



BOOK REVIEW

Developing Effective Research Proposals (3rd Edition)

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Book Review

Developing Effective Research Proposals (3rd Edition)

Author: Keith F. Punch

Los Angeles: Sage Publications (2016) pp. 192

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Reviewer: Dr. Kirsten Darling-McQuistan, University of Aberdeen

Keith Punch's 3rd edition of the text, 'Developing Effective Research Proposals', builds on the structure and content of the previous editions of this book to provide a highly pragmatic guide, which aims to 'demystify' the process of writing a successful research proposal. Punch is forthcoming in identifying graduate students, writing research proposals for empirical studies within the social sciences, as his target audience and his commitment to the possible needs of a graduate student are evident throughout the text. As Punch suggests, however, this text may also benefit a wider audience: as an early-career researcher reviewing this text, while coincidentally writing a research funding proposal, I can confirm that I gained from Punch's experience and practical support.

The success of this text lies in its structure, which is clearly mapped out and sign-posted from the outset. The structure allows readers to use the book to address their own specific needs by accessing relevant chapters, which can stand-alone, or be read within the context of the book as a whole. This design, along with the exercises and study questions at the end of each chapter (which are new to this edition), enables readers, with different levels of experience, to use the book as a practical writing tool.

Punch has organised the content of the book in such a way to provide a comprehensive, yet highly accessible account of the research proposal writing process. During the introductory chapter, Punch begins by defining key terms, such as 'social sciences', offering those with limited experience entry in to the text, and the proposal writing process itself. He also takes time to define 'qualitative', 'quantitative' and 'mixed-methods' approaches, giving a brief historical overview of these research movements in the social sciences. The 'mixed-methods' section is new to this edition, which Punch has included in response to growing interest in this approach. This chapter establishes supportive foundations for the proceeding chapters, through which Punch encourages readers to write an 'internally consistent' proposal, regardless of the nature of the proposed research.

Within this edition, Punch has also included a chapter titled: 'Including Ethics in Social Science Research', written by Alis Oancea (chapter 3). I found this chapter to be extremely

thorough and believe the advice given to be pivotal to writing a successful proposal within the social sciences. It includes discussion of 'ethical issues' and 'principles', which not only forefront the importance of embedding ethics within any research proposal, but illustrate the importance of aligning the approach taken to ethics within the wider context of the chosen research approach.

I believe this text to be a very practical tool and while it has clearly been written for graduate students, its usefulness extends beyond this target group.