

Review:

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Mechthild Kiegelmann & Leo Gürtler (Eds.) (2003). Research Questions and Matching Methods of Analysis. Tübingen, Germany: Ingeborg Huber Verlag, 270 pages, ISBN 3-9806975-5-X

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Abstract: The third in a series reporting on a conference in Qualitative Psychology held for the first time outside of Germany, this volume is basically the proceedings of the workshop. Its theme—matching questions with methods of analysis—only generally brings the individual pieces together. A large portion of the papers revolve around the idea that different researchers can approach a piece of fiction (a portion of Don Quixote) to do various kinds of qualitative analyses. While the approaches are somewhat interesting, I am not convinced that using a work of fiction in this way helps us understand issues relating to analysis of qualitative research. The individual articles take quite different approaches to making meaning from Cervantes and you may get some insights from comparisons. The rest of the articles are far-ranging in terms of content and application. I found some very interesting, although I did not gain many new ideas. The vast majority of the papers are well-edited and can be followed in English.

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. An Interesting Idea](#)
- [3. Individual Presentations](#)
- [4. Coming Together Or, I Wish It Were So](#)

[References](#)

[Author](#)

[Citation](#)

1. Introduction

Now in paperback, this volume represents the efforts of many individuals who attended the third workshop in Qualitative Psychology held in Perlorá, Spain in October 2002. You can read GÜRTLER's description of the details of this event in *FQS 4(1)*. Usually held in Germany with researchers from several European countries, this conference broadens the base of the meeting. Previous volumes in the series are also edited by KIEGELMANN (2001, 2002). In addition to GÜRTLER who serves as co-editor, contributions come from more than twenty researchers. The volume is organized into two main parts. Part one offers five different analyses and interpretations of chapter one of Cervantes' Don Quixote. Utilizing a familiar text, the researchers illustrate how research questions are matched with methods of analysis. Part two includes group sessions from three different workgroups loosely organized around a common topic or theme. [1]

I need to remind myself as I read and review this volume (and you, the reader, as you contemplate reading it), that it comes from a workshop and the information was originally written by many people in several different languages. Manuscripts were proofread by a native English speaker and a professional editor provided additional editing for this volume. I think the editors were quite successful in taking care of potential lack of clarity or ambiguity in written material prepared by non-native English speakers. A second issue is that material prepared for a workshop often takes on different characteristics than that prepared directly for print. Lastly, the volume represents what was presented at the workshop. As such, papers are extremely varied in content, application and sophistication. But I, an American researcher, am excited by the potentially multiple viewpoints that may emerge from a bevy of European researchers. [2]

Now I come to the central topic of this book: research questions and matching methods of analysis. I am intrigued. What is meant? In the preface, the editors state that the intention of the workshop was to look at "how to apply research methods that are appropriate to the research question chosen" (p.7). We are looking for examples dealing with matching methods and questions. Unfortunately, I do not believe the papers separately or as a whole really tackle many of the central issues. They are, however, apparently representative of the current state of the art. [3]

2. An Interesting Idea

The researchers begin with an interesting challenge. Present the same material to different researchers and ask them to conduct an analysis. You might have read of the multiple analyses based on an interview of a female Turkish migrant living in Germany; RIEMANN (2003) reports on the details of this project. You can actually take part in the project by reviewing the transcript of Hülya's interview and reading the different accounts. Personally, I have used a variation of this idea in my work with graduate students. Each conducts an interview with a student on the topic of "my life as a graduate student." Transcripts of all interviews are made available to all students online. Then each student analyzes the various transcripts and constructs an amalgam of "my life as a graduate student." Students have used various analytic strategies, including computer software (NVIVO). [4]

In the first section of this book, papers based on a fictional account of an individual are presented. Not content to use just any fiction, the researchers read a major work by Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, one of the finest pieces of literature, read in the United States and, I suspect, around the world. We all know the general story of the man from La Mancha who goes off in search of knightly adventures accompanied by his page Sancho Panza. I suspect that it is more than coincidence that the organizers of the meeting, its first time in Spain, select a work by a Spanish author. But then we are presented with a novel idea: take a portion of the text of this classic work of fiction and conduct a qualitative analysis. The five pieces in this section try to do just that and some are more successful than others. [5]

