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Qualitative Research Interviews

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After presenting a brief overview of the complexity of the qualitative interviewing process used by psychotherapy researchers, the authors discuss some of the major ideas that psychotherapy researchers using such interviews must consider both before and during the interview process. They then offer thoughts regarding approaches to strengthen qualitative interviews themselves.

Much of qualitative psychotherapy research relies on spoken interviews with participants to gather detailed information regarding the phenomenon under examination (Polkinghorne, 2005). In an activity that calls on not only strong interviewing techniques but also the very skills used when working with clients, interviewers confront challenges inherent in both domains: How do they conduct an incisive interview that yields rich and meaningful data while simultaneously helping participants feel safe enough to explore in depth often difficult experiences with a relative stranger? Perhaps complicating this process, qualitative psychotherapy researchers also must attend to the

ethics of interviewing. (The ethics of interviewing are beyond the scope of this article, but interested readers are encouraged to see Haverkamp, 2005.) Such researchers, for instance, have often been trained, and may even be credentialed, to address others' distress. When conducting research, however, they tread a sometimes difficult line between interviewer and therapist, an ethical challenge that other social science researchers may not face (Haverkamp, 2005). In this article, we discuss important considerations that psychotherapy researchers must address, both before and during the interview itself, as they engage in this approach to data collection. We do so in the hope that our discussion of these vital components of qualitative interviewing will not only improve researchers' execution of such interviews themselves but will also strengthen qualitative research more broadly. When possible, we integrate extant empirical evidence and relevant theory and conclude by suggesting fruitful research avenues for advancing our understanding of the qualitative interview process. We acknowledge, as well, that our focus is not exhaustive: There are certainly additional topics worthy of consideration, but we have included those that have consistently been of most relevance in our own research.

Considerations Before the Interview

Interview Protocol

Before any interview can occur, consideration must be given to the very questions that will be asked, because "at the root of ...interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1991, p. 3). The means to access those experiences range widely, from open-ended, unstructured approaches that may seem more a friendly conversation than a data-gathering interview (Seidman, 1991) to highly structured protocols with preset and standardized questions from which there is little variance.

On one end of this continuum, then, are relatively unstructured approaches (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology) that may use an evolving set of questions, such that later participants respond to queries quite different from those to which earlier

participants responded. As initial data are gathered and analyzed, they lead to refinement of the study's central focus and thus to new questions for participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such an approach is in keeping with the sentiments of Kvale (1996), who asserted that the design of qualitative interview research is open ended in that it is more concerned with being attuned to the participant than with necessarily following the same path for all respondents. In ethnography, for example, the interview is more a "friendly conversation into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond" (Spradley, 1979, pp. 58-59) and thus retains an open framework with little in the way of preset queries. The basic themes or topic areas of the investigation are likely determined ahead of time, but not the sequence or the content of the specific questions. As stated by Kvale (1996), "Sometimes only a first, topic-introducing question is asked and the remainder of the interview proceeds as a follow-up and expansion on the interviewee's answer to the first questions" (p. 127). Unstructured interviews, although they may well yield unexpected responses (Kvale, 1996), also make it difficult to compare findings across cases if participants have not responded to the same questions.

Occupying the middle of the continuum are semistructured interviews, in which a protocol using open-ended questions based on the study's central focus is developed before data collection to obtain specific information and enable comparison across cases; interviewers nevertheless remain open and flexible so that they may probe individual participants' stories in more detail (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interviewer thus asks all questions of each respondent but may pursue in more depth particular areas that emerge for each interviewee (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) and may also vary the sequence in which questions are asked. The protocol in such semistructured interviews serves as a guide (Flick, 2002), a foundation on which the interview is built but one that allows creativity and flexibility to ensure that each participant's story is fully uncovered.

