A PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION TO IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING

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1

THE WHAT AND WHY OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING

In-depth interviewing is the most common qualitative research method. This is not surprising as when it is done well it is a powerful way to gather data. This chapter gives a brief history and definition of the in-depth interview and reviews its advantages and limitations. The question of when to use in-depth interviews is then discussed. The different kinds of in-depth interviews are summarised. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the current debate around the authority of the data obtained from interviews. Chapter headings include:

- A brief history of the interview in social research
- What is an in-depth interview?
- The strengths of in-depth interviews
- The limitations of in-depth interviews
- When to use in-depth interviews
- The different approaches to interviews
- Increasing reflexivity of the interview in the contemporary period

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTERVIEW IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

Interviewing as a method to understand our social world has a long history. Probably the first use of interviews in social research was Charles Booth's seminal study of poverty in London in the 1880s. Much of his data were obtained from interviews he conducted with School Board Visitors (SBVs) in the poverty-stricken

East End of London. The job of the SBVs was to keep a record of children in the households to which they had been assigned. When a child failed to attend school, they were expected to visit the household and establish the reasons for non-attendance. This would involve interviewing the parents. Acute poverty meant that school attendance was poor and as a result SBVs over a period of time accumulated an intimate knowledge of the households they were responsible for. Booth conducted hours of interviews with the SBVs in order to acquaint himself with their exhaustive knowledge of the circumstances of the households in question (Bales, 1994). Noteworthy is that Booth refused to interview the actual residents. He walked through the areas under study but did not enter any homes, noting that to do so would be 'unwarrantable impertinence' (in Bales, 1994: 345).

In the United States of America, as early as 1924, Emory Bogardus, Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California, wrote that interviewing is 'one of the important methods now being used in social research …' and in 1926 he published what is considered to be the first detailed account of in-depth interviewing as a method (Bogardus, 1926). In his seminal 1924 article on interviewing, he lists the various kinds of interviews that were already well established at this time – 'The physician, the lawyer, the priest, the journalist, the detective, the social worker, the psychiatrist and the psychoanalyst make regular use of it' (Bogardus, 1924: 456).

In the realm of psychiatry, Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) pioneering work on psychoanalysis and the role of the unconscious was based on interviews with his patients over an extended period. Freud used free association – a particular and unusual variant of the interview. Unlike ordinary conversation, free association requires that patients do not censor themselves but instead say whatever comes to mind however unpleasant or embarrassing. This method, Freud argued, allows the analyst to access the unconscious of the patient – 'the pure metal of valuable unconscious thoughts can be extracted from the raw material of the patient's associations' (Freud, 1905: 112).

However, in the social sciences in the first part of the twentieth century there was still a great deal of doubt about using interviews as a method. The interviewing of ordinary citizens was viewed with scepticism. Class prejudice encouraged the perception that ordinary citizens would mislead the interviewer. W.I. Thomas, the joint author of the early classic, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, commented,

> Interviews may be regarded as part of personal observation, but the ordinary inhabitant has a singular interest in misleading the outsider and putting a different face on things. (Thomas, 1912: 771–2 in Lee, 2008: 312)

It was only in the late 1930s that the in-depth interview started gaining recognition as an acceptable method in the social sciences (Lee, 2008). In 1939, Pauline V. Young in her book, *Scientific Social Surveys and Research*, wrote,

> The personal interview is penetrating; it goes to the 'living source'. Through it the student … is able to go behind mere outward behaviour and phenomena. He [*sic*] can secure accounts of events and processes as they are reflected in personal experiences, in social attitudes. He can check inferences and external observations by a vital account of the persons who are being observed. (in Platt, 2001: 36)

In the contemporary period, in-depth interviewing is undoubtedly the most used qualitative method (Denzin, 1989; King and Horrocks, 2012). It is now so ubiquitous as a method and a means to understand our social world that social researchers talk about the 'interview society' (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Gubrium and Holstein, 2001; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Besides being at the core of social research, through television, radio, print media and the internet we are constantly exposed to the interview as a mode of obtaining information and opinions.

WHAT IS AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW?

