REFLECTIVE INTERVIEWING

A Guide to Theory & Practice

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Theorizing the Qualitative Interview

This chapter introduces:

- Multiple conceptions of interviewing: neo-positivist, romantic, constructionist, postmodern, transformative, and decolonizing approaches.
- Theoretical assumptions underlying how knowledge is produced in these conceptualizations of interviews.
- Implications for asking questions and analysis and interpretation of data.

This chapter reviews six conceptualizations of qualitative research interviews that I have identified in qualitative research reports as well as methodological literature. No doubt there are more. The conceptualizations of interviews that I have selected to outline here reflect different theoretical orientations to social research that both overlap and conflict, and each responds in particular ways to various critiques of interview research. By considering the underlying assumptions of 'neo-positivist,' 'romantic,' 'constructionist,' 'postmodern,' 'transformative,' and 'decolonizing' conceptions of the qualitative interview, I argue that researchers will be better prepared to design research projects to use interviews in ways that are consistent with their epistemological and theoretical assumptions about knowledge production.

Labels that differentiate between different conceptions of interviewing are always limiting, and fail to capture the complexity represented in the field of qualitative methodology. Readers may well find that they identify with multiple conceptions of the interview. The categorization I present in this chapter, then, should be thought of as an heuristic device – a way of assisting qualitative interviewers in their initial explorations of interview practice. Readers might also consider how researchers concentrate on, for strategic purposes, certain kinds of theorizations of interviewing in their work, while relegating others to the background. Thinking theoretically about interviewing is one place to start in research design, and will assist researchers when making many of the decisions related to designing and carrying out a research project.

How we think about the qualitative interview has implications for how interviews are structured, the kinds of questions posed, and how data are analyzed and represented. On the one hand, the interviewer can take a detached or neutral position in relation to research participants, aiming for the generation of 'objective' knowledge;

while on the other hand, interviewers can see themselves as co-constructors of knowledge, and may strive to develop collaborative relationships with interviewees to initiate 'change.' These views represent dissimilar positions at opposite ends of a continuum of practice, and in this chapter I outline a range of variations and debates.

A Neo-positivist Conception of the Interview

Much of the advice literature on qualitative interviewing assumes that the interview subject has an 'inner' or 'authentic' self, not necessarily publicly visible, which may be revealed through careful questioning by an attentive and sensitive interviewer who contributes minimally to the talk. This interviewer–interviewee relation can be seen in the 'neo-positivist' conception of the interview proposed by Mats Alvesson (2003) (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 A neo-positivist conception of the interview

The 'skillful' interviewer ⇒ Asks 'good' questions ⇒ Minimizes 'bias' and 'researcher influences' through taking a 'neutral' role ⇒ Generates 'quality' data ⇒ Produces 'valid' findings.

- The data generated provide 'valid' and 'credible' knowledge concerning the beliefs, perceptions, experiences and opinions of the authentic self of interviewee.
- The interviewer generally refrains from participating in the data generation, other than asking questions.
- Data are commonly coded and categorized (for example, via ethnographic, phenomenological, or grounded theory procedures) to provide accounts of cultural groups, and substantive theory concerning the research topic.

The neo-positivist conception of interviewing draws on similar assumptions as to those used by researchers employing standardized surveys. William Foddy (1993: 13) presents a summary of these assumptions that may also be applied to qualitative interviewing. These are that:

- the researcher has a clearly defined topic about which participants have information that they are able to access within the research setting;
- interviewers and interviewees share a common understanding of the interview questions, and interviewees are willing and able to respond to these;
- interviewees' answers are deemed to be more valid if they do not know why the interviewer has asked the question, and if possible responses have not been suggested by the interviewer;
- the research context does not influence the production of the data, and the process of answering questions does not change participants' beliefs, opinions, and habits; and finally,
- the data produced from this kind of interview can then be meaningfully compared with that derived from other interviews.

Guidelines for effective data gathering taught to survey researchers are aimed at lessening or avoiding altogether the effects of the researcher on the 'validity' and 'reliability' of the interview data generated. Thus we see instructions such as 'ask the questions in the correct order,' or 'do not show approval or disapproval of any answer' (Brenner, 1985: 19). Researchers are provided explicit instructions for how to formulate and pose questions – for example, by focusing on 'brevity, simplicity and concreteness' (Foddy, 1993: 50).

One example of the impact on the production of data from *not* following these kinds of rules in a survey is drawn from the British television comedy series, *Yes, Prime Minister*. In this dig at the conduct of social surveys, we see Sir Humphrey Appleby, a plotting bureaucrat, teaching Bernard Woolley, the prime minister's principal private secretary, how to generate precisely the kind of 'findings' he needs to support an argument to present to the prime minister. Sir Humphrey demonstrates two different question–answer sequences with Bernard that result in radically different responses as a suggested means of intentionally producing findings that show public 'support' for a policy decision, in this case, the re-introduction of national service. Bernard Woolley describes the conversation in his memoirs:

> ... the market researcher asks questions designed to elicit consistent answers.
> Humphrey demonstrated the system on me. 'Mr. Woolley, are you worried about the rise in crime among teenagers?'
> 'Yes,' I said.
> 'Do you think there is lack of discipline and vigorous training in our Comprehensive Schools?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Do you think young people welcome some structure and leadership in their lives?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Do they respond to a challenge?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Might you be in favour of reintroducing National Service?'
> 'Yes.'
> Well naturally I said yes. One could hardly have said anything else without looking inconsistent. Then what happens is that the Opinion Poll publishes only the last question and answer.
> Of course, the reputable polls didn't conduct themselves like that. But there weren't too many of those. Humphrey suggested that we commission a new survey, not for the Party but for the Ministry of Defence. We did so. He invented the questions there and then:
> 'Mr. Woolley are you worried about the danger of war?'
> 'Yes,' I said, quite honestly.
> 'Are you unhappy about the growth of armaments?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Do you think there's a danger in giving young people guns and teaching them how to kill?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Do you think it's wrong to force people to take up arms against their will?'

'Yes.'
'Would you oppose the reintroduction of National Service?'
I'd said 'Yes' before I'd even realized it, d'you see?[1] (Lynn and Jay, 1989:106–7)

Nevertheless, prescriptions that rely on remarkably similar assumptions to those advising survey researchers appear in the advice literature concerning qualitative interviewing. For example, Robert Weiss counsels interviewers to avoid self-disclosure, since it 'complicates an interview situation by shifting the respondent's attention to the interviewer and altering the respondent's relationship with the interviewer' (1994: 79), and Daphne Keats (2000) provides recommendations to ensure that the researcher minimizes bias, and generates valid and reliable data.