Finally, at the other end of the continuum are survey or standardized interviews, in which the goal is to expose each participant to exactly the same interview experience (Fontana & Frey,

2005) so that any differences are assumed to be due to variations among participants rather than to differences in the interview process itself (Singleton & Straits, 2002). To this end, such interviews follow a highly structured protocol consisting most often of closed questions (those that seek a definitive one-to two-word answer such as "yes" or "no" and are often used to ascertain facts) presented to respondents in the same order. Furthermore, the interview process itself is highly regulated (e.g., questions are read exactly as written, standard probes are used, no interviewer disclosure is to occur), such that researchers are neutral and consistent throughout all interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In effect, then, "the goal is nothing less than the elimination of the interviewer as a source of measurement error" (Groves, 1989, p. 358). Wholly standardized interviews have the potential advantage of greater uniformity across respondents but inhibit the uncovering of participants' rich and unique experiences, especially those that lie outside the bounds of the interview questions themselves.

Phone versus In-person Interviews

Another decision that qualitative interviewers face involves the actual means of completing the interview: Should participants be interviewed by phone or in person (i.e., face-to-face)? Little research has compared the benefits of these means of data collection, likely because, according to Shuy (2003), such studies are expensive and difficult to carry out, and few researchers have been motivated to examine the relative merits of the differing approaches. Two studies that did examine phone versus in-person interviews found a slight advantage for the latter in yielding better quality data (de Leeuw & van der Zouwen, 1988; Jordan, Marcus, & Reeder, 1980). In a third study, a meta-analysis focusing on participants' responses to sensitive topics in surveys, Tourangeau and Yan (2007) found that interviewers contribute to participants' misreporting because respondents have to share their answers with another person (vs. with a computer or only with themselves [as in a written survey]), and that social desirability bias is worse in phone than in face-to-face interviews.

Despite the potential for such bias, phone interviews are quite common. First, they enable researchers to include participants from virtually any geographic region; no one is required to travel for the

interview. The ability to cast this broader net may be quite attractive to researchers who seek an efficient and economical way to capture the experiences of nonlocal participants. Furthermore, phone interviews may also afford participants more anonymity, because they may use a pseudonym and thereby not fully identify themselves (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005) as they describe sometimes profound personal experiences (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Lowes & Gill, 2006). Musselwhite, Cuff, McGregor, and King (2006) also described several advantages of this means of data collection, some of which echo those asserted by Hill and her colleagues: Phone interviews (1) use economic and human resources efficiently (e.g., reduce the need for travel, thereby widening the net researchers may cast for participants and enabling expedient data collection); (2) minimize disadvantages of in-person interviews (e.g., researchers can take detailed notes of an interview without making participants feel uncomfortable, response bias may be reduced in the absence of facial expressions, the anonymity afforded by the phone may enable participants to be more open in their responses); (3) allow research-appropriate relationships to develop between interviewer and interviewee; and (4) improve the quality of data collection (e.g., enable greater supervision and support of interviewers, allow those who may have reading/writing difficulties to participate in research). Relatedly, Brannen (1988) asserted that participants will have less fear and will be more forthcoming if they believe that they will never cross paths with the interviewer after completing the research, with the detachment fostering anonymity and thus greater disclosure. Shuy (2003) also addressed the advantages of phone interviews, stating that they reduce interviewer effects, allow better interviewer uniformity in delivery and greater standardization of questions, enhance researcher safety and cost-efficiency, and facilitate faster results. Interestingly, Siemiatycki (1979) found that the quality of the data obtained in phone versus in-person interviews was comparable and the added costs of in-person interviews unjustified. Finally, having access to nonverbal data (via an in-person interview) may actually introduce the potential for response bias, because participants may "read" interviewers' reactions to participant responses and adjust their replies accordingly (Marcus & Crane, 1986; Musselwhite, Cuff, McGregor, & King, 2006).

