

Pattern and process through qualitative evidence. Working across survey and qualitative data

Sarah Irwin, University of Leeds

‘Thinking Critically about Analysis’

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- Introduction – methods, analysis and working across levels of the social (reflecting on strategies by which qualitative research informs general social explanation)
- Example case:
 - Theoretical issue
 - Methodological questions
 - Research design: using survey data to design qualitative sample (and help locate participants in wider structure)
 - Analysis: exploring pattern and process within the qualitative sample
 - Presenting data: reflections on a conundrum
- Conclusion – working between levels of analysis

- Sampling: fundamental shaping of evidence base
- Linked issues of how we generalise from qualitative research (e.g. Hammersley 2000; Schofield 2000; Payne and Williams 2005)
- Data analysis. How can we link the specific and general? Amongst issues arising we need consider this:
 - what is data taken to stand for, or represent?
 - How methods give a particular lens on research question
 - Research participants are positioned in a particular way

- For Hammersley: case study research needs to take into account relevant heterogeneity across the population with which it is concerned. We might apply the same to qualitative sampling more widely. We need know how cases are typical and atypical in relevant respects
 - “... to use *what is actually known about the cases and the wider population to get a fix on where the former fits in terms of the diversity likely to be present in the latter*” (Hammersley 2000, p. 105)
- - “*Without knowledge of the location of the cases studied in terms of relevant dimensions of likely heterogeneity in the target population, we cannot know how far empirical generalizations drawn from them will be sound*” (Hammersley 2000, p. 106)

Families, schooling and the reproduction of social inequalities across generations

- Intellectual grounding: influence of Bourdieu, and theory of cultural capital
- Quantitative research.
 - *Puts into doubt theory of cultural capital.*
 - *Reveals intra class diversity*
 - *Family a 'black box'*
- Qualitative research
 - More supportive of theory of cultural capital
 - *Works inside 'black box', focus on meanings, interactions and inequalities of power, lens on process (reaches parts Qn research does not)*
 - *Focus tends to be on particular classed experiences.*

- **Methodological questions arise:**
 - What do samples stand for? For middle and working class, or internal class fractions?
 - How do specific samples relate to broader processes?
 - Different samples may afford different understandings of the link between the specific and the general

Family contexts, parenting and class

- The research project started out as a small ‘extension’ project of Real Life Methods (part of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods). Thanks to Dr Sharon Elley
- The research is a study of parents with children involved in organised activities. The aim has been to explore linked issues, such as motivations, and rationales behind having children involved in such activities. Importantly it is a vehicle for exploring more general issues to do with parenting; perceptions of childhood and social continuities and changes; and expectations for their children’s education and for their future. A key area of interest relates to class diversity.

A number of writers argue that middle class parents reveal anxiety over the reproduction of advantage to their children, and are often strategic behaviours in how they raise their children – to enhance chances of educational success (e.g. Reay 2000; Walkerdine, Gillies, Vincent and Ball 2007).

Differing arguments about extent to which working class parents are ‘strategic’ in seeking to enhance children’s life chances (Lareau: no; Reay; Gillies: yes, but relatively ineffective given classed location)

- The research project seeks to explore in more depth perceptions of organised activities and linked benefits, and values relating to parenting within, and across, classes.
- ***Here I take as a focus: orientations (strategic or otherwise) to children’s education.***