Neo-positivist assumptions about interview data are clearly evident in much published research, particularly in research that uses mixed methods design (for examples of research reports using mixed methods, see Westheimer and Kahne [2004] and Zhao and Frank [2003]). In contrast to studies that have used standardized surveys, however, one is likely to see the inclusion of semi-structured interviews that have used open, rather than closed, questions. While researchers represent the results of standardized surveys numerically in the form of various statistical analyses, researchers using a neo-positivist conception of interviews are likely to represent findings in the form of themes supported by extracts from interview transcripts, sometimes complemented with models or diagrams. Let us take a closer look at a research report that relies on a neo-positivist conception of interviews.

A Research Example of a Neo-positivist Approach to Interviewing

Over a period of two years, Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne (2004) examined teachers' and students' beliefs about citizenship in 10 democratic education projects in the United States. Their report focuses on two of the programs, and findings from the study are drawn from their analyses of observational, interview, survey, and documentary data. Westheimer and Kahne report that 'the interviews and observations were designed to help us clarify students' beliefs regarding what it means to be a good citizen and the ways that features of the curriculum may have affected their perspectives' (2004: 247). Likewise, they wanted to understand teachers' conceptions and priorities concerning 'responsible and effective citizenship,' as well as their perspectives concerning teaching strategies and outcomes (2004: 247). The findings of the report are represented thematically, together with statistical analyses of changes from pre- and post-test surveys administered to students in the programs. The reporting of this study reflects underlying neo-positivist assumptions about the researchers (that they can generate objective findings) and also that research interviews can provide meaningful and stable data concerning interior states of minds (such as beliefs). Although these researchers provide a statement outlining their predispositions concerning the topic of 'citizenship,' this is not discussed in relation to either the generation or analysis of data. Westheimer and Kahne do, however, state that they asked teachers to 'reflect on our observations, not only to test the accuracy of statements but also to reexamine perceptions and conclusions' (2004: 248). This statement reflects the underlying concern for 'truth' and 'accuracy' in this conception of interviewing.

The use of standardized interviews as a method of generating knowledge about human experience has been widely critiqued by influential researchers such as Elliot Mishler (1986), who argues for an approach to interviews that recognizes and appreciates the co-production of narrative data; and Ann Oakley (1981), who has made the case for a 'feminist' approach to interviewing women that recognizes the experiences of both researcher and researched. These kinds of criticisms have also been applied to the neo-positivist conception of a qualitative interview. The chief problems that must be addressed by researchers with neo-positivist assumptions concerning interview data are that:

(1) research participants do not necessarily do what they say they do;
(2) research participants do not necessarily tell the truth;
(3) the researcher's subjectivities and beliefs may bias the data; and
(4) analyses and representations of interview data do not account for the researcher's part in the co-construction of data.

Responses to these criticisms have taken a variety of forms and primarily address the first two problems. Multiple methods of data collection are used for the purposes of methodological triangulation (for example, observations may provide opportunities to check the accuracy of what participants have said); longevity in the field allows researchers to verify the stability of participants' reports and subsequent analyses (data triangulation); and researchers frequently seek participants' responses and feedback on preliminary analyses and reports (member checking or member validation). All of these strategies are reported in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) study. The third critique – that of how the researcher's subjectivities intersect with the research participants and topic – is frequently addressed in the next conception of interviewing that I discuss.

A Romantic Conception of Interviewing

Below is an excerpt from an interview promoted as 'a refreshingly honest no holds-barred-interview' in which pop singer Britney Spears 'took on the tabloids' in an interview with *Dateline* reporter Matt Lauer (broadcast on NBC, 15 June 2006).

[1]From THE COMPLETE YES PRIME MINISTER: THE DIARIES OF THE RIGHT HON. JAMES HACKER by Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay, published by BBC Books. Reprinted by permission of The Random House Group Ltd.
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Spears: I like to cook, try to cook, and I like to clean. I'm obsessive like that. If I watch TV, I like to watch the home-redoing-the-house shows – the whole thing – and I get into redoing the living room, the baby's room and all that stuff.
Lauer: So do you clean the house by yourself?
Spears: I have a maid that comes in once a week, but she slacks a little bit (makes face.)
Lauer: So if I were to come here and ring the doorbell by surprise, you'd be vacuuming, doing the toilets?
Spears: Doing the laundry, everything, mmm hmm.
Lauer: See, there's a side of you we didn't know ...
Spears: Oh honey, that is the real me, honey!
Lauer: I pictured there would be housekeepers around here.
Spears: This house is so big, I have to have some help. (Lauer, 2006)

We are well-acquainted with this style of interview, in which interviewees provide exposés about intimate personal details to interviewers who appear to be compassionate, sympathetic, and sensitive. Larry King, Oprah, Barbara Walters, and a host of other prime-time television hosts broadcast these kinds of interviews to global audiences. Yet while the authenticity of celebrities' self-revelations and interviewers' sincerity in interviews such as that quoted above are questionable – we are familiar with the machinations of publicity relations teams and the marketing of prime-time television slots – the conception of the romantic interview is well-established in the literature on qualitative research methodology (Alvesson, 2003). Elsewhere, this formulation of the interview is referred to as 'emotionalist' (see Silverman, 2001).

In contrast to the neo-positivist conception of the interview, when used for the purposes of social research, the interviewer–interviewee relationship in the romantic interview is one in which genuine rapport and trust[2] is established by the interviewer in order to generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing (See Box 3.2).

Box 3.2 A romantic conception of the interview

The interviewer establishes rapport and empathic connection with the interviewee ⇒ Produces intimate conversation between interviewer and interviewee in which the interviewer plays an 'active' role ⇒ Generates interviewee's 'self revelation' and 'true confessions' ⇒ Produces in-depth interpretations of participants' life-worlds.

[2]A reading of the Lauer–Spears interview transcript shows in detail how Lauer works to distance himself from the 'paparazzi' who are shown to be Spears' enemies. Yet while asking questions that appear to be sympathetic and compassionate, the sequence of questions and voice-over text aggressively pursues Spears, and parallels the attacks by the 'paparazzi' that Spears attempts to counter. This interview shows how personal revelations are used in the public invention of self (see Atkinson and Silverman, 1997). These authors argue that social researchers' preoccupation with the use of the interview method reflects this kind of cultural preoccupation.

