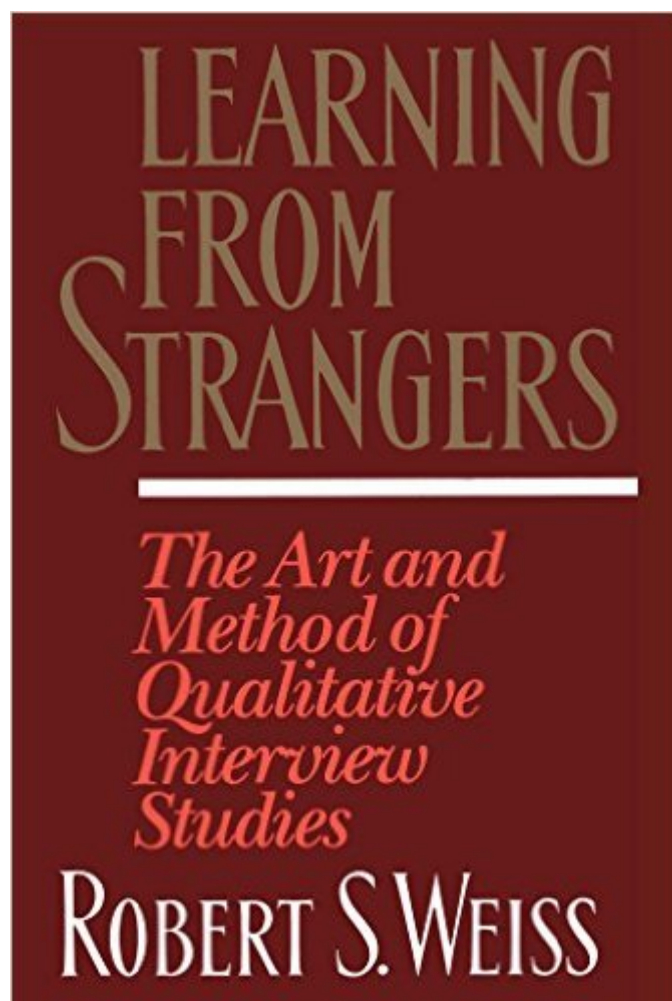


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Learning From Strangers: The Art And Method Of Qualitative Interview Studies



Synopsis

Learning From Strangers is the definitive work on qualitative research interviewing. It draws on Robert Weiss's thirty years of experience in interviewing and teaching others how to do it. The most effective interviews, says Weiss, rely on creating cooperation -- an open and trusting alliance between interviewer and respondent, dedicated to specific and honest accounts of both internal and external events. Against the eclectic background of his work in national sample surveys, studies based on semi-structured interviewing, and participant observation, Weiss walks the reader through the method of qualitative interview studies: sample selection, development of an interview guide, the conduct of the interview, analysis, and preparation of the data. Weiss gives examples of successful and less successful interviews and offers specific techniques and guidelines for the practitioner.

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Customer Reviews

"Learning From Strangers" is a book that will greatly augment any coursework in anthropology, sociology, or education research methods. I rank it right up there with classic works like Powdermaker's "Stranger and Friend", Agar's "The Professional Stranger" and Van Maanen's "Tales of the Field". This volume is well worth reading for those new to qualitative research methods, as well as for those who might question how well they're doing with interviewing as a data collection method. The author uses a conversational approach as he generously shares and reflects upon his many years of interview experience. This sharing isn't self-serving, but sensitively, (and importantly) covers all situations: the tricky, the awkward, and the difficult. The chapter on "Issues in

Interviewing" resonated with me. For example, as I was alone in the field, doing the qualitative research for my dissertation in South Africa, I was astonished at how tiring I found my interviewing to be. I had been discussing the personal histories of rural educators who had themselves been educated under apartheid, and was completely exhausted by the process. Weiss put my mind to rest when he discusses the levels of emotion that are shared between interviewer and respondent (at page 137). He also debunks some persistent research myths such as the need for a fixed set of questions (the process is iterative), or the so-called "interviewer-respondent match" (the insider-outsider dilemma). Interviewing is a technique that people frequently assume they "can do" but this book highlights the many intricacies of what are fundamentally social interactions undertaken in pursuit of research data.

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