- We want you to think about what it will take for children today to do well in life. People have very different ideas about this. For each statement please tick to show how important you think this characteristic is for a child to do well in life.
 - **Having a good education** (very important/fairly important/not important/not sure)
- Have these characteristics changed in their importance since you were a child? For each statement please tick to show if you think it has now become more important in helping a child do well in life, or less important, or stayed the same.
 - **Having a good education** (more important/less important/about the same/not sure)

q14c * q15c * HSEHLD Crosstabulation

HSEHLD				q15c			Total
				more imp	less imp	same	
MIDDLE CLASS	q14c	very imp	Count	105	6	91	202
			% w ithin q14c	52.0%	3.0%	45.0%	100.0%
			% w ithin q15c	86.1%	60.0%	79.8%	82.1%
	fairly imp	Count	17	4	23	44	
		% w ithin q14c	38.6%	9.1%	52.3%	100.0%	
		% w ithin q15c	13.9%	40.0%	20.2%	17.9%	
	Total	Count	122	10	114	246	
		% w ithin q14c	49.6%	4.1%	46.3%	100.0%	
		% w ithin q15c	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
INTERMEDIATE	q14c	very imp	Count	34	4	22	60
			% w ithin q14c	56.7%	6.7%	36.7%	100.0%
			% w ithin q15c	91.9%	80.0%	78.6%	85.7%
	fairly imp	Count	3	1	6	10	
		% w ithin q14c	30.0%	10.0%	60.0%	100.0%	
		% w ithin q15c	8.1%	20.0%	21.4%	14.3%	
	Total	Count	37	5	28	70	
		% w ithin q14c	52.9%	7.1%	40.0%	100.0%	
		% w ithin q15c	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
ROUT/MANUAL	q14c	very imp	Count	34	1	6	41
			% w ithin q14c	82.9%	2.4%	14.6%	100.0%
			% w ithin q15c	85.0%	33.3%	54.5%	75.9%
	fairly imp	Count	6	2	5	13	
		% w ithin q14c	46.2%	15.4%	38.5%	100.0%	
		% w ithin q15c	15.0%	66.7%	45.5%	24.1%	
	Total	Count	40	3	11	54	
		% w ithin q14c	74.1%	5.6%	20.4%	100.0%	
		% w ithin q15c	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

- Changing salience of formal education / qualifications to successful working class employment routes.
- Interesting frame for sampling interviewees for qualitative part of study (objective circumstance *and* subjective orientations).

	Sees education as more important than in past	Sees education as having about same importance as in past
Middle	Clare Julie Anne Andrew Mary Linda Phil	Samuel Lucy Alexander Deborah Sue Andy
Inter-Mediate	Danny Colin Jack Maggie Debbie	Nicola Mary John Tricia
working	Kath Leslie Iona Di Steph Julia Glenys Caroline	Mike Jill Pete Kev

- Qualitative analysis:
 - Thematic or by each case?
 - Process of analysis
 - Detailed readings, joint discussions, understanding participants' orientations as evidenced through interview as a whole; reflecting on presence and absence of patterning within data; reflecting on if and how it relates to knowledge about general patterns (*all in relation to specific research questions*)

Middle class - assured orientations to children's educational futures

- Middle class assuredness; not strategic (see positioning in Diagram 1) but routinised expectations of educational success; e.g.
- *Alexander.....I mean, I don't, I don't mind if they're not, they're not Oxford and Cambridge graduates, but I suppose I would like them to have gone as far in education as, as they can in some respects. And certainly the, the better educated you are, I think the more interesting the job you probably get....*

Erm, so I'd be, I'd be quite keen on doing... And I, I suspect coming from the family we come from, it'd be difficult not to do a degree, they'll feel a degree of pressure even if we don't say it, that they ought to be going to university. The same as I, you know, my father was an academic, my mother was an academic, erm, and I didn't realise until quite late on that you didn't have to go to university.

Middle class and strategic

- Julie: *Erm, for me, I think the main thing now what's important to me is ensuring, particularly for [daughter], that she gets a good basic education to move her onto the next levels in life, and I think we're really working hard at ensuring that she's got a basic foundation in which to build upon. Because we realise now that she's got a couple more years at primary school and, you know, these SATS tests that come through, we keep thinking, we've got to put lots into her, and I think we do now in terms of support and homework.*

Middle class diversity

- Diversity within middle class important to understanding orientations;
- Some strategic, others quite assured.
 - *(Consistent with a theorisation of advantage which is much more deeply embedded in social structural relations (and systems) than implied by a model of volition (see Bottero 2005).*

Working class perspectives: (a) strategic

- *Julia: If you've been going to a group or doing these activities, or swimming and gymnastics, and people can see that you're determined, they know that you're more likely to stop at whatever you're gonna decide to do, so it...it makes a connection for your job in...for you in the future, and it's like...it's...it's like her building little bricks onto a wall. You start off with some in and you build up and you're building up, and it's building your confidence and you're, "Wow, I'm getting there."*

.....