- The data generated provide in-depth knowledge and understanding concerning the beliefs, perceptions, experiences and opinions of the authentic self of the interview subject.
- The data are co-constructed by the interviewer and interviewee, and the interviewer may contribute his/her own views to the conversation in order to heighten rapport.
- Data may be coded and categorized to produce thematic accounts; or subject to various narrative analytic methods to produce evocative narrative accounts concerning the participants' life worlds.
- Research may draw on feminist, phenomenological, psychoanalytic, and psychosocial theories.

In this view, the interviewer is more apt to contribute to the interview interaction in order to prompt confessional detail from the interviewee (see also Douglas, 1985; McCracken, 1988).

One example of 'advice-giving' literature concerning the romantic conception of the interview is provided by sociologist, Joseph Hermanowicz (2002), who offers no fewer than 25 tips for novice interviewers in order to conduct an 'outstanding' interview. Using the metaphor of dating, Hermanowicz writes:

> Great interviewing is not pure sex; it's a romantic-like dialogue that progressively moves through stages (of revelation) and enacted rituals (greetings and introductions, questioning, explanation) culminating in the most intimate of exchanges ('intercourse'), even if all done within an hour's time. (2002: 482)

Embodied in Hermanowicz's approach to the interview is the notion of the skilled interviewer who, when able to successfully seduce his or her participant, will come away from the interview with descriptions of a person's 'essence or inner core' (2002: 481). The quotation above entails a common feature of methodological writing on qualitative interviewing that attempts to counter the notion of the 'neutral' and 'detached' researcher, seen earlier in the neo-positivist conception of the interview. That is, the interviewer must know how to work with participants to ask the right questions and sequence them in particular ways to generate good data. In fact, Hermanowicz provides specific instructions for posing the right question at the right time. For example, 9th and 10th on his list are:

(9) Word questions clearly.
(10) Sequence your moves:
  (a) first questions are introductory, easy to answer, nonthreatening;
  (b) difficult or threatening questions should be placed in the middle of the interview; and
  (c) an interview should always end on a positive note. (2002: 488–90)

Given that these kinds of prescriptions for good interviewing technique are similar to some of those we have seen in the description of the neo-positivist interview, what is different about the romantic interview? The aim of asking good questions

in particular kinds of ways in the neo-positivist framework is to gain descriptions that are valid and reliable – that is, accurate and stable responses from the interviewee to unbiased questions from the objective interviewer concerning particular topics. In contrast, the object of the romantic interview is to ensure the development of a particular kind of researcher–researched relationship or rapport that will result in gaining data of an in-depth nature that is revelatory and revealing for both parties. For example, Jack Douglas writes:

> ... the self-disclosure and soul-communion involved in creative interviewing become a vital source of progressive self-understanding for both the informant friends and the handmaidenly researcher. (1985: 42)

In this approach the researcher must be intimately aware of his or her own subjectivities, and interview style, and makes no claim to being objective. I use the term subjectivities to refer to a researcher's personal assumptions and presuppositions, or as Alan Peshkin writes, that 'amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation' (1988: 17). Like H.L. 'Bud' Goodall (2000), I take the stance that any exploration of subjectivities entails examination of one's personal experiences and biography as a researcher. This kind of advice is common in the literature on qualitative interviewing; for example both Douglas (1985) and Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin (2005) include sections on researchers knowing themselves.

Qualitative researchers have paid close attention to the critiques of interviewing that seek to make explicit the interviewer's part in the research project. In fact, the inclusion of researchers' subjectivity statements and the possible impact of the researcher's race, status, gender, and perspectives on the data generation, analysis, and representation has become a common feature of research reports (see, for example, Duneier, 2000: 352–4; Ferguson, 2001: 12–16; Fordham, 1996: 36–7). Another feature of reports of studies relying on a romantic conception of interviewing – although by no means standard practice – is that of including the researcher's contribution to the interview talk in the final report. One example of this kind of work is found in Elliot Mishler's (1999) study of craftartists' narratives. Let us now turn to a research report that foregrounds a romantic conception of interview practice.

A Research Example of a Romantic Conception of Interviewing

The influence of romantic assumptions concerning interviewing may be seen in Sharon Chubbuck and Michalinos Zembylas' (2008) case study of the intersections of emotions and socially just teaching in a case study of one White novice teacher working in an urban school in the US whom they call Sara. The researchers conducted a micro-ethnographic study, audio-taping and writing observations of Sara's teaching and interviewing her six times over the period of a semester. These data were supplemented with interviews of the department chair, and 10 students; Sara's reflective journal, student work samples, and informal conversations between Sara and the first author who was the principal investigator. Chubbuck and Zembylas report that since Sara was a former student of the first author, a 'level of communication and trust' had already been established which provided the necessary 'level of openness' between the researcher and participant (2008: 290). The researchers also invited Sara to comment on the initial written report of findings from the study (2008: 292). In this study the authors document information concerning their subjectivities in relation to the research project; and stress the implications of their respective relationships with Sara for the generation and interpretation of data, which was informed by critical and feminist theories. While Chubbuck's relationship with Sara is described positively as a way to enhance data generation, the fact that she 'developed a strong affection for and confidence in Sara as a teacher' is also viewed as a limitation in that it could 'skew her observations and perceptions of the data' (2008: 292). Given that Zembylas had no prior experience with Sara, he was able to cross-check Chubbuck's interpretations with a 'critical outsider's eye' (2008: 292). In this study, multiple methods of data generation, clarification of researchers' subjectivities, researcher triangulation, and member checking throughout the research process are reported as methods to ensure the quality of the study.

In the research examples provided for neo-positivist and romantic conceptions of interviews, an underlying assumption is the notion that researchers are able to access the 'authentic self' of the interview subject via interview talk. This view has been seriously questioned by researchers taking constructionist and postmodernist perspectives to interviews. In the next section, I show how a constructionist conception of interviewing rejects access to the 'authentic' self via interview data in favor of a 'locally produced subject' in relation to a particular interviewer. Here, *how* the interaction unfolds becomes a topic of study in its own right, with researchers interested in the documentation of 'the way in which accounts "are part of the world they describe"' (Silverman, 2001: 95).

