

Qualitative Interviewing



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April 18th 2012

Session Outline

- Why use qualitative interviewing?
- What is qualitative interviewing?
- Ethics
- Planning and preparing
- What makes a good interviewer?
- Recording and transcribing
- An example transcript
- Practicalities

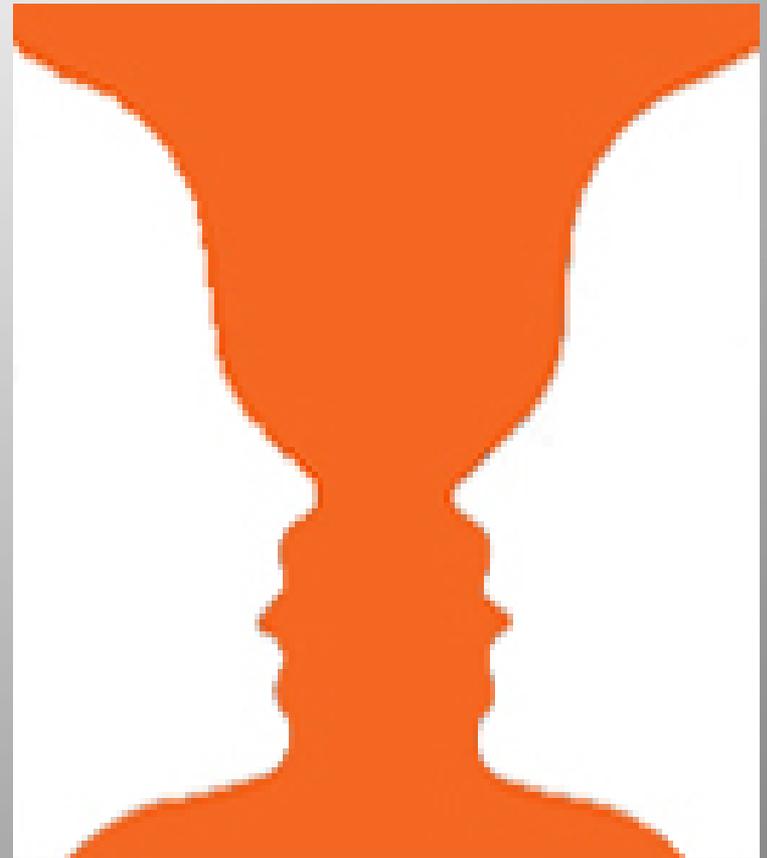
Why use qualitative interviewing?

In pairs:

Why do we use qualitative interviewing?

What particular interviewing methods have you encountered or already used?

*Why might **you** want to use qualitative interviews?*



Why use qualitative interviewing?

Some suggestions ...

Because it is the most appropriate method of generating data for your research question!

- Ontology and epistemology
- To capture biography, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes, feelings, life history, oral narrative: 'access to people's ideas, thoughts, memories *in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher*' (Reinharz, 1992, 19) [my emphasis]
- Generate rich, nuanced, in depth, contextual data relating to social processes, institutions, social changes
- Research ethics
- Because it suits you, and your project



What is qualitative interviewing? Some common features...

- Conversations....but with a purpose (Burgess, 1984, 102).
- One-to-one ; pairs; small and large groups
- In person; on the telephone; internet
- Semi-structured and unstructured (May, 2001)
- Topic-centred
- Flexible
- Produces data collaboratively
- Hard work
- Lots of fun!



- Minimising exploitation (time, location, transcripts, format)
 - Informed consent (Miller and Bell, 2002)
 - Anonymity and confidentiality:
' The anonymity and privacy of those who participate in the research process should be respected. Personal information concerning research participants should be kept confidential. In some cases it may be necessary to decide whether it is proper or appropriate even to record certain kinds of sensitive information.'
- (http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm#_anon)
- “Sensitive” topics
 - Duty of care and right to withdraw
 - Protection of data

Planning and preparing

- Using the worksheet, answer the following questions:
- Why might qualitative interviews suitable for this research project?
- What kind of interview method or methods would you choose and why?
- How might you translate these research questions into interview questions? (Think about the interview format, the interview structure, and the different kinds of questions that feature in an interview)



Interview Guide

Introduction:

- The project, consent form, me

Warm-up questions:

- Number of children, ages, names, etc
- Home life (family, work, partner)
- Christian background, life, church affiliation

Experiences of motherhood:

- Factors influencing choice (personal, role as a woman, vocational, unplanned, family, church, lifestyle)
- Roles for women in the church
- Church support for women and families
- Career/working at home balance
- Images of motherhood
- Impact of motherhood on faith (change, challenge, sustain?)
- Understandings of feminism and motherhood
- Issues facing Christian women as mothers

What makes a good interviewer?

