

LESLIE GOODYEAR | JENNIFER JEWISS  
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Editors

# Qualitative Inquiry in Evaluation

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

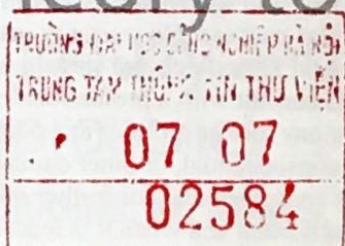


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# QUALITATIVE INQUIRY IN EVALUATION

From Theory to Practice



**LESLIE GOODYEAR,  
JENNIFER JEWISS, JANET USINGER,  
AND ERIC BARELA**



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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

To put it simply, this book is about integrating qualitative inquiry—its approaches, methods, stances, and theories—into the practice of evaluation. What do we mean by “qualitative inquiry” and “evaluation”? We agree with Thomas Schwandt (2007) that qualitative inquiry “aims at understanding the *meaning* of human *action*” (italics in original) (p. 248). It includes many forms of social inquiry such as case study research, naturalistic inquiry, ethnography, and others. Likewise, many definitions of evaluation are in play these days; however, Peter Dahler-Larsen (2012) summarizes them quite succinctly when he defines evaluation as “basically a systematic, methodological, and thus ‘assisted’ way of investigating and assessing an activity of public interest in order to affect decisions or actions concerning this activity or similar activities” (p. 9).

This book is about the intersection of evaluation and qualitative inquiry; that space in a Venn diagram where qualitative inquiry and evaluation overlap. It is the space where the two colored circles representing qualitative inquiry and evaluation come together to create a new color. That part of the diagram is what we are calling qualitative evaluation. That is what this book is about.

Sometimes, to understand what something is, it is helpful to understand what it is not. This book is not a how-to textbook. This edited volume will not tell you how to develop and implement a qualitative evaluation. Instead, we hope this book will stimulate your thinking on how different evaluation approaches dovetail with qualitative inquiry. In addition, the second part of the book offers “tales of the field” (Van Maanen, 1988) that share the ins and outs of the practice of qualitative evaluation.