KLEINING applies what he calls the qualitative-heuristic method of text analysis. He provides an overview of his method and offers some very specific suggestions as to how he approached his analysis of Don Quixote. He suggests that you can either do qualitative observations or qualitative experiments. His very detailed account with specific illustrations will help you understand this. Some of the text is written in Spanish, German, and English, but KLEINING (2000, 2001) has written about these ideas in English elsewhere. [6]

MEDINA and DOMINGUEZ take quite a different approach. They identify three questions: what is the novel about, what is the contribution made by Cervantes, and why is the action in a mythical place. These authors seem to rely on an artistic vision as well as the use of grounded theory. I must acknowledge that I had some difficulty reading this material and suspect that it is due, at least in part, to difficulties in translation. I think perhaps they are trying to do too many things and might have been more effective in addressing a few ideas more clearly. [7]

We are introduced to the voice-centered or, more simply, the voice method by KIEGELMANN in another chapter. You might find it also interesting to read about the voice-centered relational model as "ports of entry into the human psyche" (GILLIGAN, SPENCER, WEINBERG, & BERTSCH 2003). KIEGELMANN tells us that this method involves "the illumination of different layers in an individual's expression of her or his experiences" (KIEGELMANN, p.49). In order to use this method, a researcher would need to have first person representation. In other words, how does the person speak about himself or herself? She identifies a number of problems in using this method with the Cervantes text since the writing is by the narrator, the data and social context are fiction, and the data are not part of a research design. Nonetheless, in spite of those limitations and for illustrative purposes, she applies this method to the novel. I think what you can take away from her presentation are the four questions she identifies and some examples. In reading and responding to the plot (the first question), she offers specific illustrations and her reactions. She continues with examples about reading for self, for social context and for multiple voices. You might be surprised that she concludes that going through this process was not satisfactory and that she doesn't think it a good idea to begin with a given data set. I believe she felt the activity somewhat contrived, but perhaps she is too hard on herself because I found the piece quite well written. It demonstrates the importance of using first-person accounts when studying psychological aspects of an individual. I enjoyed reading her illustration that juxtaposes her content analysis (reading for plot) with her comments about the content (reflexibility) [8]

HUBER decides that quantitative methods are fair game and he approaches the task by doing a quantitative analysis including word frequencies, types of words and frequencies of word classes. His argument is that it would be "impossible to integrate the findings of a predominantly interpretive approach without using quantifying expressions" (p.68). Well, this is certainly one view, but I am not convinced. [9]

Finally, SCHWEIZER takes us on a long journey in his piece grandiosely titled: Preparations for the redemption of the world: Distribution of words and modalities in Chapter I of Don Quixote. Highly technical, and moving among Spanish, German and English versions, this chapter is extraordinarily complex and detailed. A large chunk of it presents the text in the three languages parallel to each other. SCHWEIZER spells out his method in detail. He begins with preparing the text; next he moves to expression and syntax and the distribution of word forms; finally, he presents some pragmatic issues as well. This chapter is quite meaty and needs to be read in great detail to gain all its nuances. The long appendix at its conclusion is a synopsis of the first chapter in three languages. The German version is coded with the various steps taken by the author. Since I speak English only, this text was not helpful to me. Perhaps to those who are multilingual some comparisons can be taken. [10]

