**Interviewing for life-histories, lived periods and situations,**

**and ongoing personal experiencing** using the

*Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM):*

***the* BNIM Short Guide *bound with the* BNIM Detailed Manual**

**Or is the latter becoming a Monstrous Encyclopedia? [Yes!][Sorry!]**

This revision is dated 17 April 2013 . version **2013c**

[474,770 words; 1,700 pages]

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If this is your first encounter with BNIM**,**

**then look only at………... the *BNIM Short Guide*:………**

i.e. **please ignore roughly 80% or more of** **this text,**

**i.e, about some 1,000 pages or more out of these 1,200…… ignore them!**

The rest, the ***BNIM Detailed Manual and Appendices***takes up that 80%, those c.1000 pages. The detail there is only relevant for those who have read the *BNIM Short Guide* (10%) and, after thinking about it, have decided they want to know more about some particular detail that concerns them at the moment. The *Detailed Manual* is a *Manual* for practice, not a continuous text and introduction. In fact, much to my alarm, it’s becoming more like a BNIM *Encyclopedia!*

**Until you need it, -- NO, until you need one or other highly particular bit of it , --**  ..

**keep off the ‘Detailed Manual’ and its appendices !**

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Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) *Version date.*  For a free updated version, write to [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com)”.

**If you are not too happy with beginning with too many generalities**:

Go **to the next page** for the

***Short Guide*** *:* ***Brief Table of Contents*** (2 pages)

Then, for an example of BNIM interviewing

1.1.3. Kathy, Sally, the purple sweater, and the driving test,

Or to the section.**’Why bring BNIM into your research?** p. **57**

**SHORTEST TECHNICAL READ** start with 1.3.7; or

Ignore all the rest and jump to section section 1.8.1. p. **210.**

**You** can always return to **(“Start Here”)** p. **47** later.

[The WORD ‘Document Map/Navigation Pane’ is handy for fast navigation]

The BNIM handbooks series now consists of five separate volumes. These can be uploaded separately and read as one master document or, alternatively, you can upload each one as you need it.

The five separate volumes are as follows :

I. The Short Guide

II. Detailed Manual: BNIM Interviewing

III. Detailed Manual: Interpretation

IV. Interpretation Further Appendices

V. Bibliographies, Trainings, etc.

For the first 10 years, the SGDM was a single volume. It has now got so large that it is being recast into the above five volumes from early-2013 to early-2014.

So, until Easter 2014, there may be difficulties in using the text because revising such a large project (over 1,500 pages) cannot be done all-at-once.

Since the revision is ongoing – and I hope your feedback will enable it to be done better and faster – please be patient with absurdities and incoherences.

Please let us know of any problems you have with the text, even if it’s only two lines in an email…… Given your feedback, it should be OK by 2014.

Tom

[tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).

I. SHORT GUIDE: TABLE OF CONTENTS

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# 

What follows this ‘1. Short Guide’?

The "Detailed Manuals / Encyclopedia"

These are *only* for consulting *one section at a time*

II. “BNIM INTERVIEWING”

III. “BNIM INTERPRETATION”

like any encyclopedia

*not designed as something to be read through*

THEN

The Appendices and Essays at the end of (II) and in (IV)

are even less designed as a single unit.

They

should also be read

topic-by-topic.

Together, the Appendices and Essays make up the longest section

in the 1,500 pages

THEN: **V. ‘Bibliographies and BNIM Trainings’**

This *Short Guide (*and the later *Extremely Detailed Manuals on ‘BNIM Interviewing’ and on ‘BNIM Interpretation’)*  is dedicated to all those from whom I learned about BNIM – in particular to Prue Chamberlayne -- and to all those BNIM trainees and researchers whose work continues to nourish new trainees and researchers partly through the medium of this constantly-updated *Guide.*

Without new questions, new feedback publications and new accounts of the lived experience of BNIM-reading and BNIM-doing, there would be nothing new for me to write in, and no further learning from, this evolving *Short Guide* and the later *Detailed Manuals.*

So this *Short Guide* and *the later Detailed Manuals*  are also dedicated to you in the hope that you will share your experiencing in the reading and using of the *Short Guide* and the  *Detailed Manual’s* current edition to enrich the next edition for others.