Working class perspectives: (b) Perception of significant restriction on scope of influence

- *Pete: I'd say no, no, especially these days, ... they know, know their own minds from an early age, you know, they know what they want erm and what they don't want and I don't think these days any of us parents can interfere, I really don't. I advise me kids, you know what I mean, I always say to the kids, I'll do anything for you, I help you out all I can, you know I'm here, that's what I'm here for but at the end of the day it's down to you, it's their choice, you know.*

Summary

1. Sample allowed us to tap into within-class diversity; A small sample reveals diversity and interesting aspects of how it is composed; thus claim fits evidence
2. Analysis proceeded in ground-up way, although with consideration of sample framework. Diversity within both middle and working class groups (and intermediate) – explained in relation to more detailed analysis of classed circumstance and contexts.
3. Together they generate further questions about theorising orientations to children's education (including consideration of parents positioning on inter- and intra- generational mobility trajectories). This entails further reflection on how our small samples sit with reference to broader patterns.

Presenting data: reflections on a conundrum

- During analysis: transcripts read and re-read; and individuals positioned on a continuum regarding orientations to education. Important to all but for some it stood out; e.g. returned to through interview, more a defining motif for some. Parental attitudes could be situated along a continuum.
- {The positioning of such attitudes had a strong link to views expressed in the survey (on continuity and change in the importance of education)}.
- Should we map such patterning within qualitative data?

Is education a strategic priority? - *patterning within the qualitative data* (to what extent was formal education a significant theme *throughout* the interview?) - SUBSAMPLE FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

***Education stands out
as a priority***

M/C: ___Julie___ ___Lucy_Anne___ ___Alexander___Samuel___
Andrew Sue

***matched/exceeded
by other values***

I/C: ___Jack___Maggie___Nicola___Mary___Mike___
Stephen1

W/C: ___Steph Di Kath___Leslie Glenys___Jill Pete___
Julia ___Kev

Presenting qualitative data

- **ADVANTAGES:**

- This thematises data; and offers more information about how we have tackled (*an aspect of*) analysis
- It clarifies patterning within data which holds analytic interest
- It offers transparency in what individual interviewees / quotes etc are being taken to 'stand for' (how they are positioned)

- **DISADVANTAGES**

- We can only offer a schema on a very limited number of dimensions so: does it detract from the complexity and nuance which is part of the aim of qualitative analysis?
- Does it press towards a more numerical and superficial reading of the data?

conclusion

- Linking survey and qualitative data (many ways to do so; here as sampling frame)
- Conceptualising data important part of analysis:
 - What are you taking it to ‘stand for’? How is the sample, and the cases with, situated in respect of general processes in which you are interested?
 - How does the data relate to your research questions?
 - Are there strategies for being transparent in your analysis? In your presentation of evidence?
 - How do you arrive at judgements about the *scope* of claims based on your analysis?

Relevant refs on: working with qualitative and quantitative evidence, analysis and social explanation

- Irwin, S. (2009) 'Locating where the action is: quantitative and qualitative lenses on families, schooling and structures of social inequality', *Sociology* 43 [6]: 1123-40
- Irwin, S. (2008) 'Data analysis and interpretation: emergent issues in linking qualitative and quantitative evidence', in Hesse-Biber, S. and Leavy, P. (eds.) *Handbook of emergent methods in social research*, N.Y.: Guilford Publications