Kvale (1996) suggests a successful interviewer is:

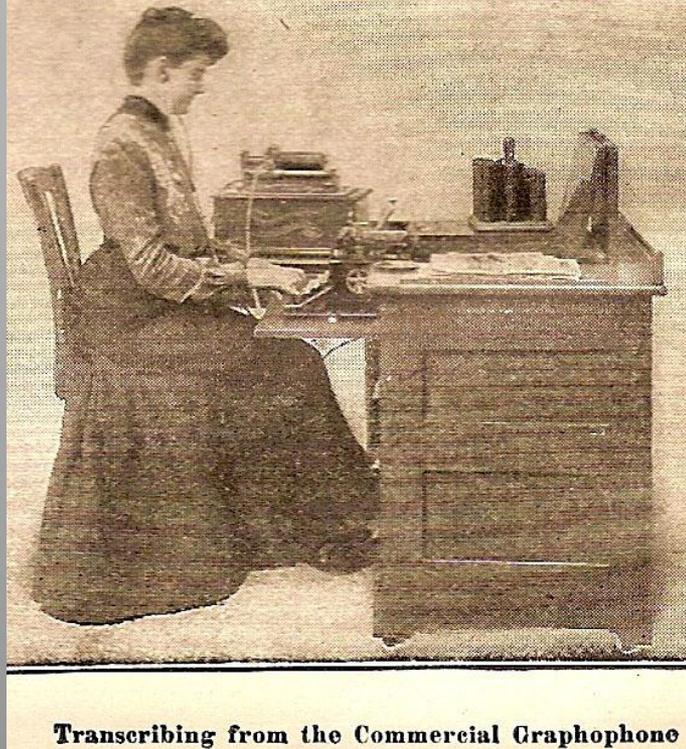
- Knowledgeable: *knows where the interview is going*
- Structures: *begins and ends the interview purposively*
- Clear: *no jargon*
- Gentle: *gives thinking time, patient, pauses*
- Sensitive: *listens*
- Open: *responds and is flexible*
- Steers: *knows what she wants to find out!*

- Critical: *is prepared to challenge inconsistencies*
- Remembers: *relates what is said to previous comments*
- Interprets: *clarifies and extends participants' comments*

Any others?

- Rapport
- Confident
- Balanced
- Prepared
- Interested
- Uses a range of questions (Kvale, 1996)

Recording and transcribing



Transcribing from the Commercial Graphophone

- Accurately captures what is said in the interview
- Ensuring validity and reliability
- Allows a fuller examination of what is said and what is not said, expression, intonation, tone
- Allows repeated analysis of questions and answers
- Interviewer can concentrate on listening, responding, prompting, and following up, rather than taking notes
- Time consuming (1 hour interview = 5 hours transcribing...on a good day!)
- Transcribing is the first stage of data analysis. Take notes of emerging themes

Example Transcript

What do you notice about the different kinds of questions, answers and interactions?

What do you notice about the layout?

What kind of things are included and excluded?

K: To identify with other mothers, as, I might not identify them, but they, they might identify themselves as mothers. Do you see what I mean? So it's a kind of dist- distinction between them. [*K laughs*]. There's two different ways, I can see.

DLL: So would it be helpful then if I, instead of just doing it as a run-on-sentence like this, do it in, 'You could either be: a) or b) or ... [*hesitant*] would that be perhaps clearer? [LP] R, have you got any thoughts about how inclusive or broad or too broad it is?

R: Um, I can see why, why you're, why you're doing it. I don't really have an opinion as to, erm ... I think it's fine as it is.

DLL: OK. It's in the kind of notes and you probably might not be able to answer this but you might have friends who you can picture, um, I was a bit worried it wasn't clear enough that I'd be quite happy to interview women whatever their marital status and whatever their sexual identity.

Example Transcript

L: I took that as assumed

DLL: Is that because you know me?

L: I took that as assumed just because I ... I thought you were looking for women who had relationships with children regardless of

DLL: OK

L: so I, I read that in probably, because that's my expectation is that they would be included because you didn't specifically say you must be married and blah, blah, blah so I thought, well that could be ... a gay couple who've adopted, or whatev- I just assumed that that was the case, probably because of my own personal politics and theology and whatever, I assumed that that would be OK within the study.

DLL: Any other thoughts on the way, that, the, any other thoughts on, on the terms, the terminology or these kind of broad categories.

[VLP]

L: No, I think everything's OK with everything, I think, from reading it, I was fine with it.

Practicalities

- Practise!
- Test out your questions: Run a focus group and/or pilot study
- Anticipate any problems: what challenges are you likely to face?
- Good quality, digital recording equipment (video for a focus group?) Practise using it.
- Take a “kit” bag: consent form, interview schedule, camera, recording equipment, notepad, pencils and pens, bottle of water, research journal, map and travel details, mobile phone.
- Pick a quiet, private place
- Don’t try to do more than two interviews in a day (depending on the length of the interview)
- Do some initial analysis. Write up initial impressions, thoughts, reflections as soon as possible
- Keep meticulous records
- Transcribe as you go along, rather than leave it until all your fieldwork is complete
- Let someone know where you are going, when, and what time you are due back