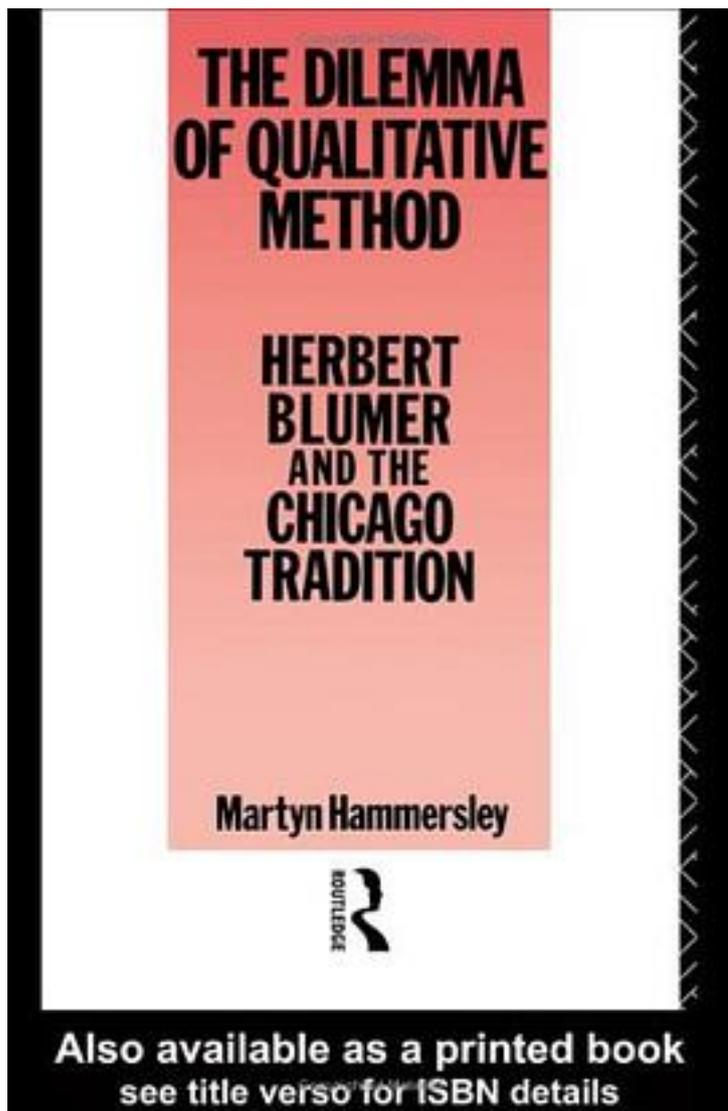


# The Dilemma of Qualitative Method



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The dispute over the value of qualitative versus quantitative approaches to social research originated in 19th and early 20th-century debates about the relationship between the methods of history and natural science. Within sociology, this dispute first arose in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s, between adherents of "case study" and statistical methods. One of the main advocates of case study was the Chicago sociologist, Herbert Blumer. His influential writings on methodology provide a link between this earlier controversy and the debates of later decades. However, Blumer's arguments for qualitative or "naturalistic" methods, retain a central ambivalence - does that method share the same logic as natural science, or does it represent a different form of enquiry characteristic of history and the humanities? That issue continues to underlie discussions of qualitative method, and provokes fundamental questions about the procedures employed by qualitative researchers. "The Dilemma of Qualitative Method" is a guide to this key area of social research methodology. The author sketches the historical content of the dispute and provides a detailed account and systematic analysis of Blumer's methodological writings, including his doctoral thesis. The strategies for qualitative research advocated by Blumer and others within the Chicago tradition are reviewed and assessed.

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目录:

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方法论

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