The semi-structured in-depth interview (I will be focusing on semi-structured in-depth interviews in this book) is similar to a conversation in that there are two individuals discussing a topic of mutual interest and ideally the discussion is relaxed, open and honest (Mason, 1998). In essence, it involves a researcher asking questions and following up on the responses of the interviewee in an endeavour to extract as much information as possible from a person (the interviewee) who has expertise on the topic/s the interviewer is interested in. This expertise is usually premised on the interviewee having direct experience of the topic under review and produces what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have called 'interview knowledge'. The in-depth interview ideally should be a flexible and free-flowing interaction in which the interviewer allows the interviewee a good deal of leeway. However, the interviewer also directs the conversation as discreetly as possible so as to ensure that the interviewee conveys as much relevant information as possible in the time allocated and covers the topics that have been designated by the interviewer as important. Interviewees are able to express themselves in any way they desire. The expectation is that they tell their story in their own words. Unlike a conversation, in a research interview there is far more probing by the interviewer. A probe involves asking interviewees to elaborate or explain an answer. It is an endeavour to obtain more clarity and detail on a particular topic.

The length of interviews varies. Usually an hour appointment is made, but ultimately the time taken depends mainly on the depth of interviewee's answers, the topic and the skill of the interviewer. Some interviewees will give detailed and elaborate answers and the interviewer does not have to do much besides keep the interview on track. Some topics lend themselves to interviewees giving rich answers. For example, once you have gained their trust, there is little doubt that a person who has endured domestic violence will have a good deal to say. An inexperienced interviewer is less likely to adequately probe than a skilled experienced interviewer and is also more likely to interrupt inappropriately. Probing and the degree to which an interviewer should intervene are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Some qualitative researchers argue that one interview with an interviewee is not enough and that in-depth interviewing should involve 'repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants …' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984: 7). Multiple interviews are almost always done when the research involves a longitudinal study (Grinyer and Thomas, 2012). There are clear advantages to doing multiple interviews (see Earthy and Cronin, 2008) but the disincentive is that it is time-consuming and costly. Also, in many instances interviewees will not be prepared to give up more time. Many studies are based on one-off interviews with interviewees.

Although, ideally, the in-depth interview should be conducted face-to-face, it can be done by telephone, Skype or email. These modes, discussed in detail in Chapter 6, allow the interviewer to extend the geographical ambit of potential interviewees and can be as effective as face-to-face interviews.

An in-depth interview in the social sciences is a peculiar phenomenon for several reasons. The person being interviewed is expected to 'open up' and divulge information to the interviewer despite the fact that in almost all cases the latter is a stranger and is not necessarily expected to disclose much about themselves. The interview often involves the asking of questions that are personal and which the interviewee may never have discussed with anybody or even thought about. Also, the interviewer is likely never to see the interviewee again. In contrast to everyday conversation, the interviewer is usually in control of the interaction and decides whether the questions have been satisfactorily answered and when the interview should conclude. Another unusual feature is that the interviewee is expected to give up a significant amount of their time. A key feature of the interview in social research is that the information given is confidential and deidentified, whereas in everyday conversation this is rarely the case. Gossip and indiscretion are common components of everyday conversation (Conein, 2011).

THE STRENGTHS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

In-depth interviewing, when done competently, is a highly effective method for obtaining data for social research. In contemporary society the way people live their lives, the issues they face, their experiences and how they see and make sense of the world are extremely varied and not necessarily evident to the researcher. Also, differences in terms of status, income, wealth, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and lifestyle, combined with massive population concentrations, mean that there will be a good deal of social reality which is not part of the researcher's immediate experience. You may have little knowledge of the lives of single parents in public housing, older renters, young rappers, ex-prisoners and women who have experienced domestic violence. On the other side of the continuum you will probably have limited knowledge of the lifestyles or perceptions of wealthy households. The interview gives the researcher access to interviewees' thoughts, reflections, motives, experiences, memories, understandings, interpretations and perceptions of the topic under consideration. It gives the researcher the opportunity to establish why people construct the world in particular ways and think the way they do. The stories of interviewees are 'a way of knowing' (Seidman, 2013: 7).

In my own research, interviews have been an indispensable source of data. I have used them extensively and in the process have had the privilege of accessing the world of the unemployed, corporate and slum landlords, irate tenants, small business owners, age pensioners, anti-apartheid activists, sex workers, homeless people and immigrants who have experienced threatening xenophobia. It is possible to get an idea of how people see the world through the use of a survey questionnaire, observation, blogs and secondary sources, but the strength of the in-depth interview lies in its ability to create a research space in which the interviewee is able to tell their story and give the researcher a range of insights and thoughts about a particular topic. Through in-depth interviews the researcher is able to obtain an understanding of the social reality under consideration and, depending on the circumstances, collect rich data fairly rapidly.

