The Irresistible Rise of The Poorly Analysed Interview
How was it for you? The Interview Society and the irresistible rise of the (poorly analyzed) interview

Qualitative Research 2017, Vol. 17(2) 144–158
The Dominance of Interviews

- My preference
- Quants strong on interviews
- Quants strong on naturalistic data
- PhD students
- Faculty
‘Qualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another’ (Denzin & Lincoln HQR 3rd Edition, 2005:6).
A Survey of a Journal

- 18 research articles
- 16 used interviews, 1 focus group, 1 documents

Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management
2008-9 [9 issues]
Bad Features

- Poor transcripts
- One line extracts
- Deleting IV/IE interaction
- Making IEs into dopes
Making Claims about Populations

- Marie, 47 years, cleaner
- Wayne, male, early 30s, married with two small children
- 8 consultants, male 25-40
Using favourable extracts

- No attempt to analyse whole dataset
- No deviant cases examined
- Often pose research question to participants
Stalking Study
How interviews analysed

- Study of stalking [Johnson & Rowlands 2002]

- ‘to learn how those who stalk others actually see or interpret their actions as well as to explore the nature of the (often conflicted) emotions that lie underneath these actions’
Critique

- Talk about stalkers’ ‘conflicted emotions’ or assume that they have stable, audience-free ‘interpretations’ of their behaviour.
- Uses everyday language and commonsense reasoning of counsellors or media reporters.
- But need to study commonsense reasoning as a topic rather than use it as a tacit resource [Schutz].
Making Claims about Individuals

- Using open-ended interviews to access ‘perceptions’ and ‘attitudes’
- Why not survey?
- Qual research better at studying social processes
Accounts in context

- Talking to a researcher
- Talking informally to a work colleague
- Talking at a company meeting
- A document for shareholders
- Describing one’s day to a partner
- Doing identity work [social workers, lawyers, police]
Student examples using a constructionist model

- How family members construct stories about their grief and recovery processes after the death of their baby (Katarin, Psychiatry, Finland)
- How versions of postgraduate life are discursively constructed and sustained by postgraduates in interviews about doing their PhDs (Steven, Social Sciences, UK)
- How drug-users and dealers present themselves in order to manage identity and keep self-respect during the interviews (Sveinung, Sociology, Norway)
What to look for

- Signalling identities [e.g. ‘speaking as a woman’, ‘wearing my professional hat’]
- Prefaces
- Warrants
Practical Suggestions

- Improved transcription
- Right-left analysis
- Down-up
- No given identities [in brackets] but co-construction of identities
- Intensive > extensive > intensive analysis
Baruch (1982) used two effective strategies:

- tabulating many cases
- investigating deviant cases
Extract 4 (Baruch, 1982) [Int=interviewer]

Parent: When she was born, they told me she was perfectly all right. And I accepted it. I worried about her which most mothers do, you know. Worry about their first child.

Int: Hm

Parent: She wouldn't eat and different things. And so I kept taking her to the clinic. Nothing wrong with her my dear. You're just making yourself ... worrying unnecessarily, you see.
**TABLE 1 MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>[%]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-child</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>[51%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent-professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional-child</td>
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<td>[16%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional-parent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>[5%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>[100%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A deviant case [the pharmacists]
Conclusion

‘we … need to be cautious when treating (interview) talk as a way of referring to inner psychological objects of some kind’ (Potter and Hepburn, 2012: 567).
Conclusion

- Reflect on choice of interviews
- Better interview analysis
- Naturalistic data?