I would have liked the editors to write an interpretation of the various approaches offered in this section. Why a novel was chosen? There is no explanation for this. KIEGELMANN feels this is a drawback, especially since the chapter selected was more narrative than first person. I tend to agree. Perhaps a novel was selected because of its widespread availability in multiple languages. I am guessing about this, however. Why this novel? I mention earlier that I think they chose this novel because of its Spanish origin and the fact that the conference took place in Spain. Again, only a guess. The time period of the novel certainly makes it outside of anyone's personal experience. What progress do the papers and presentations bring forth? I think the new advances are more in the realm of application rather than new insights. Multiple analyses of a work of fiction could potentially bring forth some new ideas. I tried to draw some threads across the several presentations, but I was not very successful since they were all dramatically different. Not that I was looking for the "right" answer since most certainly there is not a single answer. I could speculate that the researchers chose a method they had used before and applied it to the work of fiction. I did not find a particular link between research question and method. Nor did I find theoretical or practical suggestions as to how other researchers might go about selecting a method. The book would be stronger if the editors had tried to give their interpretations. [11]

3. Individual Presentations

Although there are three different work sessions and the papers are grouped accordingly, they can really be read as individual papers since the relationship within each group seems only a matter of convenience. It is only the group on feminism and gender that are evenly remotely connected. The first group of papers includes BURKART's contribution on a study of feeling, HOLZWARTH and MAURER's work on intercultural communication through children's media productions, and MEDINA and colleagues' paper on analysis of teachers' discourse. BURKART reports his study of feeling and introspection. He claims that the psychological study of feelings is usually conducted using quantitative-deductive methods, but his contribution demonstrates the use of qualitative

methods. I think the impact of his work is that he applies KLEINING's techniques (discussed earlier) to an actual study. [12]

HOLZWARTH and MAURER offer the premise that children should be given an opportunity to express themselves not only verbally, but also by using their own media productions. The article is a summary of a multi-year action research project undertaken in six European countries. Using different types of visual methods, they report on the value of using such media to facilitate communication across language barriers and age. Certainly the idea of asking children to use cameras or videos is not new; the idea that these visuals cross cultures and languages is demonstrated quite well. This piece adds to our understanding since HEYWOOD and SANDYWELL (1999) explore the hermeneutics of visual culture but do not include children in their discussions. [13]

The final article by MEDINA, DOMINGUEZ, PEREZ, and FELIZ returns to Don Quixote by exploring the value of the book for teachers, particularly how they can become involved in their own self-analysis. They combine and compare data gained through individual narrative, group discussions and expert judgment to explore interdisciplinary discourse among teachers. The main contribution of this article is a demonstration of collaboration among different groups. For me, however, I am not sure how I would use it in teaching or how self-analysis would "help rebuild educational institutions" (p.141). [14]

The next work session joined three papers with topics about gender and feminism. NENTWICH explores the process of relating and what she calls the "construction process" that takes place during interviews. I am intrigued. She poses this thoughtful idea: the mutual construction of reality in an interview situation, especially with regard to relating. She draws us in immediately to her topic by providing a reflection of an interview that she thought went wrong. She asks us to remember that an interview involves a situation in which both interviewer and the interview partner (her term) are negotiating about a construction of reality. I think these words are important. An interview is not a one-way street in which information moves from the individual being interviewed to the interviewer. Further, not only the content, but also how the relationship between the two individuals develops, is critical. I think researchers don't think about this on a more than superficial level when they talk about establishing rapport. NENTWICH provides considerable thoughtfulness here. You may find yourself rethinking your own interviewing process after you read her very interesting piece. While she does this under the guise of gender differences, I think her viewpoint can be extended much further. [15]

GAHLEITNER study of sexual abuse utilizes what she calls a modified content analysis and a gender-sensitive procedure yielding to the idea of gender-independent aspects of coping with sexual abuse. The paper is brief, but includes an extensive reference list. Finally, LIM and ULLRICH consider a feminist orientation as they explore issues of disability. They applied voice-centered listening (also used by KIEGELMANN in her analysis of Don Quixote above). The

authors' main contribution is the application of a voice-centered approach to a study of the disabled. [16]

