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Abstract

This review essay provides a brief introduction to the use of qualitative methods in criminological research, before moving on to describe the content of the two books. The books are quite different in a number of ways. NOAKS and WINCUP take the "how to do it" approach, making the book very useful for students and researchers new to qualitative methods. In contrast, POGREBIN's edited collection provides a large number of "how it has been done" examples with an equal focus on the findings as on the methodological approach. Although both books devote space to ethical dilemmas, the nature of the dilemmas and how they are resolved varies. This is probably due to the age of some of the chapters within POGREBIN's book (all are reprints and date back to 1973) but may also reflect different ethical stances in the USA and UK.

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Social science research yields valuable information and expands our understanding, but it is not 100 percent foolproof. It does not guarantee perfect results every time or offer “absolute truth.”

Exploring the real life experiences of criminal justice professionals, this anthology is the first book to focus solely on the use of qualitative research in various components of the criminal justice system. The collection is organized from two criminal justice perspectives: one qualitatively oriented and the other system oriented, including overviews of each qualitative method and commentaries that analyze the research techniques. Mark R. Pogrebin is a Professor and Director of Criminal Justice in the Graduate School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado at Denver. Professor Pogrebin has his M.A. from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, and Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. The methods employed in criminological and criminal justice research are identical to those in the behavioral and social sciences in general. A critical assumption underlying the use of these procedures involves the belief in an objective reality, or a world that different people perceive in similar fashion. Related to this assumption is that such a reality can be studied objectively. The perspective that individual and social processes can be studied dispassionately or scientifically is referred to as positivism. Not all criminologists share the positivist perspective. For example, any effort...