Face-to-face interviews, on the other hand, allow the observation not only of verbal but also nonverbal data (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004). When in the same room, for instance, participant and interviewer have access to facial expressions, gestures, and other paraverbal communications that may enrich the meaning of the spoken words (Carr & Worth, 2001). Relatedly, one assertion frequently made in support of in-person interviews is that because both researcher and participant are in the same space, and thus have access to more than just verbal data, they can build the rapport that may enable participants to freely disclose their experiences more effectively than might occur in phone interviews (Shuy, 2003). Furthermore, Polkinghorne (1994) asserted that in-person interviews yield authentic and deep descriptions of phenomena via the interviewer's ability to facilitate trust and openness in the interviewee, which then lessens the interviewee's need for impression management and enables the examination of her or his private experiences. Musselwhite et al. (2006) also addressed some of the benefits of in-person interviews, which may (1) help maintain participant involvement more successfully than phone interviews (e.g., fewer dropouts) and (2) clarify the information being communicated (e.g., those with hearing difficulties or those for whom English is not their first language may encounter fewer difficulties in face-to-face interviews; messages being conveyed nonverbally are available to the researcher).

There is likely, then, no definitive statement as to which approach is preferable, and the ideal approach may also vary from study to study (Shuy, 2003). Researchers thus should choose the method that best serves the project and will yield the richest data, because both approaches may be effective avenues for data collection. In determining which may be the preferred approach, researchers may want to consider both financial and time resources as well as participant accessibility, all of which may differ quite dramatically between phone and in-person interviews. Alternatively, and where feasible, perhaps participants could be permitted to choose how their interview is conducted, in the hope that they would be more forthcoming in the approach with which they were most comfortable.

Across the hundreds of phone interviews we have completed, we have encountered only a very small handful of participants who seemed genuinely reluctant to talk about their experiences. Most, in fact, were grateful for the opportunity to share their story, freely shared their perspectives, and stated that doing so was beneficial because it allowed them to verbalize sometimes profound personal experiences (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004). For those more reticent few, our sense was that had we been face-to-face, these participants may, in fact, have been even less comfortable, because the phone at least afforded them some physical and psychological space from the interviewer (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

Number of Interviews per Participant

Differences of opinion also exist regarding how many interviews are necessary for each participant. Some qualitative researchers or methods rely on a single interview, whereas others use multiple interview contacts (May, 1991).

Single interviews, according to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) the most prevalent approach, may be preferred when access to participants is difficult or when the topic can be effectively examined in a single interaction (May, 1991). Such interviews may well miss important information, however. One meeting with a participant with whom the researcher has never met or spoken may fail to elicit the vital contextual information that would more likely emerge across multiple interviews (Mishler, 1986) and without which the experiences described in an interview may be stripped of their meaning (Patton, 1989).

Multiple interviews, in contrast, may foster a stronger relationship between researcher and participant, such that the latter may feel more comfortable deeply describing difficult or emotionally laden experiences to someone with whom he or she has had prior contact and established at least some level of trust (Adler & Adler, 2002; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Laslett & Rapoport, 1975; McCracken, 1988; Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1994; Seidman, 1991). As an example of a multiple-interview approach (e.g., in-depth phenomenological interviewing), Seidman (1991)

described a series of three interviews: The first interview (focused life history) allows participants to tell as much as possible about themselves in light of the research topic. The second (the details of experience) focuses on the concrete details of participants' experiences in the topic area. The final interview (reflection on the meaning) enables participants to consider the meaning of their experiences in this area. The multiple-interview approach also allows researchers and participants to explore any additional thoughts and feelings about, or reactions to, the first interview in a later contact (May, 1991). Moreover, if either party left an earlier interview feeling confused or concerned about some of the content described therein, a later interview again provides an opportunity for clarification.

When making decisions with regard to the number of interviews, researchers should consider their costs and benefits. The greater the number of interviews, the greater the costs of the interviewing process, certainly in time and also quite likely in money. Researchers thus need to determine whether those costs will be balanced by more and better data, an area about which there is currently no existing literature. In addition, more contact between researcher and participant may help establish a stronger relationship, one that may facilitate greater and deeper participant disclosure. However, such extended contact may also lead to blurred boundaries between researcher and participant, especially if the researcher is him-or herself a therapist (Haverkamp, 2005). Therapist researchers enter such relationships as researchers, yet participants may have a different understanding of the nature of their time together. With sensitive or provocative research topics, in particular, these researchers may find themselves struggling with how to maintain their primary role as researcher while also ensuring that their humane and compassionate responses do not transform research into therapy (Haverkamp, 2005).

