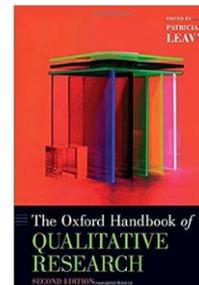


## BOOK REVIEW

# The Oxford handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.) (Leavy, Ed.)

Reviewed by Barbara L. Wheeler

Montclair State University, USA



**Title:** The Oxford handbook of qualitative research (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) **Editor:** Patricia Leavy **Publication year:** 2020 **Publisher:** Oxford University Press  
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### REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

**Barbara L. Wheeler**, PhD, MT-BC, holds the designation of Professor Emeritus from Montclair State University, where she taught from 1975-2000. She initiated the music therapy program at the University of Louisville in 2000, retiring in 2011. She presents and teaches in the U.S. and internationally and has been an active clinician throughout her career. Barbara edited or co-edited three editions of *Music Therapy Research*, edited *Music Therapy Handbook*, and is co-author of *Clinical Training Guide for the Student Music Therapist*. She received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the World Federation of Music Therapy and from the American Music Therapy Association. [[barbara.wheeler@louisville.edu](mailto:barbara.wheeler@louisville.edu)]

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*The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, is an enormous book, as are most of the Oxford handbooks. As such, it provides an opportunity to learn about diverse topics in qualitative research. Because it is an edited book, the information is presented from various perspectives.

The second edition is revised and expanded from the first edition, which was published in 2014. The first edition had 600 pages, while the current edition has more than twice that number. According to the editor, Patricia Leavy, the chapters that were included in the first edition have been updated, with seven chapters added.

The editor suggests that the book can be useful to those with little or no background in qualitative research as well as experienced researchers and that it can be used in undergraduate and graduate courses and by those working on theses and other research projects. This has prompted me to consider how music therapists might use this book. While I can certainly picture an undergraduate reading a chapter from the book, it is difficult for me to see an undergraduate music therapy student (or student in another major) using the book extensively, so describing it as suitable for an undergraduate course does not seem realistic. Moving beyond the undergraduate level, one of my concerns is that music therapy scholars do not utilize the literature that is available as well as we should. Of course, my experience is limited to those people and situations with whom I have contact: Students with whom I have worked (at all levels and from many countries); theses, dissertations, and articles that I have reviewed and read; workshop and individual interactions. It seems to me that music therapists would benefit from reading more of the literature that is available, which would include chapters from this book. My own use of the book will be primarily for scholarly work, and I will consult

it when preparing course outlines, lectures, or presentations, and when writing about aspects of qualitative research.

I have considered the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), now in its fifth edition, to be the standard handbook for qualitative research. I have several of these volumes in my library, which I have used regularly over the years, so I read this *Oxford Handbook* with the Sage books in mind. The table below compares the books on several points:

	Oxford	Sage
Date of first edition	2014	1994
Date of current edition	2020	2017
Number of current edition	2	5
Cost of hardcover version	\$230	\$150
Number of chapters	40	41
Number of pages	1280	992

**Table 1:** Comparison of Oxford and Sage handbooks

The content of many of the chapters of the *Oxford Handbook* (as well as the *Sage Handbook*) is what I consider standard for a book on qualitative research. This includes chapters on the history of qualitative research, philosophical underpinnings (as part of a chapter on philosophical approaches), and ethics. Many of the chapters on approaches to or methodologies for qualitative research are also as expected, including those on grounded theory, feminist approaches, critical approaches, narrative inquiry, content analysis, and case study research. Other expected chapters are on analysis and interpretation and on writing up qualitative research (with coverage of writing expanded in this edition).

Looking at the tables of contents of the two, it seems to me that the *Oxford Handbook* includes chapters with less traditional content than do the *Sage Handbooks*. The content, of course, is a decision of the editor, and Patricia Leavy takes responsibility for her choices. Some of the chapter content that I find unusual was also a part of the first edition, so I assume that she considers it important. Examples of the topics to which I am referring are: duoethnography (new in this edition), museum studies, photography as a research method, Internet-mediated research, and qualitative disaster research. These chapters point the reader to newer directions, which can be positive.

I found some of the chapters to be fascinating and will mention just a few of them. The chapter titled "Historical Overview of Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences" presents six histories of qualitative research, which can be considered "articulations of different discourses about the history of the field, which compete for researchers' attention" (p. 24). These include the conceptual, the internal, the marginalizing, the repressed, the social, and the technological histories of qualitative research. All help to understand this history. The chapter "Feminist Qualitative Research" was informative to me. It provides an overview of feminist research and discusses what feminist research seeks to correct, feminist epistemology, how feminist research is used for the study of sex/gender differences, the values of feminist research, challenges to feminist research, and forms of feminist qualitative research. Other chapters that I found especially instructive are "Practicing Narrative Inquiry

II” and “Practicing Autoethnography and Living the Autoethnographic Life.” Finally, I found the “Program Evaluation” chapter to be very interesting. I have not listed nearly all of the chapters that I found interesting or useful, but if I were using this book in teaching, these are among those that I would have my students study.

Five chapters present aspects of writing up qualitative research and provide a broad overview, with each contributing unique points. This coverage of presenting qualitative research is part of what the editor says has been expanded in this edition in a way that she hopes is of value to students, professors, and researchers. In my assessment, this is a valuable expansion and contribution. I also find the chapter on evaluation, which suggests five categories for evaluating qualitative research, to be very helpful.

I would like to connect the contents of this book to qualitative research in music therapy. When Aigen (2008a, 2008b) investigated the methods used in qualitative research in music therapy a number of years ago, qualitative research used phenomenological inquiry than any other method. However, phenomenological inquiry is not among the chapters in either the *Oxford* or *Sage Handbook* (although it is covered as a philosophical tradition that informs qualitative research in the historical overview chapter of the *Oxford Handbook*). Aigen also reported a number of studies using constructivist/naturalistic methods, also not included in either of these handbooks, and grounded theory, which is included.

As I read the chapter on arts-based research, I wonder how we can make those outside of music therapy more aware of our own qualitative research. The chapter authors, Chilton and Leavy, in a note to the chapter, say that they have chosen to focus on the practices with which they have the most experience and that they believe are most widely used. I think, though, that they have missed an opportunity by not including arts-based music therapy research. The chapter by Viega and Forinash (2016) in *Music Therapy Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Wheeler & Murphy, 2016) provides an overview of arts-based research in music and music therapy and includes 17 examples of music therapy studies. It is disappointing, therefore, that no music therapy arts-based research studies are cited in the current chapter. This may mean that arts-based researchers in music therapy need to publish their studies in sources that are more available to those outside of music therapy, or that those outside of music therapy are not searching diligently for music therapy studies.

In summary, this very large book provides information on many aspects of qualitative research and can be of value to music therapy students, researchers, and scholars. I encourage music therapists to take advantage of what it has to offer. Patricia Leavy says in the Preface (p. xxi); “My hope is that the handbook will be useful in the teaching of qualitative research to students across disciplines and that researchers will frequently pull it from their bookshelves.” I believe that it serves this purpose.

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