The Irresistible Rise of The Poorly Analysed Interview

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

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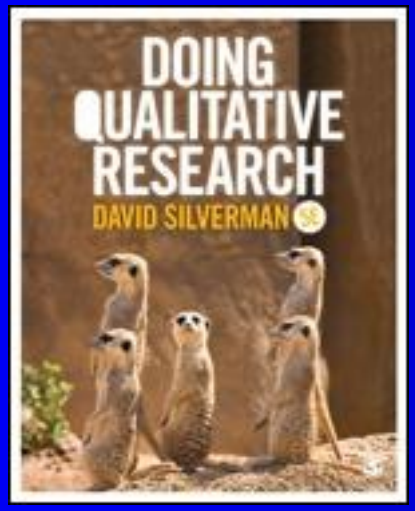
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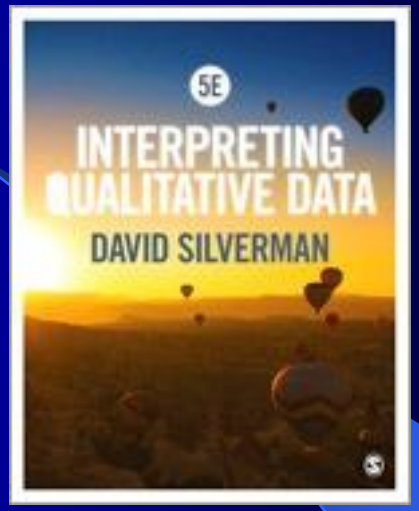
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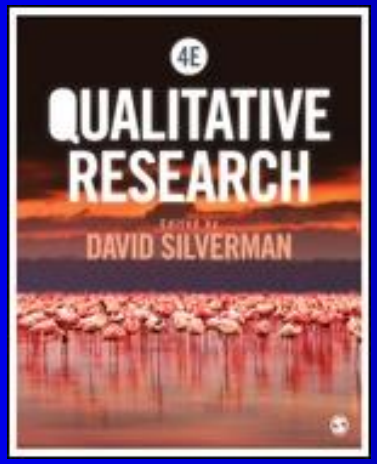
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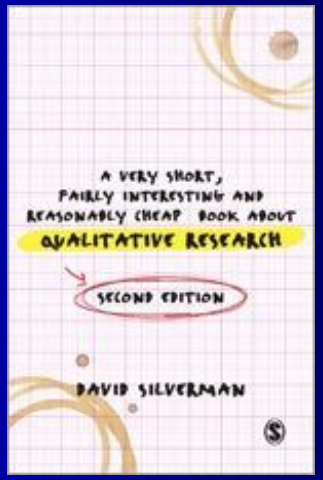
A VERY SHORT,
FAIRLY INTERESTING AND
REASONABLY CHEAP BOOK ABOUT
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
SECOND EDITION
DAVID SILVERMAN

The Dominance of Interviews

- My preference
- Quants strong on interviews
- Quants strong on naturalistic data
- PhD students
- Faculty

Theory and Practice

‘Qualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another’ (Denzin & Lincoln HQR 3rd Edition, 2005:6).

A Survey of a Journal

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

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

Bad Features

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

Making Claims about Populations

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

Using favourable extracts

- No attempt to analyse whole dataset
- No deviant cases examined
- Often pose research question to participants

Stalking Study

How interviews analysed

- Study of stalking [Johnson & Rowlands 2002]
- ‘to learn how those who stalk others actually see or interpret their actions as well as to explore the nature of the (often conflicted) emotions that lie underneath these actions’

Critique

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

Making Claims about Individuals

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

Accounts in context

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

Student examples using a constructionist model

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

What to look for

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

Practical Suggestions

- Improved transcription
- Right-left analysis
- Down-up
- No given identities [in brackets] but co-construction of identities
- Intensive>extensive>intensive analysis

Baruch (1982) used two effective strategies:

tabulating many cases

investigating deviant cases

Extract 4 (Baruch,1982) [Int=interviewer]

Parent: When she was born, they told me she was perfectly all right. And I accepted it. I worried about her which most mothers do, you know. Worry about their first child.
Int: Hm
Parent: She wouldn't eat and different things. And so I kept taking her to the clinic. Nothing wrong with her my dear. You're just making yourself ... worrying unnecessarily, you see.

TABLE 1 *MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES*

Categories	Number	[%]
Parent-child	160	[51%]
Parent-professional	86	[28%]
Professional-child	49	[16%]
Professional-parent	16	[5%]
Total	311	[100%]

A deviant case [the pharmacists]

Conclusion

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

Conclusion

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