In our own experiences, we have used at least two interviews, for the reasons described previously: Doing so increases our chance of understanding the context, and thus the meaning, of participants' experiences; helps participants feel a sense of safety with the interviewer; allows examination of additional content that may have been stimulated by the first interview; and enables either party to

clarify any potentially confusing elements of a first interview. Rarely have we encountered participants who have refused a second interview; many, in fact, have found it an equally valuable component of their participation in the study as the first interview.

Considerations during the Interview

The strength of the interviewer-participant relationship is perhaps the single most important aspect of a qualitative research project: It is through this relationship that all data are collected and data validity is strengthened (Adler & Adler, 2002; Kvale, 1996). In addition, the quality of this relationship likely affects participants' self-disclosure, including the depth of information they may share about their experience of a particular phenomenon. Consider, for example, study participants who were asked to discuss events in which their interactions (as supervisees) with a culturally unresponsive supervisor led to difficult and sometimes openly hostile supervisory relationships (Burkard et al., 2006). During these interviews, participants often expressed feeling guarded while discussing such experiences. Had they not felt at least some sense of safety with the interviewer, they likely would not have been forthcoming in discussing these difficult events at all (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Given the importance of the interview relationship, in the following section we consider some of the factors that influence development and maintenance of relationships with participants during qualitative interviews.

Qualitative Method

All research methods are founded on philosophical beliefs regarding the acquisition and interpretation of data, and these beliefs drive qualitative researchers' interview approach toward participants. For instance, early qualitative interview research in psychology, such as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), was often based on the philosophical tenets of positivism and postpositivism (Charmaz, 2005). During interviews, then, researchers often had predetermined hypotheses based on theory or prior research, and they used the research interview as an opportunity to test the validity of their hypotheses. Additionally, researchers sought to be objective observers in the interview process, seeking to maintain a professional distance

from participants. In the past few decades, however, a transition has occurred among qualitative researchers to postmodern paradigms that emphasize constructivist-interpretivist perspectives (Charmaz, 2005). Researchers are often more directly involved with participants in an attempt to more fully understand their experiences. For instance, researchers are likely to work collaboratively with participants on projects to understand the phenomenon of interest, and researchers use interviews to stimulate conversations with participants about the meaning of their experiences (Schwandt, 2000). In sum, researchers' divergent philosophical beliefs have important implications for the structure of interviews, and researchers are encouraged to understand how their beliefs regarding the nature of research may influence their interview methods.

Participant Characteristics and Processes

Although an interviewer's choice of research method may shape the approach to and the structure of an interview, participant characteristics also influence the actual interview process and relationship. Participants' reasons for or motivation for being interviewed may be one such factor. Many participants, for instance, agree to be interviewed because they expect to gain from the experience (Bloom, 1996), possibly finding the interview interesting and rewarding (Berg, 2001), validating of personal experiences (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004), or enabling them to altruistically help others (Lowes & Gill, 2006). Given that participants are often motivated to participate for such positive reasons, they may be expected to be forthcoming when describing their experiences, emotions, and beliefs. Although many participants are indeed quite open, some withhold information if the interviewer is not responsive during the interview (Oakley, 1981), suggesting that the interviewer may also need to be forthcoming and validating to promote participant disclosure. So participants may initially agree to be interviewed for personal reasons but may continue to remain open and engaged with the interviewer only when they feel that their experiences are validated and supported and when the interviewer is equally as open during the interview.

The level of disclosure by participants may also be influenced by the emotions they experienced while recounting past events. In

particular, the retelling of powerful experiences may elicit intense affect, which can influence participants' mood and emotional state during the interview (Adler & Adler, 2002). Consider that participants are often asked to discuss experiences that they may have disclosed to few others. Thus, sharing such information, and more specifically allowing interviewers to hear about participants' feelings of shame, embarrassment, fear, and anxiety, may increase feelings of vulnerability (Birch & Miller, 2000; Sinding & Aronson, 2003). Such vulnerability may be exacerbated by the fear that interviewers may be evaluating them (Adler & Adler, 2002). Research suggests that impression management strategies may be particularly heightened at these times (Dingwall, 1997; Shiner & Newburn, 1997), and participants may manage these feelings of vulnerability during the interview in multiple ways. For instance, they may respond minimally, offer vague or unclear information, or change the focus of the interview (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1992).

