

Book Review

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING. PRINCIPLES, TECHNIQUES, ANALYSIS

By Victor Minichiello, Rosalie Aroni and Terrence Hays

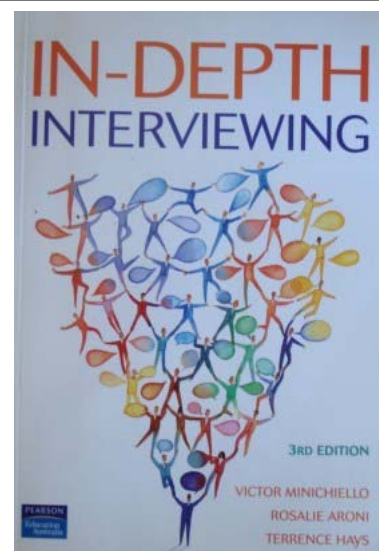
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Research in any field involves a skilfully crafted synthesis of reflecting, critically analysing relevant literature, designing methodologically sound approaches to investigate a proposition, selecting contextualised data gathering techniques and fundamentally asking the most appropriate questions.

The 3rd edition of Victor Minichiello, Rosalie Aroni and Terrence Hays' Australian edition (2008) *In-depth Interviewing, Principles, Techniques, Analysis* is an excellent addition to any researcher's library. The book is written with an emphasis on teaching research students qualitative research design. However, experienced researchers and emerging postgraduate research students will find this new edition a treasure trove of information relevant to the processes and procedures of conducting research interviews.

As the authors state, "the interview is a complex and involved procedure when used as a social science research tool" (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008, p. 1). Designing appropriate and insightful interview questions is much more difficult than many of us realise. How many of us have witnessed the inane question of the media interviewer who asks the victims of a terrorist explosion, "How do you feel?" Analogously, there is the naive question of the emergent researcher who asks, "What are you thinking?" Then there is the experienced researcher who contextualises the question by asking, "we were talking about the different principal leadership styles in terms of the effects on the classroom teacher.

Can you describe your own experiences in relation to your principal's leadership style and your working relationship in this school?" Experienced researchers also often refine their interview questions; an apparently awkward question such as "What do you think of when you hear the word research?" can be simply restructured as, "What does it mean to you to be a researcher?" *In-depth Interviewing* has a wealth of information that will assist in the design of pertinent research questions. Chapter 3, 'In-depth interviewing', presents a comprehensive overview of the purpose and distinctive features of different types of interview, such as: telephone interviews, Internet interviews, group and focus interviews, interview proxies and memory work. This chapter is an excellent exposition of interview question types and for researchers in an Information Age dominated by electronic media this chapter is essential reading.

There is currently a variety of books on the market aiming to assist researchers in the design of different types of data-gathering techniques that involve questioning, such as questionnaire and survey design (Fink, 2009; Fowler, 2009) and semi-structured and focus-group questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Yin, 2009). However, the in-depth interview is a particular kind of questioning that requires content knowledge (why do you want to know this particular piece of information?), communication skills (how will you structure particular questions?) and human experience

(what do you need to know about the fellow human being you are interviewing?). Researchers will find invaluable advice on all these questions in this aptly named book. The book's content is structured to allow a very thorough coverage of all facets of the interview process, from planning through to implementation.

- *Chapter One explores the theoretical background and is an essential introduction to in-depth interviewing techniques.*
- *Chapter Two, which provides compelling reasons for contextualising the interview process by means of a literature review, will assist researchers in devising an appropriate research methodology.*
- *Chapters Three and Four describe interview models, the many different types of interview and the process of interviewing, thus preparing the foundation for selection criteria procedures.*
- *Chapter Five gives a detailed account of the Life History approach, "... the history of an individual's life given by the person living it and solicited by the researcher. It is a sociological autobiography drawn from in-depth interviewing and/or solicited narratives" (Minichiello, et al., 2008, p. 125). This chapter is very constructive and will assist readers' understanding of this often misunderstood methodological approach.*
- *Chapter Six explains the main features of a number of group interview techniques: focus group, reference group, memory work and consensus group interviews. The level of detail will assist researchers who may be contemplating this branch of interviewing techniques.*
- *Chapter Seven concentrates on the pragmatics of in-depth interviewing. The authors' description of the different modes of sampling in qualitative research is invaluable. The work of Patton (Patton, 1990, 2002) has always been a valuable resource providing a rationale for various modes of sampling. This chapter is a welcome addition to the literature, relevant to current research design and methodology issues, and a valuable asset of the book.*
- *Chapter Eight, on the ethics and politics of in-depth interviewing, is another very valuable addition as it covers material often missing from books on research methodology. This chapter is particularly pertinent for researchers in the fields of criminal incarceration, juvenile, sexuality and cross-cultural research.*
- *Chapters Nine and Ten concentrate on the coding and analysis of data stages of research processes involving in-depth interviewing. These two chapters are invaluable, especially to the emerging researcher. For a researcher deciding whether or not to choose narrative, thematic, grounded theory or discourse analysis, Chapter 10 is a very beneficial exposition of these methodological constructs.*

The book is accessible, relevant and a valuable source of information on the design and implementation of in-depth interviewing techniques for qualitative research. I recommend this book to all

researchers, whether in the scientific or humanities, and to experienced or novice alike. *In-depth Interviewing* will be an invaluable addition to your bookshelf or library collection of resources for qualitative research design.

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