It is an extremely versatile method and can be used to study an almost limitless range of topics and research questions. For example, Cashmore and Parkinson (2011) used in-depth interviews with high conflict separated parents who had been instructed by a Judge to attend a 'Contact Orders Program'. The Program is designed to help parents who have a history of contravening the child-care arrangements that have been put in place by the courts. The main focus of the study was to examine 'the history and nature of the parents'

disputes, and their experience of the court system … and their response to the program of therapeutic mediation' (Cashmore and Parkinson, 2011: 187). A key finding was that with high conflict families traditional ways of settling disputes – mediation, court based conciliation and negotiation between lawyers – are unlikely to have any impact. The distrust and animosity is too deep. The 20 interviews elicited powerful perceptions that could not have been obtained in any other way.

A study of the motivations of child soldiers by Brett and Specht (2004) was based on 53 in-depth interviews with child soldiers from ten countries. The key research question was what made children decide to become child soldiers? The authors found that there were common factors that pushed these children to become soldiers, but that each interviewee also had their own unique motivation. The interviews established that all of the child soldiers came from poor households and disrupted families. However, many children who come from similar circumstances do not become soldiers. Thus in order to understand what makes one child join and another child not join, the authors concluded that it was essential that we go beyond environmental factors and understand the child's personal history.

A similar study based on in-depth interviews on why young men in Nigeria joined armed groups found that besides a fear of being attacked and the perception that they needed to defend their communities, a key motivation was the sense of shame if they did not join. Family, peer and community pressure was enormous. 'Soldiers' were also promised that they could keep any spoils of war – a major incentive in this poor area (Barrett, 2011)

The material generated through in-depth interviewing can make an impact on public perceptions. A study I did with a colleague on the impact of living on Australia's paltry unemployment benefit (it is called 'Newstart') generated much interest when it was reported on in the mainstream media. This was mainly due to the poignant quotes of the interviewees as they described the impact of living on the minimal unemployment benefit. There was much financial stress, their housing was often dire, social isolation was common, their physical and psychological health was poor and their capacity to re-enter the workforce was substantially weakened by their lack of resources (Morris and Wilson, 2014). A survey could illustrate that a large proportion of Newstart recipients could not afford a range of items but would not be able to pick up the multifaceted and detailed nature of the impacts. As Rubin and Rubin (2012: 3) argue, interviewing people 'can challenge long-held assumptions and help recast ineffective public policies.' Perhaps our research on Newstart recipients may make a contribution to altering the perception that the unemployment benefit needs to be kept below the poverty line so as to coerce people back into employment.

THE LIMITATIONS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Like any research method, in-depth interviews do have limitations. An important limitation is that the interviewee has the ability to construct a world the veracity of which is usually difficult to check (of course, questionnaire surveys are not immune to this phenomenon). Thus a person may say that they have strong social ties whereas in actual fact they are lonely and feel isolated. The only way this statement can be verified is by participant observation or by interviewing people who have sound knowledge of the interviewee. However, these verification tools are often not possible or practical. The issue of accuracy and the degree to which the interviewee's account reflects the social reality under consideration has to be constantly reflected on. However, in most instances, if the interviewee feels comfortable with the interviewer, they will endeavour to give what they consider is an accurate portrayal (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). There is no doubt that in every study based on in-depth interviews there will be interviewees who will hold back and not give a comprehensive and/or accurate account of events.

Another limitation is that data obtained from interviews cannot be generalised to the population. Although interview data can suggest a definite pattern, you always need to hedge its generalisability.

Interviewing is potentially a time-consuming and expensive method. Accessing interviewees, in some cases, may be difficult and involve much effort. The transcribing of interviews can be arduous if you do it yourself and, if you pay a professional, it can be costly.

