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The New Language of Qualitative Method

Susan Brown Eve
University of North Texas

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social and psychological impacts of contamination. There is much common resonance around themes such as local knowledge and lay epidemiology.

Having offered the promise of Citizen Science as an alternative paradigm for science, Irwin waits to the last chapter to admit “there is no easy synthesis on offer which can replace enlightenment/modernist thinking.” The volume is more reactive than proactive. The discussion of building sustainable futures is dominated by tales of failure rather than success, even in examining such important models as that of the European science shops or the Canadian MacKenzie River Pipeline Inquiry. Thus, as attractive as is Irwin’s vision, one cannot but be disappointed by the sparse delivery on the promise of *Citizen Science*. Perhaps the paucity of positive and successful models is itself instructive, a challenge to the thesis that is not addressed. Lacking indications of practical success, Irwin is left to cite abstract notions about a “greener science” that asks of any application “which form of science is appropriate and in what relationship to other forms of knowledge.” With the public as peer reviewers, this new science would become better able to address the ambiguities of the real world. Irwin’s integration thus bridges the post-modernist critique of contamination with the socially transformative steps necessary to reach sustainability. This is a vision that I, for one, share, and, even absent claims for idealized applications and successes, *Citizens Science* correctly charts the direction that field experimentation, innovative practice, and environmental action research should urgently pursue.

The New Language of Qualitative Method, by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 244 pp. ISBN 0-19-509993-1 (cloth), 0-19-509994-X (pbk.)

Susan Brown Eve

University of North Texas

The purpose of this book is to analyze the way the language of qualitative method relates to how researchers view and describe social life. The authors, Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, describe the four most influential approaches to qualitative research in contemporary social science. These four approaches are naturalism, ethnomethodology, emotionalism, and postmodernism. Naturalism is defined as “...a way of knowing that locates meaningful reality in the immediate settings of people’s daily affairs (p. 7).” Naturalists seek “...descriptions of people and interaction as they exist and unfold in their native habitats...in order to understand what things mean to them (pp. 6-7).” Ethnomethodologists listen “...to naturally occurring con-

versation in order to discover how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction. At the heart of the research is a deep concern for ordinary, everyday procedures and practices that society's members use to make their social experiences sensible, understandable, accountable and orderly (p. 7)." Emotionalism focuses on understanding the total man in his total environment (p. 9). To do that, requires "...open sharing and intimacy, affective sensitivity...to develop true empathy and understanding. The goal is to capture, even *reenact*, the subject's experience and to describe that in full emotional color (p. 9)." Postmodernism is concerned with the growing awareness that there is a reflexive relationship between social reality and the methods used to study it; "...that research procedure constructs reality as much as it produces descriptions of it... This 'crisis of representation' has inspired a host of attempts to 'deconstruct' research to reveal its reality-constituting practices (pp. 9-10)." Each of these four major approaches is analyzed in separate chapters in the first part of the book and their differences are discussed in detail.

In Part II, the authors show how the differences can be integrated using common characteristics of the four methods to create a "renewed language of qualitative method." The common characteristics include a skepticism toward common wisdom about social reality, a commitment to close scrutiny of the social world, a commitment to describe the "qualities," or understandings, of experience, a focus on the processes of social life, an appreciation for subjectivity, and a tolerance for the complexity of social reality. Differences in the methods have led researchers to emphasize different research questions. Naturalists focus on the *what* questions, ethnomethodologists focus on the *how* questions, emotionalists warn that naturalists and ethnomethodologists over-rationalize the *what* and the *how* questions, and the postmodernists have focused on procedural issues in qualitative research as the central problem. In their "renewed language of qualitative method," the authors argue that interpretive practice, or reality construction, that is at the heart of qualitative research requires both artful interpretation — that is, a discussion of *how* human beings create reality — and conditional or substantive interpretation — that is, a description of the *what* of social experiences — using the technique of "analytic bracketing." Analytic bracketing refers to the process of moving back and forth between the *what* and the *how* questions, alternately describing each so that neither side is emphasized more than the other. This process lays the groundwork for approaching the *why* questions, "while remaining situated at the lived border of reality and representation (p. 211)."

The book will be of interest to experienced qualitative researchers for its suggestions of ways in which the four major approaches can be used together

to provide a greater understanding of the “qualities” of social life. It will also be useful to researchers new to the field of qualitative techniques who are struggling to sort out the major divisions within the field of qualitative methods.