A Constructionist Conception of the Interview

IR: Interviewer
IE: Interviewee

IR: yeah .hhh u::m (.) next one is just <u>what</u> u:m is a good day for you w-
what kind of things would happen (1.0) on a good day
IE: u::m get a lunch time? no [heh heh heh um
IR: [heh heh heh .hhh
IE: o::h (.) it's a hard question
(3.0)
IE: can you give me an example? (Roulston, 2004: 156–7)[3]

[3]Transcription conventions are drawn from conversation analysis, and are found in Appendix 1.

The assumptions underlying a 'constructionist' perspective (Silverman, 2001) of the interview are outlined in Box 3.3.

Box 3.3 A constructionist conception of the interview

The interviewer and interviewee ⇒ Co-construct data in unstructured and semi-structured interviews ⇒ Generating situated accountings and possible ways of talking about research topics by the interviewer and interviewee ⇒ Researcher produces analyses of how the interviewer and interviewee made sense of the research topic and constructed narratives; researcher provides understandings of possible ways of discussing topics.

- The data generated provide talk-in-interaction produced within the social setting of the research interview as but one cultural event within the life-world of the participant.
- Data are not seen as reports – that is as directly reflective of either 'interior' states of mind, or 'exterior' states in the world. Instead, data are viewed as 'accounts' – or practical displays of the local organization of social order by the speaker/s (Baker, 2004).
- The data are co-constructed by the interviewer and interviewee, and any of the interviewer's contributions are subject to the same kind of analytic focus as that of the interviewee.
- In this approach 'it's all data' (pers. comm., Carolyn Baker). Interviewers use ordinary conversational skills to elicit data and do not necessarily need specialized skills or training. See, for example, Rapley (2004) and Hester and Francis (1994).
- Data may be analyzed through inspection of both structural and topical features. That is, 'how' talk is co-constructed (indexical features) is just as important as 'what' is said (referential features).
- Analytic methods may be drawn from conversation analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and sociolinguistics.

Alvesson (2003) uses the label 'localist' to describe this approach to interviewing, and it is likely that some researchers who describe their interviews as 'constructionist' define their work somewhat differently than I do. Nevertheless, the label 'constructionist' captures both the importance of social interaction for the co-construction of interview data, as well as the focus on examining the resources people use to describe their worlds to others.

There is a good deal of variation among researchers who rely on a 'constructionist' conception of interviews to how interviews might be transcribed. In the interview excerpt above, in which a first-year teacher is asked to describe a good day, details that are frequently omitted from transcriptions are included. For researchers more familiar with the carefully edited and punctuated versions of talk commonly included in the representations emanating from other conceptions of interviews, this kind of transcription is likely to be off-putting. Yet, researchers who draw on conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992) to examine social interaction do not claim to have captured the talk in its entirety by providing such detailed transcriptions, and are well aware that transcription is theoretically informed (Ochs, 1979) and necessarily always incomplete. Analytic approaches such as conversation analysis and some forms of discourse and narrative analysis rely on detailed transcriptions to capture the complexity of the ongoing construction of interview data. In this kind of work, pauses, silences, laughter, and even inhalations and exhalations provide rich detail for analysis concerning how interviewers and interviewees co-construct possible ways of talking about research topics.

In the constructionist conception of the interview, data provides situated accountings on research topics – that is, particular versions of affairs produced by particular interlocutors on specific occasions. Carolyn Baker explains that rather than analyzing interview talk as 'reports' corresponding to matters outside the interview – that is, what people actually believe, observe, or do – if treated as 'accounts,' we can investigate the 'sense-making work through which participants engage in explaining, attributing, justifying, describing, and otherwise finding possible sense or orderliness in the various events, people, places, and courses of action they talk about' (2002: 781).

From this perspective, 'how' interview data are co-constructed by speakers becomes a topic of study, rather than merely a transparent resource for discussing particular research questions. Some of the scholars working in this tradition draw on ethnomethodology, which teaches us that when people talk to one another, they are also performing actions (for example, clarifying, justifying, informing, arguing, disagreeing, praising, excusing, insulting, complaining, complimenting, and so forth). In interview talk, this means that in any sequence of utterances, speakers show how they have oriented to and made sense of other speakers' prior talk.

In the excerpt included at the beginning of this section, we see that the interviewee provides an assessment (see Appendix 2) of the interview question – 'o::h (.) it's a hard question' that indicates an initial inability to draw on knowledge and experience of what a 'good day' could be. Spoken directly after a tentative response to the interviewer's question, it indicates the interviewee understands that her candidate response ('get a lunch time?') is an incomplete description of a 'good day,' and she continues to search for a possible answer by asking the interviewer for an example of a 'good day.' In this short fragment of talk we learn something about this first-year teacher's cultural world as a teacher through her initial facetious response followed by further difficulties in formulating a reply. While some might argue that this teacher's inability to respond to the interviewer's question shows the question to be invalid, I propose that the trouble encountered by the interviewee in formulating a response (that is, 'how' the interviewee's responses are formulated) provides rich data concerning how the world of teaching is and could be organized (that is, 'what' the speakers are talking about, or the topic of talk) (see also Roulston, 2001).

While methodological issues may be highlighted in this approach to the examination of interview data, Baker has argued that the study of people's sense-making practices in interview talk – just as in any other social setting – provides access to how members of society assemble 'what comes to be seen as rationality, morality, or social

order,' and locates culture in action (Baker, 2000: 792; see also Baker, 1983, 1984, 2004). Holstein and Gubrium (2004) have promoted the view that researchers can usefully study both 'how' interview interaction is constructed and 'what' is said (see also Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). A growing number of researchers have used a constructionist approach to the interview, and draw on analytic methods from ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, membership categorization analysis, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis (for a review, see Roulston, 2006a).

The chief criticisms of this approach to interviews is that the analytic focus is too 'narrow,' and that the aim of examining both 'how' data are constructed and 'what' the topic of talk concerns is inconsistent with the critiques of the romantic and neo-positivist models of interviewing posed by the constructionist perspective of interviews (see Silverman, 2001: 97–8). Before leaving this approach, however, let us look at an example of research that uses this approach.