So send in accounts of your experience (positive and negative) and questions and comments to [biographic-narrative-BNIM@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:biographic-narrative-BNIM@jiscmail.ac.uk).

Or directly to me at [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).

This Short Guide and the Detailed Manuals, and the BNIM 5-day intensive training:

**read it before/instead of/ the training!**

Chapters 6 and 12 of the textbook (Wengraf 2001) were written to make it possible for researchers to acquire the basics of BNIM without doing a training course. This Short Guide and the Detailed Manuals have been written so as to make it even easier to acquire the basics -- and also viable for researchers to reach a good level -- without such a training course, but in conjunction with the textbook.

However, we do run trainings to run as complements to both textbook and the Detailed Manuals.

**If you have registered for a 5-day training or might register in the future, please bear the following in mind:**

Our original training in BNIM took 9 days; the current intensive model takes 5 days. Among the reasons for being able to shorten the time is that the ‘exposition’ part of the 9 day training has now been very largely encapsulated in the textbook and in thistext. Briefly, it originally took 9 days to train people; now, with the *Detailed Manuals,* it takes 5 days (see p.**1415** onwards for a description and schedule of the 5-day training).

**But you have to have done the reading for the 5-day training to work properly!**

Somebody on a recent training said, around day 4 of the five days, something like

*“I felt fully on top of all the learning by doing until just now. However, today, we’re now getting beyond the point to which I read the Guide, and I’m feeling much less confident and getting much less from the exercises….. I should have finished my preparatory reading!”.*

I’m glad to say that by the end of the 5 days he had managed to cope with the temporarily-lowered quality caused by his incomplete reading of the *Guide,* and was feeling fine. But the point remains. I said “With the *Guide*, it takes 5 days”; it might be better to say “To get the best out of the 5-day course, you need to have read the key bits of the *Guide* beforehand”.

*The 5-day Intensive* does have brief expositions of theory to explain the key points as you proceed, but only as reminders of the ‘gist’ of previous reading of this *Short Guide and* some of the *Detailed Manuals*. [The intensive also provides intermittent open plenaries for discussion of points of difficulty as they arise].

So:

* although you can get a considerable amount from an intensive even if you only have read the ‘brief overview’ beforehand, and just perhaps scanned sections 2 and 3,
* the 5-days will work most effectively for you if you have prepared yourself by having had a serious look at, and preferably read, sections 1-3. When *after* a training, you read it in the course of practice, the bits that are relevant for each stage of that practice, you will get still more.

Your **predominantly ‘learning-by-doing’ on the 5 day course**

***depends for its effectiveness…***

***….on your previous ‘preparation-by-reading’.***

***And then afterwards practising, and***

***Therefore getting more from reading the manual***

***post-practice!***

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Author’s note to author:

Add-

From Old Appendix

1. BNIM-SQUIN

2. TWIN TRACKS

3. SOME EXAMPLE OF TELLER FLOW ANALYSIS (e.g. Gabriele?)

From vol. III or my ESS-NOTES

# I. Overview – Short Guide

## 1. 1. Focus

The *Guide and Manual*

“is the most complete set of information I have ever found on this theme and I hang onto it (*email* Anita Pincas, Institute of Education, London October 2008)”

The *Short* *Guide* part of this text is quite sufficient for  *a broad understanding* of the method.

The *Short Guide* is quite short; the Detailed Manuals *are* ***very very*** *detailed*.

The *Short Guide* can be read as a whole.

The *Detailed Manuals* are like an Encyclopedia of Timed Practice.

*Only read each section of the Detailed Manuals at the time when you are engaging in the practice that the particular section is about.* Just like a Car Maintenance manual.

