Journal of Transport Geography 44 (2015) 89

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Transport Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jtrangeo

Book review

Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry: A Relational Approach, R. Josselson. The Guilford Press, New York (2013). £20.99, Paperback, ISBN: 978-1-4625-1000-9

This book describes the process of qualitative or narrative interviewing (the author uses the terms interchangeably). It explains the process from start to finish, accompanied by useful hints and tips. By doing so, the author attempts to fill what she perceives to be a gap in the market by producing a book that discusses the interview process itself, rather than focussing on epistemological aspects or on conceptualizing the interview process. As such this book will be very useful to transport geography researchers interested in qualitative interviewing.

It focusses on a particular niche: the process of interviewing individuals to collect "*a rich, nuanced, storied sample of subjectivity that details how it has felt to the participant to be living the life he or she has lived in relation to the phenomenon of the research question*" (IX). It therefore concentrates on the use of unstructured interviewing to collect the interviewees "story" in such a way that it will enable the researcher to answer their research question. This book aims to help both inexperienced and relatively experienced researchers improve their interview approach and technique.

There are eleven chapters that lead the reader from "The foundations of interviewing as qualitative inquiry" (Chapter 1) through planning for and undertaking the interview, to the equally important process of what to do "After the interview" (Chapter 10). The chapters are illustrated with useful exerts from real life interviews which add depth to the descriptive text and ensure the reader can clearly understand the concepts and events that the author is talking about. There are also a number of useful exercises throughout the book that aim to enable the reader to experience and understand the interview process in a controlled environment. These appear to be well thought through and would prove useful in a workshop situation where they could be used with groups of inexperienced (and more experienced) interviewers to help them develop and improve their interview technique.

The book offers a good mix of information, including sections on the organisational aspects of interviewing (obtaining ethical approval, and incorporating it into the interview process; recruiting participants, location of the interview; developing the questions) and the practical process of the interview (beginning the interview; interview experiences; empathetic listening; after the interview; etc.). The value of the book is increased by clear explanations of why aspects of interviewing should be approached in certain ways, or at least what the outcomes of different approaches might mean.

The author goes to great lengths to share the idea that not all interviews will be perfect, and one should anticipate undertaking "good" and "bad or difficult" interviews for a range of reasons, not all of which are under the control of the interviewer. In doing so she reflects on her own experiences as an interviewer and draws upon occasions when it was uncomfortable, or when the interviewee wasn't forthcoming with information. Furthermore the section on difficult interviews provides advice on what the reader should do if they encounter certain situations.

In terms of suitability, this book will be useful to a range of people – from students to experienced interviewers. It offers enough detail for the student to grasp what the process of interviewing entails, and what outcomes they can expect, even if they have never undertaken a qualitative interview. Alongside this, it is advanced enough for the more experienced interviewer and provides material that will enable them to reflect on their approach, and on interview situations that they have encountered. The book is well written, and leaves a feeling that one has been to a particularly good workshop, or sat down with the author over coffee to chat about what narrative interviewing entails.

Nevertheless there are a couple of ways in which this book could be improved. Firstly the inclusion of an appendix on interview aids seems a little clunky and poorly explained. Whilst the aids are mentioned in the preceding chapters, perhaps some more commentary in this section would be useful as in its current form it appears something of an afterthought. It would also be beneficial to have some information about the types of analysis that could be used. Although more advanced scholars may already be aware of the breadth of approaches available, students are unlikely to have this awareness and a small amount of signposting towards the various theories and approaches they might consider would be valuable.

Overall this book represents a very valuable contribution to the existing literature in this field and certainly achieves what it set out to in terms of providing a detailed guide to assist those who undertake, or are about to undertake narrative interviews. It covers the approach in enough detail to help even the most novice interviewer prepare to undertake research using this method. In conclusion therefore, it will be a useful addition to the bookshelves of researchers interested in qualitative interviewing, and to academics who supervise students undertaking work using this approach.

Rebecca Johnson
Research Fellow, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Plymouth University, Drake Circus, Plymouth, Devon PL4 8AA, United Kingdom
E-mail address: rebecca.johnson@plymouth.ac.uk

Available online 29 March 2015

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2015.03.003