Finally, participants' cultural background and values have an important effect on interview relationships. In the past few decades, theorists and researchers have noted the influence of cultural differences in communication styles (e.g., proxemics, kinesics, paralanguage, high-/low-context communication), particularly with regard to how information is communicated to others (Hall, 1988; Sue & Sue, 2003). For instance, some cultural groups (e.g., Africans, African Americans, Arabs, Latin Americans) prefer to have physical closeness when communicating with others, whereas other cultural groups (e.g., European Americans, Germans, Scandinavians) prefer more physical distance. Specific to qualitative interview research, interviewers are thus encouraged to understand nonverbal communication (Hall, 1988; von Raffler-Engel, 1988) as well as how cultural differences in communication styles may affect the development and maintenance of participant rapport (Kvale, 1996).

In addition to these nuances of cross-cultural communication, interview participants of some cultural groups may also expect a collaborative and cooperative relationship with researchers, one that extends outside of or well beyond the research study (Ryen, 2002). In fact, some cultural groups many only cooperate with researchers who are willing to form long-term partnerships that address mutually

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identified goals, including giving back to the community where the researcher collected data (Norton & Manson, 1996). For instance, rather than merely collecting data and leaving the community, the researcher may also be expected to help design and implement interventions to address and improve the community from which the data were collected.

Interviewer Characteristics and Processes

Similar to the influence that participant characteristics may have on the interview relationship, interviewer characteristics also have an important effect. As noted previously, psychotherapy researchers enter interview relationships with clinical knowledge and skills, and they often also have competence with regard to the subject matter or populations of interest (Haverkamp, 2005). For instance, participants may expect that psychotherapy researchers will respond in supportive and caring ways to their emotions and possible distress, and interviewers' ability to do so may prove critical to developing an interview relationship (Gottlieb & Lasser, 2001). However, interviewers often find emotionally charged qualitative interviews distressing (Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster, & Nagy, 2004), which can cause confusion in responding to participants. For instance, researchers may minimize participant feelings, fail to respond to intense emotions, or even change topics to avoid addressing deep affect expressed by participants. Further complicating this potential lack of responsiveness by researchers, some participants may withhold information if they feel that their distress remains unacknowledged during interviews (Oakley, 1981). To maintain the integrity of the interview, it is important that interviewers learn to manage their own reactions to participants' emotional distress and to respond in supportive ways to participants to maintain the interview relationship and encourage further elaboration.

On the other hand, and often because of their clinical training, psychotherapy researchers may be inclined to respond to participants with therapeutic skills, particularly in the presence of strong emotional reactions from participants. Researchers are cautioned to avoid responding therapeutically to participants for two reasons. First, such interviewer responses can cause role confusion for participants,

perhaps leaving them uncertain whether they participated in a therapeutic or research interview. So interviewers must ensure that they are keeping the boundaries between their roles as researcher and clinician clear for participants, thereby managing any ethical dilemmas (Haverkamp, 2005). Second, some researchers (e.g., Rennie, 1995; Seidman, 1991) believe that therapeutic responses may influence participants' interpretations of such events, perhaps compromising the integrity of the data collected during an interview. Thus, interviewers should encourage participant elaboration (Seidman, 1991) but refrain from therapeutic responses to avoid imposing their views and biases on the area of interest.

