Patterson, M. E., & Williams, D. R. (2002). *Collecting and analyzing qualitative data: Hermeneutic principles, methods, and case examples*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore.

Reviewed by
Susan L. Hutchinson
The Pennsylvania State University

Susan Hutchinson is an Assistant Professor in the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Recreation Management at The Pennsylvania State University. She uses qualitative research methods in her own research on leisure, coping and adjustment to negative life events. She is currently working on a study of parenting practices associated with adolescent free time use, and the role of leisure in coping post-divorce.

In my first foray into the realm of "on-line" texts, I promptly printed off Patterson and Williams' (2002) *Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data: Hermeneutic Principles, Methods, and Case Examples* (although I wasn't sure if "virtual books" are allowed to be printed off). Old habits die hard. I still feel as if I can only apprehend the *whole* of a book (something hermeneutic researchers should appreciate) when I see it in its entirety, not screening back and forth on the computer from one page to another, or between tables and references and the text. In fact, if I am going to spend time reading a book thoroughly, and referring back to it repeatedly, I want it to *feel* more substantive; that is, I want it to be a "real" book rather than another file-folder to add to piles of paper on my book shelf. That said, this virtual book *is* worth reading in whatever form.

Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data is a useful *and usable* resource for leisure researchers. It responds to concerns about the state of qualitative research in leisure studies. "Despite the increased prevalence of research using qualitative approaches in recreation and tourism, discussions of principles that should guide this research lags behind other social science disciplines" (Patterson & Williams, p. 1). Patterson and Williams have accomplished their goal of integrating research philosophy with practice by providing an ongoing dialogue throughout the book between philosophical tenets of science and the practice of collecting and analyzing qualitative data. In addition, they have done an admirable job of balancing description of the philosophical principles of qualitative research within the hermeneutic tradition with exemplars from their own research that illustrate "how to actually do it."

Patterson and Williams advance their arguments for better grounding interpretivist approaches in "research philosophy" by first describing the "universal characteristics of science" in Chapter 2, then providing evidence of how interpretive approaches, including hermeneutics, adhere to these principles of good science. In fact, the comparisons they provide between traditional positivistic versus interpretivist approaches are useful for researchers interested in better understanding interpretive approaches to research more generally, beyond the emphasis here on the use of a hermeneutic paradigm to guide data collection and analysis.

The "normative philosophical commitments" upon which hermeneutics is based are described in depth in Chapter 3. Normative commitments, comprised of beliefs about the nature of human experience and reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and the goals of science (axiology) provide a basis for understanding hermeneutics as well as evaluating its merits. While I found myself, at times, impatient with the amount of information provided regarding these principles (because I, like many of my students who are interested in qualitative methods, wanted to know more about how to "just do it"), I also appreciated the depth to which they describe the tenets of *good* science, including good qualitative hermeneutic research.

Patterson and Williams explain that hermeneutic research emphasizes individual cases and contextualized description of a phenomenon, in contrast to positivist traditions that seek to identify context-free generalizations. In addition, they contrast hermeneutics with other approaches to studying social and psychological phenomena in leisure studies. For example, they compare a hermeneutic approach to conceptualizing "meaning" with information processing paradigms that have dominated tourism and recreation research. These comparisons are helpful for new researchers to see how different beliefs about the nature of human experience, knowledge, and science shape the research process.

Patterson and Williams describe the research process within a hermeneutic tradition as "the hermeneutic circle, a metaphor intended to communicate multiple meanings" (p. 26). They see it as a "dialogue" between the whole and part, between one's theoretical framework (which they call "forestructures of understanding") and the phenomenon under investigation, and between evolving relationships in the data. While hermeneutic principles and processes may seem relatively vague (which the authors admit), this discussion is strengthened by examples from recreation and tourism research.

Chapter 4 provides a template for collecting and analyzing data within the hermeneutic tradition. However, Patterson and Williams begin by describing steps that comprise *any* research design; from choosing a guiding conceptual framework, to determining the sample and methods of data collection and analysis. This description is helpful for any new researcher. Additionally, while they suggest that the same methods (e.g., interviewing) are applied differently depending on the normative commitments guiding the research, it does seem that it is not the data that are collected that distinguishes hermeneutics but what is done with the data afterwards. As it relates to data analysis in a hermeneutic tradition, analysis focuses on developing an "organizing-system" in which analysis is "holistic" and aims for creating interpretations of relationships between the data. For those of us who want more concrete guidelines on "how to actually do it," the 8-step process Patterson and Williams outline regarding the development of an organizing-system and then the exemplars that comprise Chapter 5 are invaluable.

Rather than merely re-presenting studies reported elsewhere, Patterson and Williams use three case examples in Chapter 5 to explain how they *thought* about methodological issues, research goals, research design, and data analysis. This "reflection-on-action" is immensely useful for helping researchers new to an interpretivist approach to

better understand how to think about their phenomenon of interest, and how to weave together this interest with existing literature, with their research design, and with the data at hand. The final chapter, Chapter 6, seems somewhat out of place however, as it returns to a more philosophical stance by talking about the types of situations, within the domains of tourism and recreation research, for which it would be appropriate to adapt a hermeneutic approach. While this discussion is interesting it does seem that it would be better placed in an earlier chapter (e.g., Chapter 4) as examples of how to apply a hermeneutic approach to recreation and tourism research.

Finally, for those of us who naively consider ourselves to be *leisure researchers*, within which research on tourism and recreation contexts may occur, the lack of mention of "leisure" in the text does seem somewhat odd. Nonetheless, the authors have provided a strong foundation for researchers within tourism, recreation *and* leisure studies to consider hermeneutics as the paradigm upon which they may want to hang their "virtual" researcher hat.