

humans and their sinister metamorphosis into news items. Poetic rupture reminds us of our immanent presence within phenomena and eposes us to the ineffable, to a poetic understanding of existence

(p 117)

My feelings are that whilst the text is rich as a source of reference for further reading of other important voices in the cultural, political, personal and psychotherapeutic debate represented here, the voice of this author has the power, the poetics, and the political commitment to stand-alone. Reducing the number of references may slow the pace somewhat and open the text up to a wider audience, making Bazzano and his own poetics more accessible. That said, the pace seems to add to the poignancy and therefore the urgency of the discussion and so taps into my own sense of urgency for such a debate.

The well-woven references offer us a well-crafted text that sets it apart from other dry academic texts only because of the fluid poetical song of Bazzano and his commitment to his own radical voice. This text may be slim in stature but it belies the layer upon layer of rich flavours that work beautifully upon the palate, and just as you lick your lips and clean the palate ready for the next bite, there is a burst on the tongue reminding you of a poetry that lingers: a poetry that is committed to housing rebellion.

Julie Webb

Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology: Combining Core Approaches

Nollaig Frost.(ed.) (2011). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Phenomenology For Therapists: Researching The Lived World

Linda Finlay. (2011). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

First of all, a warning: Do not judge these books by their covers! Looking, for example, at the cover image of Finlay's *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World*, which is apparently entitled 'Executives standing in lobby' (no joke), the impression is of somewhat mesmerised or robot-like humans that could have stepped out of an episode of *Dr Who*, bearing no relationship with the content of the book at all (see below).

However, focusing first on *Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology: Combining Core Approaches*, the old adage not to judge the book by the cover goes even further than that. In fact, I would ask the reader not to judge this book by the first 117 pages either. With only another 75 pages of main text to go thereafter, the reader of this review may start to wonder

why to give time to this book at all, or even to this review. This is where I ask the reader to bear with me, as in my view this is an indispensable book for anyone who, like me, believes that each qualitative research method only gives us one particular and thus limited facet of the issue under investigation, that we need to widen the horizons of our social science research endeavours and that we need to move away from a one-truth-fits-all approach, not only in our philosophies but also in our sciences. If you just look at the title of this book, if you take it from the shelf, or if you just look at the cover on the web, you may very likely feel puzzled about my claim that this is an indispensable book in such a pursuit. However, at the time of writing (November 2013), there is no other book on qualitative research methods, as far as I am aware, which provides a practical introduction to one of the most promising developments in social science research of the last few years: pluralistic qualitative research. And it is the aforementioned 75 pages that do exactly that and therefore give this book its particular edge.

Having such a unique position in the market (and since 2011 when it was first published), I have been surprised why this is not reflected in the title and why the book is such a mixed offering: half – or more than half – introduction to qualitative research methods, less than half introduction to pluralistic qualitative research. Were the publishers scared that the pluralistic label would alienate the mainstream? Were they hoping to catch two ends of the market? Did the authors not have enough material on pluralism and therefore bolted it on to a standard introductory text? Other questions raised by the packaging are: Why call it rather unadventurously ‘*combining* core approaches’? Why shy away from the much richer, deeper and more meaningful term ‘pluralistic’?

I don’t want to suggest that the initial 117 pages are not worth reading as such. The first part of the book constitutes a basic but solid and clear introduction to four different types of qualitative research: Grounded Theory, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis. Each chapter follows a similar structure, covering the basics of each method under headings such as history, ontology, epistemology, methods, applications etc. and ends with a useful chapter summary. There are also numerous boxes interspersed, containing research examples, case studies and reflections on using the methods.

To be fair, the introduction suggests that the book’s intention is to introduce each of the approaches as single approaches first before describing how to combine them, and the book furthermore argues and shows that most single approaches can be used in multiple ways. Given its declared purpose, the book has probably fulfilled its agenda, but, speaking as someone who is excited by the radical and creative possibilities that methodological pluralism entails, I feel a little disappointed by this modesty and would have preferred a stronger and bolder entrée of pluralistic qualitative research onto the scene.