A Research Example of a Constructionist Approach to Interviewing

Susan Walzer and Thomas Oles' (2003) study of 'uncoupling narratives' recounted to them in interviews by divorced men and women characterizes a constructionist conception of interviews. Their representation of findings draws on narrative analysis, and while sequences of talk include both questions and responses from the interviewer in relation to interviewees, they do not use the detailed transcription conventions used by some analysts (e.g., Mishler, 1986). Initially, the researchers wanted to study roles taken on by those identified as either 'initiators' or 'non-initiators' of divorce. After analyzing their data they discovered that the narratives were replete with discrepancies that they could not explain and reconcile. The researchers then analyzed discrepancies in the narratives, identifying instances in which speakers claimed to have initiated a divorce while providing narratives that suggested they had not, or vice versa. In their presentation of findings, Walzer and Oles recognize that the accounts that they studied do not provide a clear 'truth.' Drawing on Catherine Riessman's (1990) work that used narrative approaches to analyze people's accounts of divorce, their close examination of how speakers construct their narratives reveals the ways that speakers used 'gender' to justify and excuse their actions. In this report, the participants are seen as providing situated accountings that reveal 'interpretations that are generated in interaction with some kind of social audience' (Walzer and Oles, 2003: 341).

In the next conception of the interview, which I describe as 'postmodern,' the notion of interviewees enacting situated performances of various selves is frequently highlighted. Whereas in the constructionist conception of the interview, researchers show how interaction unfolds through in-depth, line-by-line analyses, in the postmodern conception of the interview, researchers have shown through artful analyses and representations possible ways of breaking from traditional research practices. Whereas the constructionist perspective seeks to interpret the moment-by-moment unfolding of co-constructed meaning in interview interaction, and how speakers orient to one another's talk, a postmodernist view argues that 'there is no stable "reality" or "meaning" that can be represented' (Scheurich, 1995: 249).

A Postmodern Conception of the Interview

Norman Denzin promotes a fourth version of the research interview, which I call here the 'postmodern' interview (see Box 3.4). Denzin, a scholar whose work spans the fields of media and communications studies, film criticism, and sociology, has conceptualized the interview as a 'vehicle for producing performance texts and performance ethnographies about self and society,' rather than a 'method for gathering information' (2001: 24). In contrast to an authentic self produced in an interview with the skilful interviewer as in the neo-positivist and romantic models, this interview subject has no essential self, but provides – in relationship with a particular interviewer – various non-unitary performances of selves (Denzin, 2001: 28–9). Indeed, Jim Scheurich writes that '[t]he indeterminate totality of the interview always exceeds and transgresses our attempts to capture and categorize' (1995: 249).

Researchers using a postmodern conceptualization of interviewing question the possibility of generating 'truthful' accounts by asking questions of others, and in their representations of data, question the method itself and trouble readers' assumptions about the findings represented. For example, Trinh T. Minh-ha in her film *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (1989), defines the interview as 'an antiquated device of documentary. Truth is selected, renewed, displaced and speech is always tactical' (Trinh, 1992: 73). She directly questions romantic assumptions about interview practices that aim to generate intimate portraits of a human subject's essence, and highlights the often unseen work of interviewers and authors in assembling texts that aim to represent others. Trinh continues:

> The more intimate the tone, the more successful the interview. Every question she and I come up with is more or less a copy of the question we have heard before. Even if the statement is original, it sounds familiar, worn, threadbare. By choosing the most direct and spontaneous form of voicing and documenting, I find myself closer to fiction. (1992: 78)

While Trinh T. Minh-ha has used documentary film as one approach to representing and questioning interview data, other researchers have applied creative analytic practices (CAPs) (Richardson, 1994, 1999, 2002), such as ethnodrama (Mienczakowski, 2001), plays (Saldaña, 2003), fiction (Angrosino, 1998; Banks and Banks, 1998; Clough, 2002); performance ethnographies (Denzin, 2003a, 2003b), readers' theaters (Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995) and poetry (Faulkner, 2005). This kind of work engages with audiences in new ways, often outside the academy. In Denzin's conception, a major aim for this 'new interpretive form, a new form of the interview, what I call the reflexive, dialogic, or performative interview', is to 'bring people together' and 'criticize the world the way it is, and offer suggestions about how it could be different' (2001: 24).

Box 3.4 A postmodern conception of the interview

The interviewer and interviewee ⇒ Co-construct data in unstructured and semi-structured interviews ⇒ Generating 'situated performances' ⇒ Producing data that may be subject to deconstructive analyses and/or fashioned by the researcher into performance texts in multiple genres, such as fiction, poetry, and performance texts.

- Data produced provides material for deconstructive readings and/or the construction of performance texts that are autoethnographic and/or critical.
- Both the interviewer's and interviewee's vulnerabilities are exposed to the audiences in texts and performances.
- Analytic methods may draw on critical, poststructural and postmodern theories, and represent multiple and fragmented 'selves', non-linear narratives, and use creative analytic practices (Richardson, 1994).
- Representations are partial and fragmented, and reject the notion of a unified self.

The application of postmodern theoretical lenses to interview data and the use of alternative modes of representation have invited both critique and applause (Gergen and Gergen, 2000). For example, in the US, the National Research Council's report *Scientific Research in Education* dismissed the work of 'extreme' postmodernists (2002: 25), and reinforced a particular perspective of science that was evidence-based, replicable, objective, and generalizable. Yet, such critiques have not dampened the enthusiasm of qualitative researchers across disciplines for alternative ways of doing and presenting research. For example, the journal *Qualitative Inquiry* has published numerous examples of this kind of work. One example of interviewing and representation that could be labeled postmodern is provided by anthropologist Michael Angrosino.

A Research Example of a Postmodern Approach to Interviewing

Angrosino's (1998) book, *Opportunity House: Ethnographic Stories of Mental Retardation*, is a series of fictional stories that he constructed from data generated in life history interviews with a group of men with cognitive disabilities. His interest in researching this group came from longstanding involvement as a volunteer worker at the house in which the men lived. Angrosino's treatment of interviews is multilayered, and shows a deliberate recognition of the performative nature of the interview itself; as well as the performative potential of the researcher's re-presentation of the data. Angrosino writes:

> [T]he rendering of a life as a story – an artifact, a text – means that it has been filtered through at least two consciousnesses. It is no longer simply the internal memory of the person who lived the life; it is also the narrative record of the question I asked about it and the directions in which I subtly or otherwise led the person to speak. There is also an implicit third consciousness – that of any potential audience for the story ... a life history may well provide us with nuggets of insight about the specifics of a culture, it is also, and most significantly, a document of interaction – primarily between the 'subject' and the researcher, and secondarily between both of them and their potential audience or reference group. (1998: 32)

Angrosino's reflections on the interviews he undertook with the men are instructive. He comments that 'while my [Opportunity House] friends might never be able to provide me with coherent, objective narratives of their life experiences, they were nonetheless communicating some very important information about how they construct and maintain relationship' (1998: 37). With the invention of settings, and the creation of composite and fictional characters, Angrosino's purpose was to convey 'truths' about adult experiences of cognitive disability, rather than 'facts.' Angrosino explains that as a non-therapist, he aimed to learn from the participants of his study, rather than advise them, or promote any kind of 'change' through interview dialogue. Unlike Angrosino, some researchers who take a postmodern conception of the interview align with critical perspectives and are change-oriented. In the next section, I consider an overtly 'transformative' conception of interviewing.

