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A Practical Approach to Qualitative Interviews

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Abstract

Nigel King and Christine Horrocks (2010) provide a functional discussion of multiple topics related to interviewing in their book, *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. However, the authors present more than just a useful discussion of how to design, conduct, and analyze interviews. They simultaneously introduce the importance of philosophical approaches and ethics in relation to the topics discussed, making connections between these important notions and the qualitative research process they describe. Their practical approach to the topics presented makes their book a wonderful resource for novice researchers.

Keywords

Qualitative Research, Interviews, Philosophical Approaches, Ethics

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A Practical Approach to Qualitative Interviews

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*Nigel King and Christine Horrocks (2010) provide a functional discussion of multiple topics related to interviewing in their book, *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. However, the authors present more than just a useful discussion of how to design, conduct, and analyze interviews. They simultaneously introduce the importance of philosophical approaches and ethics in relation to the topics discussed, making connections between these important notions and the qualitative research process they describe. Their practical approach to the topics presented makes their book a wonderful resource for novice researchers. Key Words: *Qualitative Research, Interviews, Philosophical Approaches, and Ethics**

In *Interviews in Qualitative Research*, Nigel King and Christine Horrocks (2010) provide much more than the standard orientation to the procedures of qualitative interviewing, making their book a good resource for novice researchers. Foremost, the authors address how to design, conduct, and analyze interviews by using a practical approach that not only discusses each topic in a logical step-by-step fashion but includes applications using real-life research examples. The chapters are formatted in a way that enhances the reader's understanding of the material. They begin with an introduction to the topic—including bulleted lists of items covered in the chapter, methodically present the content, and conclude with a summary of key ideas and recommended readings. In particular, the boxes, figures, and tables provide graphic organizers that further enhance the reader's understanding. This practical approach brings clarity to topics that can be quite complex for novice researchers. Additionally, there are two major strengths to the book that further promote the reader's understanding.

The book's first major strength is that, within the various chapters, King and Horrocks (2010) continuously reintroduce the importance of philosophical approaches in relation to the topics discussed. They begin with the notion that philosophical assumptions drive qualitative research in chapter 2 and spotlight the realist, contextual, and constructionist points of view. Using a functional approach in their discussion, they focus on the ontological and epistemological perspectives, arguing that the researcher's beliefs about "what counts as knowledge" (King & Horrocks, p. 10) influence how it is studied. Then, throughout the book, the authors reinforce the importance of explicating the philosophical assumptions in research by connecting those assumptions to the various processes used in qualitative research.

One example of the authors' connection between philosophical assumptions and their use in qualitative research occurs in chapter 7 when the authors encourage researchers "to consider the morality of not only research practice, but also the various practical, epistemological and ontological assumptions that surround and define the research" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 104). Furthermore, they raise the reader's consciousness of the "ethical relationships and responsibilities" (King & Horrocks, p. 104) involved in knowledge production using these assumptions. Another example of the

connection between philosophical assumptions and their use in qualitative research occurs in chapter 9 on data analysis. Here the authors tie the philosophical assumptions to specific analysis approaches: the constructionist point of view to discourse and narrative analysis and the realist and contextual points of view to data analysis techniques used in phenomenology, grounded theory, and case studies. By explaining these connections in a functional way, the authors assist novice qualitative researchers who frequently find making such connections a cause for consternation.

The second main strength of King and Horrocks' (2010) book is their treatment of the topic of ethics. Aside from an extensive discussion of interviewing ethics in chapter 7, the authors make useful connections between the topic of ethics and the various components of the research process. For example, in chapter 3 on designing an interview study, they touch upon ethical obligations to participants. They discuss the need for keeping "participants' confidentiality in relation to other members of the organization (including the gatekeeper)" (King & Horrocks, p. 31) and the undue influence that gatekeepers may exert on participants that would prevent genuine consent. Realizing that ethical considerations undergird every aspect of the research, as exemplified by this connection to participant recruitment, is particularly important for novice researchers who might not otherwise be aware of such concerns. Another example of the integration of ethics in the book occurs in chapter 8 on reflexivity. The authors elucidate the importance of using reflexivity to address the researcher's ethical and social responsibility "to present their work in ways that are understandable, useful, and accountable" (King & Horrocks, p. 139).

In summary, by using a practical approach to addressing how to design, conduct, and analyze interviews, King and Horrocks (2010) provide the reader with an accessible format which enhances the understanding of topics, particularly those that pose challenges to novice researchers. Additionally, the book has two major strengths: discussions of philosophical assumptions and ethics. Although these topics individually are well addressed by other writers in the field of qualitative research (see Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011, respectively), what makes *Interviews in Qualitative Research* engaging is the authors' ability to make connections between these topics and the various areas of qualitative research as they relate to interviews. Their continuous reaffirmation of the importance of elucidating the philosophical approaches and tending to ethical issues within qualitative research provide useful connections for the reader, especially novice researchers, that have the potential to enhance their research skills. To read more about the book and sample Chapters 1 and 2, you may visit the publisher's website at: <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/textbooksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book228232&currTree=Subjects&level1=L00&#tabview=samples>.

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