Another point to be made is that basic introductions to different qualitative methods have been done before, and I can't really see how Part 1 of this book adds to this. For example, Carla Willig's (2013) *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*, now in its third edition, in my view provides a more thorough and more thoughtful introduction to different qualitative methods, and Evanthia Lyons and Adrian Coyle's (2007) edited volume *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* constitutes a more research practice-orientated introduction to actually using the four different methods, and the authors not only provide a thorough introductory chapter on each method but also a chapter each in which these methods are applied to the same data set, which can be found in the Appendix, accompanied by reflections on the practical utility of each method, with the added bonus of written-up reports for each method interspersed with further reflections and recommendations. Compared to those two books, Part 1 of Nollaig Frost's introductory volume possibly appeals through its simplicity and might therefore be particularly suitable for undergraduates trying to make up their minds about which qualitative method to choose. As regards beginners, however, another recent text succeeds particularly well as a hands-on and step-by-step guide to conducting qualitative research, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark, published in 2013, which might arguably be more recommended for those just starting out in qualitative research.

In sum, if Part 1 is best suited for undergraduates, I can't really see how it works in combination with Part 2, which may be more interesting to postgraduates and beyond, as it could be argued that it is preferable for undergraduates to get a specific method under their belt first before entering the more complex world of pluralistic research.

Moving now to the innovative heart and soul of the book, the aforementioned 75 pages, or 'Part 2: Combining Core Approaches', it is this part of the book that makes it such an interesting read. It consists of four chapters that introduce the reader to different aspects that are relevant to conducting pluralistic qualitative research.

The first chapter of Part 2 deals with practical issues when carrying out such research. The chapter author, Sevasti-Melissa Nolas, situates pluralistic research within a broadly postmodern and critical psychological perspective and takes the reader through different practical stages of doing research such as literature review, study design, recruitment, data elicitation and analysis, explaining the kinds of decisions pluralistic researchers need to make above and beyond those of single-method researchers and providing examples from actual research. As a counselling psychologist I was particularly interested in the examples and recommendations relating to research designed to inform and evaluate therapeutic practice. It makes sense to me that the

world of practice is complex and multi-faceted and that a multi-perspectival approach may yield findings of greater ecological validity and practical relevance.

The second chapter then turns to the topic of interpreting data pluralistically. The author, Nollaig Frost, discusses different approaches, for example applying different methods of analysis to the same data set or using ‘within-method pluralistic interpretation’ (p 154), as in ‘dialogical phenomenology’ or group phenomenology, in which different researchers analyse the same data set using the same method of analysis and then develop both consensual and divergent analyses. This chapter illuminatingly describes how applying multiple approaches in a systematic, rigorous and transparent manner allows for greater extraction of meaning to produce rich and credible readings that can dig deeper and take us further than single-perspective approaches:

Pluralistic interpretation provides a way to minimise the imposition of any one ontological position. It aims to illuminate what is real for others while minimising the impact of the researcher and their lifeworld

(p 148)

For existential researchers interpretative pluralism may be particularly attractive, as it does not impose a particular version of reality onto the subject matter but opens up new and multiple layers of meaning, some of which may fit together harmoniously, while others may create uncomfortable tensions. While such tensions may be difficult to tolerate for researchers who seek objective ‘truth’, they can provide new meanings and insights into the complexity of the topic for those who prefer more differentiated understandings. Furthermore, the pluralistic researcher is confronted with even more choices than the ordinary qualitative researcher, and thus the process of research can become an existential project in itself, as discipline and rigour are warranted but no preconceived rules are available that can be drawn on. However, I feel that pluralism as presented in this volume would probably best suit existential researchers with a more critical and constructionist slant than those of a more purely phenomenological persuasion. Having said that, some versions of methodological pluralism as, for example, group phenomenology, could be easily adapted with a more existential-phenomenological perspective in mind.