To prevent many of these problems, interviewer training is essential, as are pilot interviews, to prepare interviewers to address participants' potentially diverse and intense responses to the interview (Fassinger, 2005). As noted previously, many psychotherapy researchers will have received extensive therapeutic training, but the skills acquired in this training will not necessarily translate directly to research interviewing. Complicating matters further, few qualitative methods offer guidelines for conducting qualitative interviews (Fassinger, 2005). In our own research teams, then, we use a number of training methods to develop interviewer skills and readiness (i.e., reviewing the research protocol, practicing the interview process through role-plays, conducting practice and pilot interviews while under supervision, listening to recordings of more experienced interviewers, debriefing after actual interviews; also see Fassinger, 2005, for additional ideas).

Future Directions

Thus far, we have reviewed literature and offered an analysis of topics important to qualitative interviews before and during the actual interview process. This review, however, stimulates many ideas regarding how psychotherapy researchers can improve on this fundamental component of their method. In the following section, then, we offer some ideas to promote improvement in qualitative interview research.

Operationalizing the Interview

Interviews have become such an important tool to qualitative researchers that many qualitative methods rely heavily or solely on them as the primary mechanism for data collection. Although there are a few seminal books on interview processes and strategies (e.g., Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1991), most qualitative methods offer surprisingly little guidance about the nature of or techniques appropriate for executing an effective qualitative research interview (Fassinger, 2005). For instance, we examined the last 10 years of qualitative studies published in *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *Psychotherapy Research*, and *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, and Training* and found 44 (63 total qualitative studies) published qualitative studies that used interviews as their primary data collection procedure. Among the topics that these studies investigated were therapist immediacy, supervisor cultural responsiveness and non-responsiveness, novice trainees' experiences of becoming psychotherapists, and clients' experiences of sadness in therapy. Interestingly, 26 studies included the interview protocol and 14 provided a description of the protocol, but only four provided a rationale for their use of interviews in research. Furthermore, only 13 studies provided a description of the actual interview techniques used, such as additional clarifying questions, paraphrasing, restatements, interpretations, open-ended questions, or closed questions. Based on this survey of the research, there appears to be little transparency in the literature about the rationale for choosing interviews as the data-gathering approach or the actual interview techniques used in published research. In the following section, then, we offer some ideas that may be helpful in advancing interview research, thereby increasing the transparency of the interview process.

First, it is unclear from the literature even what constitutes an interview, because the operational definition of an interview appears to vary by method. For instance, at one of the spectrum are ethnographic or participatory action researchers, who (as noted previously) often immerse themselves in the culture, context, or community of participants. So the interview may not actually be a discrete event or even an intentional conversation that occurs between participant and researcher. Rather, the interview process and the data collection may

be continuous and may arise from constant interactions between participant and researcher. As such, the data emerge as a consequence of this ongoing relationship. On the other end of this continuum might be the consensual qualitative research investigator who follows a semi-structured protocol presented to participants in advance of the actual interview. To a large extent, the interview is a planned conversation to collect data and is intended to be carried out in a similar manner with all participants.

Despite these very distinct interview approaches, surprisingly few researchers provide a rationale for their use of interviews themselves as a data collection method. Before an investigation, researchers likely consider whether interviews are an appropriate data collection method for understanding the phenomenon under examination. If researchers conclude that interviews are indeed appropriate, some explanation should be included to articulate this decision. Thus, we encourage more transparency regarding the reasons for using interviews in research as well as the decisions regarding the nature of the interview (e.g., telephone vs. in person, single vs. multiple).

Furthermore, it is important that qualitative researchers seek greater transparency in their operational definition of the interview. As part of this definition, researchers should identify the philosophical underpinnings for the study and interview (e.g., positivist/postpositivist, constructionist-interpretivist) and provide a description of the actual interview techniques used (e.g., restatements, minimal encouragers, open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, reflections of feelings, interpretations). This information should also be reported in method sections of manuscripts.

The Interview Protocol

Different researchers (or teams of researchers) could run parallel studies, each using a protocol of different levels of structure (e.g., low to high structure). The findings yielded by these parallel studies could themselves be examined with respect to the nature and the type of data yielded, the richness or depth of the data, and the similarity of the actual findings from each of the different studies.

Results from such a qualitative metastudy (see Timulak, 2007) may provide useful information about the strengths and weaknesses of different protocol designs.