Why bother? A quick route to getting at the significance of those procedures might be to **look through the 'examples' of** **what sort of different 'writings-up' emerge** -- from them -- **(BDA section 3.3.4; TFA sections 3.5/5.. 3/5.6. , Mutations of the Case section 3.6.2.)**

BUT:

If you eventually intend to use all of the BNIM approach professionally,

please bear in mind that **you will need both this *Short Guide*** *and* ***the Detailed Manuals,*** and also  **the textbook that they are designed to complement,** namely Tom Wengraf (2001) *Qualitative research interviewing: biographic narrative and semi-structured method.*  London: Sage Publications

However, the good news!

**You can do BNIM *interviewing*** just on the basis of the relevant sections of this BNIM *Guide* and *Detailed Manual on BNIM Interviewing,* plus Appendix A. That’s about **120 pages, plus the Appendix A. Quite manageable.**

**You can decide later** whether you want to explore the BNIM *interpretive apparatus*, or not. At least half the users of BNIM interviewing procedure don’t. They use other interpretive methodologies. And, for many purposes, but not for others, that’s fine!

*The following remarks will make more sense once you have grappled with the account of BNIM interviewing and interpretation. BNIM has a strong* ***‘one thing at a time, delay the’ getting everything together moment’ until later’*** *principle.*

One feature characterises some of the features of both BNIM interviewing and of BNIM interpreting: this is *the separation out into different ‘moments’* *of the procedures for doing things* which are – in most semi-structured interview methods and interpretation methods -- *more often done together in a ‘fused’ way right from the start*  *-- a ‘fusion’* which can become, without always realising it, a con-fusion.

You could think of BNIM-work as *‘a holism which is deliberately delayed -- but very carefully prepared-for -- by careful previous provisional disaggregation and anti-holisms’.[[1]](#footnote-2)*

1**) Interviewing** **with separate sub-sessions – what is the point of separation?**

Most semi-structured interviewing method allow the interviewer to ‘insert’ their requests for clarification, for more detail, even their personal responses and interpretations at any point that feels ‘right’. BNIM demands that no such ‘insertions’ at all be made during Sub-session One, and very firmly restricts what the interviewer can do in Sub-session Two.

**BNIM’s Power to Unpack Short Initial Narratives**

One worry that people (interviewers and interviewees) have about not providing a semi-structured set of questions is that the response to an open-narrative question might be very short. The interviewee might ‘dry up’. This does happen.

A very short BNIM Interview Sub-session One:

**Ann**: *Can you tell me your life story, the events and experiences that are important to you? Begin wherever you like. I won’t interrupt. I’ll just take some notes.*

**Sara**:

Well, I got this house, an’ then I, whay, I fell pregnant. Then I got this house. Then I had (baby), so wi’ bein’ so young, I didn’t really have a chance to get a job. I went back to school and done a bit, a bit more, to add on to me ermm results that I got, me GCSEs. An’ then I fell pregnant, so I, I left school, an’ then I ermm got this house, an’ then I had (baby), but (laughed) that’s about it really (laughed).

Sara (17, ‘mother’) (McNulty 2008).

Ann McNulty (2008) remarks on BNIM’s ‘power to unpack’, reporting that, using BNIM rules**, she managed to help Sara unpack that 5-line initial narrative (half a page at most)** **into a rich 40-page sub-session 2.**

This is the power of the BNIM interview procedure. And it’s not hard to learn. Providing you learn how to do the Sub-session 2 unpacking, even a very short initial response can be perfectly productive – as in the above case. [Normally, you are less constrained: a typical interview might have a sub-session 1 of 45 minutes and a sub-session two of 75 minutes].

As a result, such “requests for clarification, expression of personal responses and interpretations, etc.” have to be kept for after the end of Sub-session Two.

In Sub-session Two, BNIM principles foster only the asking for “more (narrative) detail”, more story. In the first two Sub-sessions, only one thing is done at a time. Only after the first two distinct Sub-sessions are concluded, and the material thought about, does the researcher go on to Sub-session Three, where the field of questioning is much more open.

