Research in Physical Education and Sport: Exploring Alternative Visions
Andrew Sparkes (Editor). Published 1992 by The Falmer Press, 1900 Frost Road, Bristol, PA 19007. (303 pp.)

Reviewed by Robert Brustad, School of Kinesiology & Physical Education, University of Northern Colorado.

During recent years there has been increasing acceptance of sport psychology research that does not completely adhere to the positivist, quantitative traditions of the natural sciences. This book attempts to provide readers with firsthand knowledge of the range of alternative methodologies that have begun to impact sport and physical education research. Editor Andrew Sparkes has not sought to develop a "how-to" book of alternative methodologies, nor has he attempted to contrast the strengths and weaknesses of various research approaches. Rather, the chapters presented in this book are designed to fully immerse the reader in the end product of various alternative methodologies. Ten chapters by separate authors provide firsthand accounts of a variety of approaches such as action research, phenomenology, feminist research, discourse analysis, and ethnographic strategies.

The book's first chapter is an overview of the paradigms debate in social science research. In this chapter, Sparkes identifies the underlying assumptions that guide the positivist, critical, and interpretive paradigms and then discusses the importance of recognizing how these assumptions determine research methods and shape the nature of the investigator's involvement. He does not argue for a particular perspective, but since the focus is upon alternative methods, the positivist tradition does not receive further treatment. In my opinion, this chapter makes an excellent contribution to the understanding of paradigmatic differences in research methods in our field and will help students understand the foundations and implications of such differences in the practice of research.

The remaining chapters focus on a particular research method or on issues surrounding the writing of the research report. One chapter that I found particularly interesting was written by Sparkes and Thomas Templin. This chapter presented a phenomenological account, describing how the low status accorded to physical education teachers within schools creates a sense of "marginality" in the workplace that subsequently affects teaching behavior and day-to-day interactions. I found it unfortunate, however, that in contrast to the book's title, virtually all chapters focused upon research conducted in physical education settings rather than sport. Consequently, I feel that the book may not necessarily capture readers who are interested primarily in sport or sport psychology.

This book is not designed as a textbook per se, but could serve as an effective supplement in a general research methods class. The book succeeds in providing students with an introduction to, and immersion in, alternative forms
of research. However, since the mechanics of conducting alternative methods of research are not addressed, instructors will need additional resources to cover the how-tos of each method. With the expectation that sport psychology researchers will continue to be at the forefront in expanding the range of research methods used in the sport sciences over the next decade, I feel that books such as this one will prove extremely valuable in directing these efforts.

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