

Neophyte Qualitative Researcher Finding His Voice Through Qualitative Journeys

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*If you are looking for a book written about the qualitative research experience, you can find it in Victor Minichiello and Jeffery A. Kottler's (2010c) edited volume *Qualitative Journeys: Student and Mentor Experiences with Research*. For a neophyte qualitative researcher who is finding his voice as a budding qualitative scholar, this book serves as an inspiration. This easy-to-read book gives a firsthand look at what other new, and oftentimes struggling, qualitative researchers experienced as they began their research journeys. Overall, the book builds a sense of excitement and interest in the qualitative paradigm; and, after reading it, I am energized to move forward with my own qualitative journey. Key Words: Qualitative Research, Stories, Novice, and Journey*

If you are looking for a book written about the qualitative research experience, you can find it in Victor Minichiello and Jeffery A. Kottler's (2010c) edited volume *Qualitative Journeys: Student and Mentor Experiences with Research*. For a neophyte qualitative researcher who is finding his voice as a budding qualitative scholar, Minichiello and Kottler's book serves as an inspiration. This easy-to-read book gives a firsthand look at what other new, and oftentimes struggling, qualitative researchers experienced as they began their research journeys. The book highlights the experiences of over a dozen individuals as they worked through their first experiences as qualitative researchers. Adding to the richness of this text, not only does the reader get the student-researcher point of view, but the chapter authors also weave in the experiences of the mentors who guided them throughout their first qualitative journeys. This component of student-mentor interaction added a dimension to this text that I have not seen in other works. The book provides a multidimensional learning experience, bringing to life numerous issues and concerns that a researcher may encounter before, during, and after the research process.

In chapter one, Minichiello and Kottler (2010d) eloquently introduce the stories lying ahead, outlining the purpose of the publication. From the first page they state, "Our goal is to increase your understanding of qualitative research by capturing your interest within the stories of two dozen journeys undertaken by students, and the methods they used" (p. 1). Over the next two hundred and ninety-one pages, the authors set out to achieve their goal, which I feel they accomplished. An interesting component to the first chapter is the honesty the authors portray as they describe the beginnings of their own qualitative journeys. Kottler proclaims, "I have always been naturally curious and trying to make sense of the world and especially to make sense of where I fit in the grand scheme of things" (p. 5). Minichiello shares that his qualitative roots could be "traced to my undergraduate studies. I have always loved both new adventures and talking to

people” (p. 2). After reading both of the authors’ stories, one comes away with a sense of a deep passion for and appreciation of the qualitative paradigm. In addition, though the authors are seasoned scholars and methodological experts, one cannot help but get the sense that after decades of qualitative experiences, they are still learning as scholars and growing as researchers. As a result of the authors’ candor and sincerity, a trust is built with the reader.

As chapter two begins, Minichiello and Kottler (2010a) give a brief qualitative research review, highlighting several well-known qualitative methodologies. This is a helpful section of the book and is really the only point the book feels like a textbook. From “different ways of knowing” (p. 13) to “different ways to approach data collection” (p. 14), the review of basic concepts is covered briefly but one does not feel as if any area is shortchanged. The authors include a useful table (p. 29) to outline in a concise manner the major qualitative methodologies: Grounded Theory, Phenomenology, Narrative, Case Study, and Ethnography. They might have included numerous other qualitative hybrids on this list, but one has to remember that this book is an introduction to the ever-expanding world of qualitative research; an exhaustive list would have been beyond the purpose of this text.

The next fourteen chapters present stories of numerous types of qualitative research experiences. The common thread running through these chapters is that each student recounts his or her first qualitative research journey; each story not only includes the student’s perspective but the mentor’s thoughts, as well. The chapters are diverse and cover many different research areas and methodological choices. There is a story of a researcher who used narrative inquiry to tell the stories of parents whose children as young adults committed suicide (Maple & Edwards, 2010). There is a story of a researcher who studied the experiences of trans individuals while at the same time navigating through her identity as a trans woman (Reicherzer & Comstock, 2010). There is a story of a woman who is visually impaired who used interviews to “see” her research and shed light on the phenomenon of career development in the accounting profession (Smith-Ruig & Sheridan, 2010). Each chapter is different, but all are equally important in giving a comprehensive and honest look at what it means to be a fledgling qualitative researcher.

In the final chapter, Minichiello and Kottler (2010b) conclude with a brief review of what they themselves learned through the experience of constructing the book. Again, it is refreshing for those who teach to share how they also learn from their experiences. “We started out with some preconceptions and expectations about what we thought we’d find and hear in the narratives...we should have known better” (p. 278). This openness speaks to their ability to learn from doing, remaining in a constant state of self-reflection, critique, and review.

This book contributes to the advancement of qualitative research as a legitimate and scholarly research paradigm. The experiences and voices of the authors ring loud and clear in proclaiming that they are doing “good” research and that the way they are doing this research is valid and important. Overall, the book builds a sense of excitement and interest in the qualitative paradigm; and, after reading it, I am energized to move forward with my own qualitative journey. Though it may not be easy and the path may become a little messy, I can take solace in the fact that many others have come before me and have made it to the finish line. I look forward to one day adding my own chapter to this ever-

expanding story of the qualitative research journey. You can find additional information about the book and browse through sample material at <http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?contribId=529172&prodId=Book231711#abview=samples>.

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Article Citation

Robison, M. K. (2009). Neophyte qualitative researcher finding his voice through *Qualitative Journeys*. *The Weekly Qualitative Report*, 2(49), 285-287. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/WQR/minichiello.pdf>