A Transformative Conception of Interviewing

In that Denzin's proposal of a 'new interpretive form' for the research interview challenges its audiences to reconsider the world in new and critical ways, and promotes a conception of a research interview as 'dialogical,' there is some overlap with the openly transformational intent in the next conception of the interview outlined in Box 3.5. Some might argue that any interview can facilitate some kind of transformation of parties to the talk (see for example, Wolgemuth and Donohue, 2006, pp. 1027–8). Indeed, in talking to other researchers about this topic I have found that many assert that as interviewers they have encountered transformational moments for both themselves and interviewees. Certainly, this may be the case. Here I use the term 'transformative' to denote work in which the researcher *intentionally* aims to challenge and change the understandings of participants, rather than 'transformation' that may be associated with new understandings on the part of either interviewer or interviewee. Jennifer Wolgemuth and Richard Donohue, for example, argue for conducting 'emancipatory narrative research with the explicit intent of transforming participants' lives by opening up new subjective possibilities' (2006: 1024). This work contributes to emancipatory and social justice work in that it assists in transformation of the parties to the talk, as well as generating data for research purposes.

Box 3.5 A transformative conception of the interview

The interviewer dialogues with the interviewee and may work in collaboration to design, conduct and present the research project ⇒ The interviewer and interviewee develop 'transformed' or 'enlightened' understandings as an outcome of dialogical interaction ⇒ Interpretations of data produce critical readings of cultural discourses that challenge normative discourses.

- Data produced changes both interviewer and interviewee; as each engages in dialogue that challenges former and current understandings.
- Impetus for this work is fostering social change for social justice.
- Analytic methods and representations draw on critical, emancipatory, and psychoanalytic theoretical perspectives (for example, critical theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, hermeneutics, and psychoanalysis).

The transformative interview has been discussed from two perspectives – in research emanating from an emancipatory or critical agenda (such as action research); and in work in which the 'therapeutic' interview has been applied to social research (Kvale, 1999). The distinction between these two perspectives of the transformative interview lies in the conception of the change made possible. In the first perspective, the transformative potential for participants cannot be predetermined, 'since people's meanings and prejudices can only be brought forth at the time of articulation' (Melissa Freeman, pers. comm., 13 June 2006). In the therapeutic interview, change involves healing of the patient. According to Steinar Kvale, '[t]he purpose of the therapeutic interview is the facilitation of changes in the patient, and the knowledge acquired in the interview interaction is a means for instigating personality changes' (1999: 110). Kvale has advocated for the use of the psychoanalytic interview as a means of generating knowledge; and outlines a lengthy tradition in the field of psychology in which 'some of its most lasting and relevant knowledge of the human situation has been produced as a side effect of helping patients change' (1999: 110). A further distinction between these two strands of thought is that while in some incarnations the transformative interview is explicitly dialogic (and both interviewer and interviewee contribute to and are transformed by the interaction); in others it appears that the interviewers work to transform others.

While some feminist research may fit into the transformative conception of interviewing; not all does. For example, Terry Arendell's discussion of her interviews with men in her feminist study of divorced men discussed how she systematically avoided challenging interviewees who 'asserted their beliefs about male superiority, expressed other kinds of sexist and misogynist sentiments, and described behaviors hostile to women' (1997: 363). In Arendell's study, the interpretation produced in the final report produced feminist and critical readings of the data; however the interview itself could be characterized as romantic, in that the interviewer provided the kinds of responses necessary in order to elicit confessional detail from her informants; and withheld information when not directly asked that may have negatively impacted men's participation in the study (for example, that she was a feminist). Arendell's purpose was to generate *data* for her study; and her aim was not in any way to challenge or change participants of the study.

The key difference, then, between a 'transformative' interview and other models described earlier is found in the purpose of the interview. In this kind of interview, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee aims for less asymmetry in talk, with 'transformative dialogue' enacted in the interview interaction. There are, however, few examples of what interaction that is truly 'dialogical' might look like, and how one might go about fostering that kind of talk in a research project. Kvale has discussed interviewer–interviewee relationships; in particular the problems associated with the asymmetrical power relation of the interview, arguing that 'a conception of research interviews as personal egalitarian dialogues masks the power asymmetry of hierarchical interview relationships' (2006: 496). A second issue that is not clear from the writing on this topic is how forthcoming interviewers are in working with interviewees about the aims of their research. While Adrianna Kezar (2003) has described some of the problems that arise in this kind of research interview, and Wolgemuth and Donohue propose an 'emancipatory narrative inquiry of discomfort [that] takes as its primary goal the transformation of individual into ambiguous selves' (2006: 1030), there is still much room for discussion of the place of research interviews in emancipatory and transformative research. This kind of methodological writing could show the range of talk produced by interviewers and interviewees in transformative interviews, and how such research might be facilitated with participants who may not share the interviewers' theoretical perspectives and aims.

A Research Example of a Transformative Approach to Interviewing

One example is provided by Melissa Freeman, who is theoretically informed by philosophical hermeneutics, which she describes as focusing on 'the event of understanding or interpretation as it occurs in the encounter' (2008: 386). Freeman (2006) describes a transformative conception of interviewing in her report on the use of focus group discussions with parents on the topic of state standardized testing. Although the purpose of the facilitation of focus groups was to gain data concerning parents' perceptions of the research topic, Freeman purposefully structured the talk to 'provide a space for people to engage critically and reflectively with issues that affect them daily' (2006: 84). Freeman provides some insight into the kinds of things that interviewers might do to facilitate dialogue. These include calling upon participants to 'think more deeply about the issues they bring to the discussion,' requesting examples of what participants mean; and use of alternative elicitation strategies such as the use of drawing, writing, or poetic transcriptions derived from prior data collection as a basis for group discussion (2006: 87). Another strategy that Freeman outlines is that the interviewer carefully

consider what participants 'bring to the table,' and be less quick in judging talk as 'off topic' or 'irrelevant' (2006: 87).