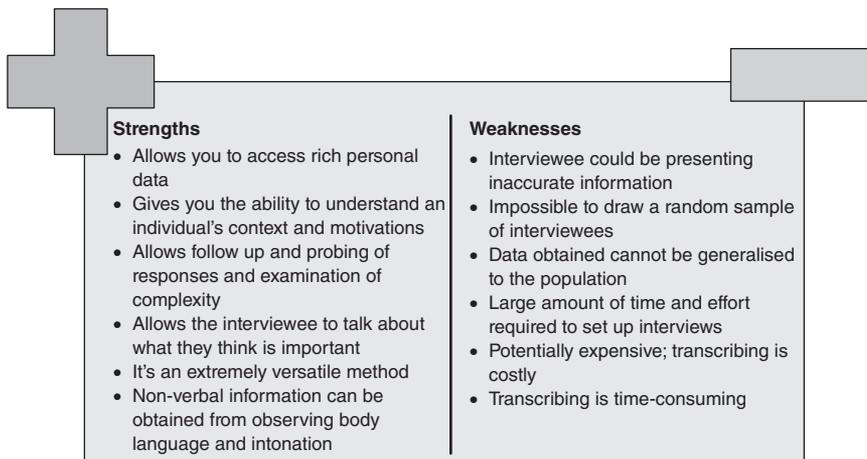The strengths and limitations of in-depth interviews are summarised in Figure 1.1.

Strengths
- Allows you to access rich personal data
- Gives you the ability to understand an individual's context and motivations
- Allows follow up and probing of responses and examination of complexity
- Allows the interviewee to talk about what they think is important
- It's an extremely versatile method
- Non-verbal information can be obtained from observing body language and intonation

Weaknesses
- Interviewee could be presenting inaccurate information
- Impossible to draw a random sample of interviewees
- Data obtained cannot be generalised to the population
- Large amount of time and effort required to set up interviews
- Potentially expensive; transcribing is costly
- Transcribing is time-consuming

Figure 1.1   *Strengths and weaknesses of in-depth interviews*

WHEN TO USE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

It is difficult to have definitive guidelines as to when in-depth interviews are appropriate. It is such a powerful method that it is probably safe to argue that in almost every social research situation they may have a role to play. Certainly, when the research involves obtaining a sense of how individuals view their situation and what their experiences have been around the research topic under consideration, in-depth interviewing is an appropriate method. The interview allows us to enter the interviewee's 'lived everyday world' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 29).

In-depth interviewing is usually an appropriate method for sensitive topics. If you are examining the experience of racism and how people cope, the in-depth interview gives you the opportunity to establish a rapport with the interviewee before exploring potentially personal and difficult material (Mellor, 2003). A study on the impact of the holocaust on survivors would require personal face-to-face contact with the interviewer and the interviewee (Greene, 2002). It is unlikely that an impersonal questionnaire survey would capture the trauma and be welcomed by survivors.

The research question you are investigating is a key gauge of whether you should or should not use in-depth interviews. Any research question that can be answered by people talking about their experiences lends itself to in-depth interviewing. If you are interested in the question, 'How do interruptions of doctors in emergency departments impact on patients?' then observation and recording of the interactions between the doctors and nurses and others, will probably be a more powerful method and more appropriate than in-depth interviews (see Chisholm et al., 2000). If your research question involves trying to capture what the population thinks about a particular issue, a questionnaire survey is a more appropriate method than in-depth interviews. For example, Wilson and Meagher (2008) were interested in investigating how 'Australians perceived increasing inequality in Australia since the mid 1980s in a context of strong economic growth'. Drawing on surveys on social inequality and on social attitudes conducted in 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2005, they found that while Australians were increasingly concerned about the growing gap between rich and poor, a far smaller proportion thought it was the job of government to do something about the gap and redistribute income (Wilson and Meagher, 2008: 232).

A major advantage of questionnaire surveys is that if the sample is adequate and has been randomly selected, the findings can be generalised to the population. A questionnaire survey can measure how respondents feel about particular issues but the capacity of surveys to explain why respondents feel the way they do is limited.

In-depth interviewing can be complemented by participant observation, analysis of census data, document analysis, video analysis, surveys, etc. Bergman (2008: 18) concludes, 'using data of different types can help us both to determine what interpretations of phenomena are more or less likely to be valid and to provide complementary information that illuminates different aspects of what we are studying'. Thus a survey questionnaire could be followed by in-depth interviews or vice versa (see Creswell, 2003). The questionnaire survey can generate key demographic data and allow us to obtain some understanding of a situation while the in-depth interviews allow the researcher to probe beyond the surface findings of the survey. In my own research on inner-city transition in Johannesburg, I first did a random survey of residents and followed this up with in-depth interviews. The interviewees were drawn mainly from the respondents to the survey. The survey allowed me to gather a substantial amount of data that could be generalised to the population. The interviews brought the data to life; interviewees were able to tell me about their everyday lives in an area that was the first urban space to experience the collapse of enforced racial segregation in Apartheid South Africa (Morris, 1999).

THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO INTERVIEWS

Interviewing can take different forms. They can be precisely structured with set questions, semi-structured or unstructured. Although the different kinds of interviews are presented as 'pure' categories, there is often overlap.

The structured interview

The structured interview is closely aligned to the survey method. Structured interviews have set questions and the interviewer is expected to stick to the questions set and the order of questions. There is no expectation that the interviewer probes the answers given or digresses from the set questions. Rather, the emphasis is on minimising interviewer effects by training interviewers to ask questions in a standardised fashion and to limit their non-verbal responses. The central premise is that interviews must be standardised as much as possible so as to eliminate interviewer variation and error. In the structured interview, questions are generally closed rather than open-ended. In other words interviewees are presented with a range of predetermined possible answers to questions set. If there is scope for follow up questions, these are usually standardised.

A good deal of attention is also paid to potential issues such as the gender and 'race' of the interviewer (Schaeffer et al., 2010). If the structured interviews are

being conducted in a poor, black neighbourhood it is desirable that the interviewers be black so as to avoid bias. If the topic is domestic violence and the abuse of women, it is important that the interviewers are female. Interviewers are also not expected to reveal much of themselves so as to avoid 'social desirability bias'. This occurs when interviewees give interviewers the answers they feel the interviewer will want to hear (Esterberg, 2002).

In-depth, semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews are semi-structured in that the interviewer has topics that they want to cover that are related to their research question/s, but there is plenty of scope for digression. The interviewee is allowed to 'ramble' to an extent and the interview style is conversational. However, the interviewer is expected to cover all the key topics in the interview guide (see Chapter 3) and intervene when appropriate. The semi-structured interview also gives the interviewer the space to seek clarity as to what the interviewee actually means and why they gave a particular answer. There is thus scope for a detailed discussion. For example, if an older private renter feels that the agent or landlord is treating them unfairly, the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to explore and establish the reasons as to why the interviewee has this perception.

In many interview situations there is the space and need to probe. For example, if you are investigating gender dynamics in gangs the semi-structured interview will give you the scope to delve into the different ways men and women experience gang dynamics. Miller and Brunson (2000) interviewed 58 gang members in St Louis (31 men and 27 women); a key finding was that the proportion of girls in a gang played a major role in determining their experience. In gangs where girls were a distinct minority, the young women tended to identify strongly with the male members and male dominance tended to be excessive. In gangs where young women were well represented, the male–female dynamics were not as overtly sexist – '… girls received status and protection in the gang' (Miller and Brunson, 2000: 439).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews can be repeated so as to build up the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee and enhance the depth and detail of the answers.

Unstructured interviews

In unstructured interviews or open interviews there is not necessarily a pre-given list of topics and interviewees are encouraged to answer at length. The questions asked give the interviewee the opportunity to give detailed answers and explanations and to

set the agenda for the interview; 'In unstructured interactive interviews, participants retain considerable control over the process' (Corbin and Morse, 2003: 337). The unstructured interview is often accompanied by observation, and questions arise in context. For example, Schultze (2000) spent eight months doing a field study in the headquarters of a US manufacturing firm examining how knowledge workers produce information and what it involves. Besides observation and informal conversation she had regular unstructured interviews with the participants in the work context. The situation triggered the questions. The unstructured interview is similar to a real conversation in that the context is crucial and there is a fair amount of spontaneity.

Narrative interviews

With narrative interviews there is an endeavour to get interviewees to tell their story about a particular event or issue as a narrative or a story. There is a good deal of overlap with life histories, as interviewees will be asked to organise their presentation temporally. There is minimal interruption by the interviewers when the interviewee tells their story and selects what they see as important. Often narrative interviews have a significant historical component, comprising an interviewee reflecting back on their life to explain an event and its consequences.

Holloway and Jefferson (2000: 4) contend that the narrative interview is more powerful than the semi-structured interview as it gives the interviewee the chance to 'free associate' and thereby make connections which they would not have thought about or been prepared to reveal if the researcher was using the standard semi-structured interview method. They argue that when interviewing people about painful experiences a common phenomenon is the 'defended subject'. The defended subject or interviewee is reluctant to share painful experiences with an interviewer when the standard question answer interview mode is used. Rather they will attempt to manage these painful experiences by giving basic and vague answers. One way to address this is to ask questions that are very open-ended and which encourage the interviewee to tell a story related to the topic and talk about whatever is on their mind. Interruptions are kept to a minimum.