A second area worthy of investigation might focus on the effects of various priming techniques. All potential participants must receive information sufficient for their completion of the required informed consent forms, but how might their receiving supplemental information affect the quality of the data? For instance, researchers using CQR usually send potential participants a copy of the interview protocol before the interview takes place so they know what they will be asked and, ideally, can reflect on their experiences and be prepared to discuss those experiences as they relate to the topic of investigation (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005). As yet, however, there is no empirical basis to support the assumption that doing so "primes the pumps" for richer data. Thus, researchers could provide different degrees of preparatory information to participants and compare the data yielded by those more versus less ''primed.''

Finally, whether potential participants receive an interview protocol well in advance of or just before the interview, they will have some type of reaction to it (e.g., ''Oh, that's interesting,'' ''Hmm ...this will be challenging," "Oh no, I'm not sure that I feel comfortable talking about that''). It is possible, then, that some participants may, based on the protocol alone, decide not to participant in a study, especially if it focuses on a particularly sensitive topic. Researchers could contact those who chose not to take part and ask them what led to that decision and what might have enabled them to feel safe enough to join in the research. Understanding the basis for such decisions may help researchers reduce the likelihood of later refusals and may also render more effective the preparation future participants receive so that they feel safe taking part in the study, even when its topic may be quite difficult.

Phone versus In-Person Interviews

In this area, as well, are opportunities for additional research to advance our understanding of the effects of the interview medium. For example, two studies could be run concurrently on the same topic,

with one using phone and the other in-person interviews. The data from each could then be examined (e.g., depth, richness, completeness) to illuminate which approach proved more effective.

Number of Interviews per Participant

In seeking to advance research with regard to the most effective number of interviews, comparisons could be made between the data and findings yielded by studies using single versus multiple interviews. One intriguing way this could be done is to run parallel studies of the same phenomenon, one study using a single interview and the other study (or studies) using larger numbers of interviews. Do the data produced by the study (or studies) using more interviews lead to richer findings?

Interviewer Consistency with Theoretical Perspective

Reviewers could examine tapes and transcripts of interviews to assess the degree to which the researchers were consistent with the theoretical perspective underlying the interview. For example, did those using a grounded theory approach refrain from paraphrases, interpretations, and reflection of feelings and instead rely on open-ended questions and encouragers? Did those applying a CQR approach follow the semistructured nature of the protocol? And how did the degree of adherence affect the nature of the data collected?

Topic Sensitivity

How do more versus less sensitive topics affect the data? Additionally, if researchers complete follow-up interviews with those participants who become noticeably upset, how do these additional contacts alter the data and the subsequent findings as well as participants' experience of the interview itself? Here, then, an independent team could examine the data arising from those more versus less affectively aroused in the interview to understand how emotionality may influence both the process and outcome of such research. Do, for example, researchers back away to protect seemingly vulnerable participants? If so, how do they still foster an

environment in which they obtain rich data based on participants' ability to fully articulate their experiences?

Cross-Cultural Concerns in Interviewing

We also wonder about cross-cultural concerns in qualitative interviewing, especially the high-versus low-context culture hypothesis (Hall, 1988). With high-context cultures, does the researcher, in fact, need to not only hear participants' verbal report but also see their nonverbal communication to fully understand the meaning of the verbal data? Is researchers' understanding enhanced when they have access to both sources of data?

Effects of Interviewer Training

Finally, it would be beneficial to examine the effects of different types of interviewer training. Some trainers may have new interviewers read articles on interviewing strategies, others may have them listen to tapes of interviews, some may have new interviewers engage in mock role-plays of interviews, and some may require that neophyte interviewers complete pilot interviews before they interact with "real" participants. How do these different approaches influence the quantity and quality of data yielded by the interview, the confidence of the interviewer, and her or his relationship with the participant?

Thus, we offer these ideas in the hope that psychotherapy researchers will use their empirical skills not only for investigating their particular phenomena of interest but also for beginning to examine the very processes through which they study these phenomena. We are interested, then, not only in what we know but also in how we come to know it and how might we come to know it more effectively.

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