One possible critique of this conception of the interview is the right and/or responsibility of the researcher in changing others' understandings. Further, researchers who frame their conception of interviewing using psychoanalytic theories are open to critique for blurring the lines between 'scientific research' and 'therapy.' For example, methods texts on qualitative interviewing frequently admonish researchers to clearly distinguish between doing 'therapy' and doing 'research' (see, for example, Seidman, 2006).

Writing on the transformative conception of interviewing is still sparse, and we have yet to see how this approach to data generation is taken up, adapted, and used for the purpose of doing social research. There are particular groups, however, who are likely to reject the notion that researchers might attempt to instigate dialogues of change with research participants in interviews. Some, perhaps, would reject direct involvement in research altogether. I speak specifically of indigenous groups with whom some researchers have worked to develop 'decolonizing' approaches to research.

A Decolonizing Conception of Interviewing

Research has long been a tool of colonization used by principalities and powers to explore, claim, divide, and vanquish peoples, cultures, and countries. Qualitative researchers are implicated in these explorations – for example, many methodological texts draw on advice provided in anthropological accounts authored by white researchers describing foreign lands and peoples and furnished with data extracted via interviews with key informants. Some argue that qualitative inquirers still participate in colonizing research. Thus, when Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that decolonization of indigenous peoples 'is now recognized as a long-term process involving bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power' (1999: 98), she is also writing about research practices. In her influential book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Smith shows how Western research practices that have objectified and endangered indigenous peoples throughout the world are an integral part of European colonialism. These practices, Smith asserts, have largely been experienced negatively by those who have been the objects (see also Stronach [2006], who addresses imperialism as a contemporary and continuing phenomenon in qualitative inquiry). Negative experiences with whites – research included – have led many indigenous people to mistrust non-indigenous peoples, researchers, and research itself (Smith, 1999).

Thus, before a researcher can conceptualize what a 'decolonizing' interview might look like, he or she must pay very close attention to indigenous research agendas. According to Smith (1999: 116–18), who is a Maori researcher in New Zealand, the indigenous research agenda involves the processes of decolonization, transformation, mobilization, and healing. She write that these 'are not goals or ends in themselves,' but 'processes which connect, inform and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional and the global ... that can be incorporated into practices and methodologies' (1999: 116). Further, she asserts that indigenous peoples are moving through the conditions of survival, recovery, development, and self-determination (1999: 116). Thus any researcher planning to conduct research with indigenous peoples must thoroughly consider the issues outlined above, realizing that to be 'culturally sensitive' and to follow ethical codes of research conduct may be insufficient.

Smith writes that researchers with 'outsider' status are particularly problematic in indigenous communities, given that indigenous voices have often been silenced and marginalized by non-indigenous experts (1999: 139, see pp. 177–8 for models for culturally appropriate research by non-indigenous researchers). In some communities, research may only be conducted by indigenous researchers. Even so, indigenous researchers with 'insider' status in a community still face particular challenges in conducting research, given that often they are trained by and must meet standards for research required by academic communities that are in tension with those of indigenous communities.

Indigenous peoples have long relied on oral transmission of stories, yet interviewing as a method in some cases may not be appropriate. For example, Iseke-Barnes writes that:

> Often Elders decline to have their words recorded in print or on tape because when Elders' words are recorded the Elder loses the possibility of adjusting the lessons to the maturity of the learner and the ability to influence the ethical use of the knowledge. (2003: 214)

In settings in which interviewing as a method may be appropriate, what might a 'decolonizing interview' look like? Smith does not write specifically about a decolonizing conception of the interview, however, given the larger agenda that she articulates, together with the examples she provides, I draw pointers that must be considered in light of the particular issues relevant to different indigenous communities around the world (see Box 3.6).

Box 3.6 A decolonizing conception of the interview[4]

Prior to the interview, and throughout the research process

- The researcher observes culturally specific ethical protocols required by indigenous communities to gain entry to the community, as well as culturally specific protocols of respect, and practices of reciprocity with those involved in research (Smith, 1999: 118–20, 136).[5] Interviews as a form of data may only be used with permission of community members (Davis, 2004).

(Continued)

[4]This conception of the interview is framed using Smith's outline of an 'indigenous research agenda' (1999: 116–20).

[5]See also Smith (2005) and Bishop (2005) for suggestions concerning researcher conduct and models of decolonizing research in the Maori context.

(Continued)

- The interviewer has considered possible negative outcomes of the research, and worked to eliminate these (Smith, 1999: 173).
- The interviewer is aware of the potential for abuses of power in the researcher–researched relationship (Smith, 1999: 176).

The interview

The interviewer, with interviewee, generates the kind of talk that is deemed appropriate and valued in a particular indigenous community given the requirements of gender, status, and age of the interviewer/interviewee ⇒ Indigenous knowledge, practices and spirituality are taken into account by the interviewer in the design and conduct of the interview ⇒ Data analysis and interpretation is respectful of indigenous peoples and their knowledge and practices ⇒ Findings from research are shared by the researcher in respectful ways with and for the benefit of the communities studied, and in ways that may be understood by community members.

- Findings and interpretations from research studies are useful for indigenous communities and contribute to restorative justice.
- The impetus for this work is to contribute to the agendas of decolonization, transformation, mobilization and healing of indigenous peoples.
- Research follows the pathways of (1) community action research based around claims, and (2) advanced indigenous research and studies programs in academic institutions (Smith, 1999: 125).
- Analytic methods and representations draw on emancipatory and critical theoretical perspectives, and may involve community participation. Alternative representational strategies may include testimonies, story telling and oral histories, writing involving language revitalization, poetry, fiction, film, and art.

