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Book Review: 100 Questions (and Answers) About Qualitative Research

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Given, L. M. (2016). *100 Questions (and Answers) About Qualitative Research*. California: SAGE Publications

As researchers, scholars, professors, or educators, both new and experienced, we all seek to understand a myriad of occurrences, oftentimes with an attempt to tackle pressing and emerging problems or even improve our knowledge by means of research. If our aims are to observe or explore human-related issues and experiences and to deepen our understanding about them, qualitative research is, then, an effective approach to study these inquiries we pose. However, to familiarize oneself with qualitative research can be quite perplexing for those who are new to the concepts and are in need of clear, concise explanations regarding the qualitative discipline.

100 Questions (and Answers) About Qualitative Research was written by Lisa M. Given and was published by SAGE Publications, Inc. in 2016. The book is one of the Q&A SAGE 100 Questions and Answers Series, including *100 Questions (and Answers) About Research Methods* by Neil J. Salkind, *100 Questions (and Answers) About Tests and Measurement* by Bruce B. Frey, *100 Questions (and Answers) About Statistics* by Neil, J. Salkind, and *100 Questions (and Answers) About Qualitative Research* by Lisa M. Given.

The author of the book, Lisa M. Given, Ph.D., is a professor of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, Australia. She is also a member of the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education at Charles Sturt

University. Her previous publication was a reference book entitled *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, which was published in 2008.

As a resource for reference, the content of the book is divided into easy-to-follow sections, ranging from the theoretical backgrounds to the practicality and implementation of qualitative research. There are in total nine parts as follows:

Part 1: The Nature of Qualitative Inquiry

Part 2: Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research

Part 3: Designing Qualitative Research

Part 4: Ensuring Rigor in Qualitative Research Design

Part 5: Methodologies and Methods

Part 6: Mixed-Methods Research involving Qualitative Approaches

Part 7: Collecting Qualitative Data

Part 8: Conducting Qualitative Analysis

Part 9: Writing Qualitative Research

Despite being sequential in nature, each part is independent of the others and can be read according to the needs of the readers. In each part, a set of questions and concise answers are provided.

The first two parts give the readers a glimpse of what qualitative research essentially is. The questions in Part 1 address some of the common inquiries regarding, for instance, the definitions of qualitative research, how it is used across disciplines, and qualitative research in comparison with quantitative studies. In addition, the explanations of key terms such as “ontology” and “epistemology” are addressed. Some other issues include the approximate length of time required to carry out qualitative studies and certain limitations that researchers might encounter. Part 2 centers on ethical issues in connection with major questions such as the following: “*What are the researcher’s ethical responsibilities in qualitative research?*,” “*What kinds of ethics challenges do qualitative researchers face, typically?*,” and “*Ethics approval seems to be more difficult to obtain for qualitative projects. Is that true?*” Simply put, both Part 1 and Part 2 help the readers to explore and strengthen their ground in qualitative research.

Another focus of the book primarily deals with qualitative research design. In Part 3, the readers are exposed to a set of questions

regarding, for instance, what kinds of issues that can be tackled qualitatively, the extent to which a hypothesis and theoretical/conceptual framework can be used in qualitative studies, sample size, and appropriate sampling approaches. Some specific terms in qualitative design, such as “exploratory qualitative design” and “emergent qualitative design,” are additionally highlighted. Complementary to the preceding part, Part 4 further discusses the rigidity of qualitative design by proposing effective strategies that researchers can employ to ensure the rigor of their research projects as well as some useful approaches to be implemented in the data collection process. Further, the author gives concise explanations of, along with counterarguments to, common criticisms in qualitative research. Moving from design to procedures, Part 5 begins by differentiating the meanings of “design,” “methodology,” and “method”. This part also discusses important approaches in qualitative research including “grounded theory,” “phenomenology,” “case study,” “ethnography,” “narrative inquiry” and basically how to select the right methodologies for a study. The author, furthermore, sheds light on the optimal use of specific methods in qualitative research, such as individual and group interviews. For those that are interested in integrating qualitative approaches in their mixed-methods studies, Part 6 of the book illustrates how the two different approaches are integral to specific designs and projects and also provides answers to some useful questions such as “*How can qualitative research complement a quantitative study?*,” “*Which do I do first—The qualitative component of the study or the quantitative component?*,” “*I’ve only ever used quantitative designs, but I want to use qualitative approaches now—What are the key issues I need to consider and how can I learn more about them?*”. This section familiarizes readers with the processes of designing and applying qualitative methodologies and methods in their research.

In the last three parts of the book, Part 7, 8, and 9, the implementation of qualitative research is the central theme. Part 7 features data collection procedures, covering various issues on conducting a pilot study, neutrality in collecting qualitative data, the role of fieldwork, and how to gather so-called “rich data.” Since

qualitative approaches can involve numerous sources of data, some other questions address how researchers can make use of such variety (e.g. social media, websites, photographs, drawings) and methods (e.g. audio or video recordings and interviews). After discussing the gathering of qualitative data, Part 8 introduces how to conduct qualitative analysis. It talks about when and how to analyze the data, what coding is and how it can be carried out, and some useful analysis software. The final part, Part 9, concerns the final step in doing qualitative research—writing things down. New researchers might be curious about how their findings should be presented in a proper way or how to include different types of data in their writing, in as concise a way as possible for example. Therefore, this section helps to clarify these questions for those that are going to be reporting qualitative data.

Considering the unique characteristics of qualitative research, including the principles, designs, methods, and implementation and application, one might find it challenging to understand the concepts of qualitative research or feel unsure about where exactly to begin. *100 Questions (and Answers) About Qualitative Research* by Lisa M. Given can serve as a fundamental guide for those new to qualitative approaches and be a quick brush-up for those who experienced qualitative studies before. As its name suggests, the content is organized in a question-and-answer manner, creating a friendly experience for the readers. All of the questions are presented in a way that helps voice questions being posed in real life, and each is accompanied by a concise answer written in a readable fashion. Thus, not only can the readers easily relate to these queries, but they can also quickly and precisely identify a specific topic that corresponds to their doubts. Since certain issues of qualitative research overlap, the book also provides suggestions that cross-refer readers to other relevant questions for more comprehensive understanding. However, those who wish to explore qualitative research based on a specific field or discipline may find the book rather unfit for their needs, as the book generally focuses on the prevalent issues of qualitative research. It is, therefore, suggested that they also consider other specific textbooks focusing on their particular discipline. In the field of EFL/ESL, TESOL

or applied linguistics, the following books in qualitative research are additionally recommended: *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* by Berg and Lune (2011), *Qualitative Educational Research: Readings in Reflexive Methodology and Transformative Practice* by Luttrell (2010), and *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Introduction* by Heigham and Croker (2009).

As the author herself asserts in the book, “Like all research approaches, qualitative research offers a complex and varied way to understand the world around us.” If you are planning to conduct a qualitative project or are simply looking for a way to familiarize yourself with the concepts of the qualitative approach, this book can definitely be a friendly companion that guides you through all of the basics and also prepares you for more specific, in-depth knowledge regarding qualitative research.

The Reviewer

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