin, Fritz Morgenthaler and Goldy Parin-Matthey; Glifford Geertz; Norman Denzin; and Marie Jahoda. This novel way of reviewing research trends not only appreciates the work of major contributors to qualitative research but also introduces different approaches to qualitative inquiry in the context of part of their historical process of development and elaboration.

Not many books on qualitative research concentrate on the theoretical bases of the methodological issues they present but this is what Part 3 of the *Companion* deals with. The first section of this part explores theoretical foundations and the second section reviews the main programs of qualitative research. Although qualitative styles of inquiry are treated under different names, their underlying theoretical ideas seem to be generated from similar epistemological beliefs. This is evident in how theoretical assumptions are implemented in qualitative research programs such as biographical research, cultural studies, gender studies and organizational analysis. This overlap is even more conspicuous in exploring methodological aspects of qualitative research specifically dealt with in Part 4, including issues of design, hypothesis, deduction/induction, sampling and triangulation, as well as qualitative–quantitative interface and criteria of quality in qualitative studies. These methodological considerations are difficult to specify as relevant only to one particular style of qualitative research.

Entitled ‘Doing Qualitative Research’, Part 5 focuses on procedural considerations in conducting qualitative studies and the four sections of this part, with more than 20 chapters, explore issues of entering the field of research, verbal data, observation, and analysis. A number of chapters in this part discussing discourse analysis, conversation analysis, genre analysis, and text analysis may be of particular interest to the readers of this journal, since they interestingly place discourse studies in a wider context of qualitative inquiry.

Part 6 of the *Companion* – ‘Qualitative Research in Context’ – presents discussions on the use and challenges of qualitative research including two intriguing chapters on research ethics and teaching qualitative research, and finally the only chapter in Part 7 provides valuable information on various resources for qualitative research. Introduced in this chapter are books, journals, classic articles, internet resources, and a few university programs that might be of interest to those involved in qualitative research. A rich cumulative references section followed by author and subject indices are the final sections of the book.
Included among the research styles in the Companion is ethnomethodology – what Paul ten Have considers ‘a special kind of social inquiry’ (p. 14) in his Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology. With the purpose of stimulating ‘reflection on ways of doing qualitative research’ (p. 1), ten Have presents a general overview of qualitative research as his starting point. Although his brief first chapter is too limited a space for an elaborate discussion of issues in qualitative research, the author manages to touch upon types and styles of social research and the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy as well as the analytic status of research materials that is particularly relevant to ethnomethodology.

In Chapter 2, mainly referring to Harold Garfinkel (1967, 2002), ten Have presents a brief account of the historical development and theoretical foundations of ethnomethodology. From an ethnomethodological stance, social events are not simply facts that can be taken as evidence. Rather, even the most commonplace social facts are treated as constructs and accomplishments, the very formation of which is subject to scrutiny and explication. Ten Have elaborates on this perspective in Chapter 3 where he considers methods of ethnomethodology. Concentrating on commonsense practices and knowledge as the core of the problem for ethnomethodology, the chapter discusses the methodological endeavor in ethnomethodology aimed at, on the one hand, ‘minimizing the unexamined use of commonsense and on the other, that of maximizing its examinability’ (p. 32). The author particularly focuses on the role of transcription in ethnomethodology’s methodology, although this prominence given to transcription might appear to project the restricted view that ethnomethodology deals with verbal data only, while this is not in fact the case.

The distinction between a factist and a specimen view of data (Alassutari, 1995) is the major feature of the author’s ethnomethodological perspective in the next three chapters in which he explores the place of interviews, natural documents, and field methods in ethnomethodology. This treatment of data as discursive constructions and accomplishments would be particularly appealing to those interested in critical discourse studies. These three chapters may indicate that, rather than being an independent qualitative research procedure, ethnomethodology is a general approach that might be practiced through various methods of research.

With an ethnomethodological perspective, the nature of analysis and theory building would be different from inquiries based on other qualitative traditions. This is what ten Have discusses in his interesting Chapter 7 where he specifically concentrates on ethnomethodology versus grounded theory in terms of analysis. Similar elaborations on the stance of ethnomethodology compared with other qualitative styles could be more illuminating.

Chapter 8 on practicalities of doing ethnomethodological studies may be especially useful for novice researchers and also those who teach qualitative research. The issue of generalization of research findings, which ten Have calls ‘the problem of generality’ (p. 174) and the concept of ethnomethodological indifference are among the author’s reflections in his final chapter that is followed by an appendix of transcription conventions, references, and index.

The fact that the two books do not provide how-to-do types of practical methods and techniques for conducting research by no means reduces their value.
For researchers and students involved in qualitative inquiry as well as teachers of qualitative research methodology A Companion to Qualitative Research will be an invaluable resource, covering epistemological, theoretical, and methodological as well as procedural and practical aspects of qualitative approaches to research. For those interested in a deeper understanding of ethnomethodology as a potentially significant research standpoint, particularly for qualitative researchers with a tendency to defy factist views and to adopt a critical view of data, Paul ten Have’s book will be a very useful source.

REFERENCES

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In the preface to their anthology, ethicist Peter Singer and novelist Renata Singer contrast the systematicity and abstraction of technical discussions of moral philosophy with the fluidity and contextual richness of literature. They argue that both sources have the potential of forming the basis of deep ethical reflections and offer their collection of extended excerpts and commentary to students of literature and philosophy, as well as any literate person with an interest in ethical issues. Readers of this journal may immediately identify with the argument put forward by Singer and Singer given that literature is society as found in discourse. As such, I believe the volume under review is also of relevance specifically to those who concern themselves with discourse and discourse in society.

According to Singer and Singer (p. x):

Long before the rise of systematic philosophical thought, however, people have been making up stories in order to convey what they think about how we ought to live. Inevitably, in telling stories, and in writing novels, plays, short stories, and poems, the authors and narrators raise moral questions and suggest possible ways of answering them. Thus ethics comes squarely within the field of literature, as well as within the field of philosophy. Each approach to ethics has its own strengths and weaknesses.

They point out that literature raises ethical issues not necessarily because authors are overtly concerned with these issues or wish to project such an image, but because in writing about society these issues will inevitably emerge.