Indigenous ways of knowing may be seen as contradictory to Western ways of knowing, and doing research studies which aim to decolonize may involve different representational formats to traditional academic reports. For these reasons, one critique of this kind of work is that it is not sufficiently 'scientific' or 'academic.' Although issues outlined above represent substantial obstacles to the conduct of doing research with indigenous populations and the publication and dissemination of findings, there is a growing body of work from indigenous scholars from all over the world that 'talks back,' contradicts, and produces new understandings that counter the findings produced by non-indigenous researchers over many decades. The work of indigenous scholars is supplemented by that of non-indigenous researchers who have selected to work with indigenous communities. While there is a good deal of debate whether non-indigenous scholarly work can be decolonizing, or of value, there is a growing body of literature exemplifying decolonizing research.

A Research Example of a Decolonizing Approach to Interviewing

One example is Yoshitaka Iwasaki, Judith Bartlett, Benjamin Gottlieb and Darlene Hall's (2009) study that reports on leisure-like experiences of urban-dwelling Metis and First Nations people living with diabetes in Canada. The authors used a decolonizing methodology with the overarching aim of allowing the research process to be guided by Aboriginal world views. Specifically, the decisions concerning the project, which involved the use of in-depth interviews, involved collective discussions and consensus decision-making guided by Aboriginal researchers.

This article demonstrates some of the features of a decolonizing approach to research outlined by Smith (1999). First, the researchers purposefully avoided the use of Western-oriented academic language, such as 'stress,' 'coping' and 'leisure,' and pilot-tested questions that used culturally relevant terms approved by members of the Aboriginal community (Iwasaki et al., 2009: 162). The inclusion of input from community members with respect to question formulation recognizes the colonizing potential of research with indigenous peoples, and attempts to disrupt this. Second, the researchers paid specific attention to showing respect for Aboriginal people's knowledge throughout the research process. This is demonstrated in multiple ways.

Aboriginal researchers were included in discussions and decision-making concerning the research project; interviewers used broad, conversational probes in order to 'respectfully listen and honor the life stories' of participants in interviews; the research team did not assume that diabetes was central to participants' lived experiences (Iwasaki et al., 2009: 162); and the process of data analysis used a procedure called Collective Consensual Data Analytic Procedure (CCDAP), an approach to research adapted from facilitation and organization practices that have been used successfully with Aboriginal organizations in Canada (2009: 165). The research team also received input from three respected Aboriginal health and social service professionals in a two-day interpretive workshop that discussed the conclusions and verification of the findings. Finally, the authors report that those researchers who were not Aboriginal made specific attempts to bracket their 'conventional Western-oriented research paradigms and assumptions to become knowledgeable and immersed in an Indigenous way of doing research' (Iwasaki et al., 2009: 162). These researchers' emphasis on the development of a research project guided by Aboriginal researchers and knowledgeable Aboriginals within the community, as well as carefully considered procedures regarding collective decision-making, provides a useful guide to how a decolonizing methodology might be used by researchers seeking to advance knowledge about the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined six conceptions of research interviews. In published accounts, readers may find that the distinctions outlined between these perspectives

may blur. Yet it is useful for readers to examine how researchers foreground particular kinds of assumptions concerning their use of interviews. Locating these assumptions in research reports is helpful in clarifying the different theoretical positions that researchers take in their use of interview research. For example, do researchers emphasize their objectivity as interviewers or the sense of rapport and trust they have developed with participants? Do researchers foreground the researcher's co-production of interview data, or make explicit their rejection of a 'unitary truth' as an important feature in reports from qualitative interview studies? Or, perhaps, research reports feature dialogue that researchers assert shows how speakers have experienced transformational moments within the interview talk. Other accounts may foreground the need for culturally sensitive research practices that strive to avoid the denigration of indigenous ways of knowing. By asking these kinds of questions of research reports, readers can become more familiar with the different kinds of assumptions that researchers use in their work. Beginning researchers who familiarize themselves with a range of approaches to interviewing will be better able to situate themselves as researchers.

In the next chapter, I discuss how researchers might go about developing ideas into a topic for research, how research questions might be formulated, and the kinds of decision making that inform the design process. Finally, I discuss the issue of quality in relation to the design process.

Further Reading

A Neo-positivist Conception of Interviewing

Monte-Sano, C. (2008) 'Qualities of historical writing instruction: A comparative case study of two teachers' practices', *American Educational Research Journal*, 45 (4): 1045–79.

A Romantic Conception of Interviewing

Kouritzin, S.G. (1999) *Face[t]s of First Language Loss*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

A Constructionist Conception of Interviewing

Baker, C.D. and Johnson, G. (1998) 'Interview talk as professional practice', *Language and Education*, 12 (4): 229–42.

Schubert, S.J., Hansen, S., Dyer, K.R. and Rapley, M. (2009) '"ADHD patient" or "illicit drug user"? Managing medico-moral membership categories in drug dependence services', *Discourse and Society*, 20 (4): 499–516.

A Postmodern Conception of Interviewing

Gale, K. and Wyatt, J. (2007) 'Writing the incalculable: A second interactive inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (6): 878–907.

Gale, K. and Wyatt, J. (2006) 'Inquiring into writing: An interactive interview', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12 (6): 1117–34.

A Transformative Conception of Interviewing

Stinson, D. (2008) 'Negotiating sociocultural discourses: The counter-storytelling of academically (and mathematically) successful African-American male students', *American Educational Research Journal*, 45 (4): 975–1010.

A Decolonizing Conception of Interviewing

Caracciolo, D. and Staikidis, K. (2009) '"Coming of age in methodology": Two collaborative inquiries with Shinnecock and Maya peoples', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15 (8): 1395–415.

Kombo, E.M. (2009) 'Their words, actions, and meaning: A researcher's reflection on Rwandan women's experience of genocide', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15 (2): 308–23.

Madison, D.S. (2008) 'Narrative poetics and performative intervention', in N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln and L.T. Smith (eds), *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. pp. 391–405.

Activity 3.1 Reading research: Theoretical assumptions

Locate two reports of qualitative studies that have used interviews in a journal in your field of interest. Read each article, paying particular attention to the literature review and research design and methods section.

- What theoretical and conceptual frameworks are described by the author/s?
- What information is included about the researcher/s?
- How are the qualitative interviews characterized and described in the research design statement?
- If the interview questions are included, what do you notice about their formulation and sequence?
- How are interview data incorporated into the findings section?
- Are the interview questions and interviewer's interactions included in the report?
- What kinds of assumptions about qualitative interviews may be inferred from the research report?
- Which conception of the interview do the authors foreground in each report?
- How convincing did you find this report? Why?