

Situated Accounts: Qualitative Interviews with Women Educational Managers

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ABSTRACT Generally, researchers do seem to pay attention to the manner in which social and contextual attributes may transform interpersonal sensitivities and communication in the interview. This paper argues that qualitative interviews cannot be divorced from their contexts and therefore it is a 'situated account'. This means that the interview is shaped by the fact that the 'cast' is the researcher, that particular woman/man, and that it is happening in a particular place, at a particular time, in response to particular shaping questions. Ten methodological issues are highlighted by the description of interview processes of the case study that explored the subjective accounts of five of the six women who were principals of secondary schools in Venda, Limpopo Province in South Africa, in 1996, in order to understand how they accessed managerial positions. The methodological issues discussed confirm that an interview cannot be separated from its context. Thus the interviewer must be aware of the contextual factors and be able to go around them. The article suggests that maintaining a "situated friendship" and employing reflexive approach as a form of localism can reduce the risk of 'harmful effects' when doing qualitative interviewing.