The third chapter of Part 2, also written by Nollaig Frost, provides guidance on writing up pluralistic research. This chapter steers the reader confidently through the challenge of writing up research that in a worst-case scenario may at this point consist in reams of multiple analyses of multiple data sources done by multiple researchers, and a number of different ways of structuring, displaying and layering of the data, all with the intention of enabling the presentation of a multivocal yet coherent whole, are introduced.

Finally, the book ends with a brief chapter in which Frost summarises the book and pulls out the key points for conducting pluralistic research. When I put the book down, I felt rather well-fed and keen to apply the new insights but also slightly wary about the vicissitudes of taking such an approach. When I used interpretative pluralism some years ago, I was rather naïve about the challenges and just embraced them like the archetypal Fool travelling into the unknown. After reading *Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology: Combining Core Approaches* I was wondering whether I would use a pluralistic approach now, and after some reflection thought I would; I might not travel as light as I did before but I'd certainly have better equipment in my backpack now.

Turning now to the second book, *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World* by Linda Finlay, I would not want to compare this to other books. Although Darren Langdrige's volume on *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method* also provides a very good introduction to a number of phenomenological methods, I think that the two books each have their own focus and flavour and can happily sit next to each other. In fact, I would probably recommend them both.

But let's listen to Linda Finlay:

I want to do and hear about research that teaches me something new and, ideally, moves me in some way. I want research with the potential to contribute something to my practice, to help me to better understand the therapeutic process and my clients' needs. I seek research that enables them to make sense of their own experiences and have this witnessed. I also want to spread the word to others. All this, I argue, can be made possible through recourse to phenomenology, with its enriching and transformative possibilities.

For me, phenomenology has become more than a research methodology. It is a way of being.

(p 12)

What Linda Finlay describes in this quote as her needs and expectations with regard to research seems quite basic and simple, even commonsensical. Of course, who would not agree that we want to learn from research, that we want it to be useful to our work? That we want it to be meaningful? Yet, what these simple wishes also reveal is that, as we probably know from reading a lot of research that is out there, finding meaningful, useful and relevant research is by no means the norm. Thus, her desire for something so seemingly ordinary becomes at the same time

a desire for the extraordinary if not the impossible. Finlay's answer to the dilemma, phenomenology, satisfies both desires: focusing on the ordinary, the actually lived world, has the potential to transform us in extraordinary ways. And she shows in this book that this paradox, which is inherent in the phenomenological project, is worth pursuing with wonder and awe, with dedication and passion:

The strength of the method lies in its ability to bring to life the richness of existence through description of what may appear at first sight to be ordinary, mundane living. The magic comes when we focus so deeply on aspects of individuals' ordinary lives we see that what is revealed is, invariably, something special; something more. What is revealed is actually quite extra-ordinary.

(p 26)

This is no ordinary book, and I hesitate to fill the page with commentary and summaries, as I'd much rather present a range of quotations that might whet readers' appetite for more, so they can experience it for themselves. However, the task of the reviewer is also to stand back a little, something not easily achieved with a text that draws you in on so many levels. I first reviewed this book for *Counselling Psychology Review* two years ago, shortly after it was first published. The timing was good, as I had just become involved in teaching phenomenological methods and acting as a research supervisor for existential counselling psychology and psychotherapy doctoral students, most of whom were using or hoping to use phenomenological approaches in their research. My appreciation of the book has not changed, only increased if anything since then, and I will gladly present my reasons for this in what follows. Reviewing this book for a second time now, and for *Existential Analysis*, I realize, though, that I imagine that many readers will already own a copy or have at least looked at it somewhere, for example those actively involved in psychotherapy-related phenomenological research, so this review may not offer them anything new. However, there may, of course, be new researchers, needing to make decisions about which direction to take in their inquiries and more experienced researchers, who are perhaps looking for new insights and new inspiration. Furthermore, there may be all those others who could potentially benefit from this book, and these may not only be researchers or those wanting to do research, and it is with this section of the readership in mind that the task of reviewing this book takes on a particularly exciting turn. Let's see...

Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World is in my opinion the best companion to phenomenological research available today. It is extremely well-written and well-researched, comprehensive and rich

but at the same time clear and easy to read, a welcome change from the often esoteric writing that pervades much that has been published on phenomenology. The book is divided into three parts of approximately 80 pages each. The first part provides the reader with an excellent overview of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of phenomenology. The second part contains six chapters which introduce the reader to six different phenomenological research approaches including Descriptive Empirical Phenomenology, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Lifeworld Approaches, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, First-Person Approaches and Reflexive-Relational Approaches. The third part deals with the application of phenomenological methods in practice, providing hands-on advice to actually carrying it out.

Apart from the wealth of information contained in this volume (and please do read the footnotes, as they contain many curious and additional facts, interesting quotes, tips, references to current debates and other useful sources and a whole range of other valuable nuggets of insight), what makes this book so special and worthwhile, is the style in which it is written. There is a sense of the author's presence throughout the text. The feeling is that the author lives and breathes phenomenology and shares her experience and understandings in a holistic way that does not only speak to the intellect of the reader but to the reader as an embodied fellow being:

Phenomenology – when it is done well – discloses, transforms and inspires. That is why it excites me, why I am passionate about it. It is not just a research method. It offers a way of both being in and of seeing the world, from inside and out. It is not just an intellectual project; it is a life practice. It is concerned with the discovery and celebration of our own immersion in body-world experience.

(p 26)

Finlay communicates her grasp of the subject in a way that is inherently phenomenological. As I put it in my previous review 'it is in keeping with the fundamental assumptions and aims of phenomenology; we are not getting to know phenomenology as an object that exists outside of consciousness but we become aware of it through an intersubjective process of sharing in the lived and conscious experience and understanding of it as conveyed by another' (Steffen, 2012: p 75). It is this aspect that makes this book highly recommendable to anyone interested in phenomenology, even to those who are not concerned with research. However, it is possible that such a reader's interest in doing research is sparked as a result of engaging with this writing, particularly as Finlay shows so well how there is an overlap between phenomenological research and therapy that foregrounds

the client's experience, and it seems that one of the core intentions of *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World* is to provide guidance for practitioners who wish to make the transition to research:

If you have been hesitating to cross the bridge between therapy practice and research, I urge you to stride forth. But be warned, you need to choose your route through research territory with care.

(p 7)

Finlay succeeds in making phenomenological research transparent and accessible without losing complexity or depth, and in Part III she provides practical advice that readers can follow step by step. Her other core intention concerns bridging the practice-research divide on a grander scale, asking the question '[h]ow can the chasm that lies between clinical practice and academic research be bridged?' (p 5). As she concedes herself, this question is only partially answered in her book, and for long stretches of the book I did not find many references to psychotherapy research or why the book is mainly 'for therapists' when it provides such a broad overview of phenomenology that it could easily take on a more generic title.

One set of approaches Finlay introduces, the so-called 'reflexive-relational approaches' may be particularly useful in the endeavour of narrowing the gap between research and practice, as such a method could be especially suitable for therapists, drawing on 'relational skills, empathy and reflexive capacity used in practice' (p 173), attending 'to the layered embodied intersubjective relationship between researcher and co-researcher' (p 91) and involving 'a way of being *with* rather than doing *to*' (p 166). What is interesting in the relational-centred method is the active involvement of the researcher in the research, similar to dialogal and heuristic research, only with a stronger hermeneutic emphasis that includes a degree of relativism as it regards meanings as developed through co-construction. However, it must be said that this is still a relatively new method, and Finlay warns therapists and researchers to only apply it selectively, one danger being that it might 'invite self-indulgent or skewed findings' (p 174). As this method has been a prominent focus for her in recent years, we may perhaps expect further development in this regard, to which I would look forward with anticipation.

At the end of Part II, I would have liked to have seen another chapter reflecting on all the methods introduced in the light of the initially described intentions, perhaps drawing out the key take-home messages, and I felt a little left hanging after the intense build-up about the 'magic' of phenomenology. Nevertheless, these queries and wonderings do not take away from the richness of the book and only make the reader hungrier for more, well, this reader, as undoubtedly much depends on personal taste when judging