The final work group offers three dissimilar papers. GÜRTLER takes us on a completely unusual journey as he examines test theory, a constructivist position, and Buddhist psychology. This paper is primarily theoretical and expository, thus completely different from all the others. I am not quite sure what to make of it in the context of the other papers. I leave you to judge for yourself. FIGAREDO examines teaching educational research in cyberspace. I personally have had considerable experience teaching research online, however, I had some difficulty following the author's examples as he describes his own experiences. Lastly in this section, LINK and SCHMIDTS introduce the suitability of a patient simulation for practicing clinical reasoning by using a software package. I am not quite sure how this fits in with the theme of the conference, but if you are interested in the topic of preparing students in the medical field, you should find it provides some new insights. For example, the authors hoped that a software package might be a useful tool for training students in a self directed manner. In fact, only one of the five students was able to use it without teacher support. This did not surprise me since, in my experience, most software programs—whether of a qualitative or quantitative nature—need considerable initial explanation and support from experts. I think software developers and programmers are working on just this issue, however, as increased uses are made. I know in the United States, there is a great interest in using computers for training in the medical field and by physicians in working with patients in other than face-to-face situations [17]

I think these papers only loosely deal with the topic of matching research methods with questions. One can say that researchers are always cognizant of a match between the questions they pose and the way they proceed to analyze them. What the papers do demonstrate is that European researchers are willing to step outside of the box of classical or traditional approaches, especially in the field of psychology. From an American experience, psychology is often the last stalwart of classical, scientific, hypothesis-testing models. I cannot say from personal experience whether this is true throughout some European communities, but I suspect that is the case. MRUCK and MEY (2000) acknowledge this when they speak about the scepticism of many reviewers in psychology. BREUER and MRUCK (2000) speak about what they call a "fresh wind" of change. Yet old habits die hard and some five years later I still sense reluctance on the part of the European psychological community to adopt qualitative methods. In the United States, CAMIC, RHODES and YARDLEY (2003), in an edited volume published by the American Psychological Association include a series of papers about "Expanding Perspectives in *Methodology and Design*" (my emphasis). You will be able to read more about the status of European Qualitative Research in the next issue of *FQS* (September 2005: The State of the Art of Qualitative Research in Europe, edited by KNOBLAUCH, FLICK and MAEDER). [18]

As I completed my reading of this volume, I asked myself: could the editors have found a way to bring comprehensiveness and completeness to the individual

presentations? Here are some things that might have been helpful. (1) Extract from each presentation how question and method were intertwined. If the authors failed to do that, as I believe is so in some cases, then the editors might have suggested how that could have been done. (2) Explained the groupings of the papers into three workgroups. For me, I could not really find a common element. I suspect that the sessions were organized that way for the conference and the editors just reported what was said. (3) Finally, I assume the editors were the conference organizers. I would have liked them to comment on things not written. Were new alliances made across countries? Did psychologists find themselves persuaded that traditional approaches could be complimented by alternative approaches? [19]

4. Coming Together Or, I Wish It Were So

I wish I could tell you that this book fulfilled its promise of matching research questions and methods of analysis, but I am afraid it does not. The first part of the book, devoted to a study of a portion of Don Quixote, begins with an interesting premise, but some of the analyses seem contrived or forced. The remainder of the book, although organized around different work sessions, is basically a presentation of both theoretical and individual discussions on a wide variety of topics using qualitative research methods. There is little or no discussion in the various papers about matching question and method. The topics cover an enormous range of content from sexual abuse, to feelings, to online teaching. The presentations are somewhat uneven with some being very brief while others explore topics in a very detailed manner. [20]

I think the editors might have considered writing comments or interpretations that joined the pieces or commented on them. For whatever reason, perhaps because they just wanted to provide an account of the conference, they did not do so. I would have liked to hear their thoughts. [21]

I did not have an opportunity to read the first two volumes in this series so am unsure if this issue follows previous formats. I do recognize the massive effort that went in to just publishing these pieces—issues related to translation being a major one. I think the field of psychology needs such conferences and records of the work currently being conducted. I hope that for the next conference the editors will choose to include more of their own thoughts. [22]

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