Life history interviews

The life history interview gives the interviewee the space to tell their life story and key events are focused on. It gives the interviewer the capacity to assess why the interviewee is in a particular situation – for example, in an abusive relationship, in and out of prison or a religious cult. In the area of public health, the life history interview has been used to examine how the lifestyles of individuals impacts on their health and what would be appropriate interventions (Goldman et al., 2003).

Usually the life history interview will be guided to some extent by the interviewer. It does, therefore, overlap with the semi-structured interview. However, the telling of their life story and what they focus on is left to the interviewee. It is their story.

The life history interview requires a good deal of trust between the interviewer and the interviewee as the latter is expected to give a comprehensive and honest account of their lives and some of the events discussed could induce painful memories.

INCREASING REFLEXIVITY OF THE INTERVIEW IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

Over the last couple of decades there has been an increasing questioning of the interview as a method. Historically, it was viewed as an unproblematic method that elicited information that represented the interviewee's reality. There was consensus that the responses of interviewees represented the 'real world' and there was little need to interrogate the views, perceptions, experiences and feelings expressed in the interview. This approach has been labelled a realist perspective. A realist perspective is similar to the perspective of social scientists using survey questionnaires. There is a reality out there that you can accurately capture and represent.

The argument that the in-depth interview necessarily accurately captures the interviewee's reality has been subjected to much scrutiny. There is increasing acceptance that cognisance needs to be taken of the interviewer–interviewee relationship and the way it can impact on the interaction and the answers of the interviewee. Invariably the interaction will be influenced by contextual factors such as the age, ethnicity, gender and class of the interviewer and at times, the setting. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 7. What is required is that the interviewer recognises the potential influence of these factors and endeavours to ensure that bias is minimised.

The constructivist perspective emphasises the relative nature of knowledge – 'at different times and places there will be different and often contradictory interpretations of the same phenomena' (King and Horrocks, 2012: 22). In relation to interviews, the constructivists argue that the interviewee constructs a particular view of reality and that this view is shaped fundamentally by the interview itself. Thus, 'Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003: 68). The answers an interviewee gives to one interviewer will probably be different to the answers they

give to another interviewer. What the constructivist approach does is heighten our sensitivity to the centrality of the interviewer–interviewee relationship and the interview process. The responses of interviewees will be shaped by the interviewer's questions, the relationship of the interviewer with the interviewee and the context. The interview is thus viewed as a collaborative process – the content, to an extent, is shaped by the interaction. The extent to which the interviewee trusts the interviewer, the questions asked, the level and kind of probing and the interruptions will all contribute to shaping the final product – the interview transcript. During the course of the interview, the interviewee consciously and unconsciously makes decisions to omit some experiences, perceptions and insights and not others, to give varying degrees of detail and perhaps exaggerate some aspects and downplay others. In sum, the interviewer can only try their professional best to elicit material that reflects the interviewee's reality. You can never be totally sure that you have succeeded.

SUMMARY

This chapter introduces the reader to in-depth interviewing. The brief history of the interview in social research illustrates how the interview as a method has historically been viewed with much scepticism and it was only in the late 1930s that the interview emerged as a recognised method in the social sciences. In contemporary social science, the in-depth interview is the key qualitative method. In essence, the in-depth interview is a conversation that is directed by the interviewer. Although the interviewee has leeway to digress, ultimately the aim of the interview is to shed light on the research questions the interviewer is endeavouring to answer. The advantages of the interview are highlighted. It is argued that if your research question requires accessing an individual's personal experience, understandings and perceptions, then an in-depth interview is potentially a highly effective method. However, in-depth interviews do have limitations. A key limitation is that the interviewee can give limited or even misleading answers. Also, the data obtained cannot be generalised to the population. These limitations can be dissipated by combining in-depth interviewing with other methods. Although the in-depth semi-structured interview is the focus of this book, the different forms interviewing can take are briefly reviewed. Finally, the chapter discusses the increasing reflexivity around the interview as a method and the varying ways interview material is viewed. The interviewer needs to be aware of the factors possibly influencing the interviews – reflexivity is essential.

Exercise

List five studies where in-depth interviews would be an appropriate method to use. Explain your reasons for choosing these studies.

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