The quest for research that builds theory and helps practice in public administration reached a way station with a collection of essays covering 15 years of debate (White and Adams, 1994). Its editors urged greater acceptance within public administration for alternative research approaches, both interpretive and critical, as a way to further knowledge development in public administration. At the same time, they and others acknowledge weaknesses in the current practice of alternative approaches (meaning to some any method that is nonquantitative in form), using public administration doctoral dissertations as an indication of the state of knowledge development in public administration (White, Adams, and Forrester [1996], Adams and White [1994, 1995], Cleary [1992], White [1986a], McCurdy and Cleary [1984]). How can the development of interpretive and critical forms of knowledge acquisition in public administration be advanced? Where can interested researchers, students, teachers, and practitioners turn for help in using these forms?

My objective in writing this review is to direct attention to resources available to those who are interested in research from interpretive and critical approaches. The essay is, of course, influenced by my own experiences with alternative methodologies.(1) I hope it will prove useful to faculty members supervising--and students undertaking--dissertations described as "qualitative" or "case study" research. Practitioners may find the review worthwhile if they are interested in expanding public program evaluation beyond administratively defined outcome measures and into the "lived experience" of program participants (Denzin [1989]). Finally, as more manuscripts employing interpretive and critical modes of inquiry are submitted to journals of public administration and other human sciences, it becomes increasingly important for reviewers to understand that there are different and appropriate processes used in works of qualitative research.

As Weitzman and Miles (1995, 5) express it, qualitative research is "a big tent," covering works labeled as explanatory or positivistic, interpretivist, and critical theorist in their approaches to understanding the social world (White and Adams [1994], Fay [1976], Habermas [1971], White [1986b]). To those using positivistic approaches, qualitative research includes case studies with structured interview questions, open-ended survey questions, and focus groups with pre-structured questions, resulting in reports and texts that often include a smattering of semiexact quotations intended to give findings "real person flavor." Generalizable knowledge and explanation remain the goal of this type of qualitative research. The researcher working from an interpretivist perspective is interested in understanding participants' own experiences, and for him or her the above forms of qualitative research have far too much researcher construction. Interpretive and constructivist approaches can be further broken down into miniparadigms such as ethnography, ethnomethodology, grounded theory, phenomenology, and hermeneutics.(2) Critical theorists and postmodernists expect the stance and role of the writer/researcher and the potential for research co-inquirers to evolve during the research process (Richardson [1995]).

Marshall and Rossman (1995, 2) explain that they utilize the term "qualitative research" as a broad umbrella: "Throughout the text we refer to qualitative research..."
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