**2) Interpreting the two tracks (sorts of data) separately – what is the point of this separation?**

Similarly, in the two-track BNIM interpretation procedure, only one thing is done in each track. The hard biographic data (BDC) is focused on, and data about subjectivity are firmly excluded. Then, the ‘soft telling of the told story’ data (TFA) is focused on, and data about the ‘hard objective reality data’ are firmly excluded.

**3) Bringing together the insights from the separate tracks (sorts of data) explicitly and consciously. This bringing together is delayed.**

Only after the two tracks are both separately concluded and the results thought about, does the researcher go on to explore their interrelation in constructing the ‘Case Account’ which require that that which was previously firmly separated be brought together.

The principle of the division of labour suggests that, for many purposes,

**the mind of the interviewer and the mind of the interviewee benefit by focusing on one clearly-defined thing at a time:**

* **in the separated interview phases, then**
* **in the separated interpretation phases.**

**After such focused separate-work, the focus then shifts to another ‘one thing at a time’; namely, at the right time, the new other thing being…**

**bringing the results of such previously differentiated activity together and integrating them in an integration-work:**

* **the ‘Coda’ at the end of** *Sub-session Two**(and eventually Three)*

*of the interview***;**

* **the ‘Case-account’ at the end of** *the interpretive work on the two separated tracks of the case-interpretation procedure*

### 1.1.1. Some quotes and discussion

How can we make sure that the Other tells the story that [s]he really wants to tell and not the one we [or our theory? or our supervisors? or our funders?] want to hear?

*(Mary Harvey et al 2000)* (material in square brackets added, TW)

Any interviewer who just recycles what they are told ( in an interview, in mass media, or elsewhere) is in public relations or ideology-recycling, not in social science

Narratives exhibit

the mediation between the person and the situation

because they are not reducible to either…

Narratives are both about the life and a part of it.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Both need rigorous interpretation.

*The first sentence of every novel should be:*

*“Trust me, this will take time but there is order here,*

*Very faint, very human.’*

*Meander if you want to get to town.*

[Michael Ondaatje, *In the skin of a lion,* 1987, cited Ogden (1994)]

*It is very interesting to find that, in Sanskrit, the word for ‘certainty’*

*is the same as the word for ‘imprisonment’.*

*And the word for ‘non-certainty’ is the same as the word for ‘freedom’*

[cited Patrick Casement *Learning from our mistakes,* 2002: 16]

The map is not the territory; the word is not the thing itself (Alfred Korzybski 1923)

A colleague said “Avoid the hardening of the categories” (Siri Hustvedt 2012)

*How quickly a formulation, a concept or theory [and this Guide and Manual, TW]*

*loses its enabling quality and becomes a barrier to the possibility of making further observations*

(Robert Gosling 1981: 644, cited Armstrong 2005: 118)

An American poet, John Crowe Ransom, remarked that “poetry dramatises the past”.

A story is told as much by silence as by speech.

Like the white spaces in an etching, such silences render form.

But unlike an etching, in which a whole is grasped at once,

The silence of a story must be understood over time (Susan Griffin)

Spoken words are a means to arrest a thought.

Once one has caught the thinking, one forgets about the words.

(Chuang Tzu 3rd/4th century BCE, cited Peggy Jones 2008*)*

I would argue that good qualitative inquiry always looks not only at what people say (in interview words, in documentary writing) but also at what they do (observation and/or participation).

A Frenchman once wrote that

"words were given to men to hide their thoughts":

you have to be a sufficiently sophisticated researcher to use only interviews and come away with anything but ideology!

*Any account should consciously pave a way towards its own obsolescence:*

*it does pave such ways, anyway, irrespective of consciously.*

On average, a novice gains most by following the rules moderately rigidly, and learning from consequences and outcomes by watching the transcripts, and her/him/self

Having learnt from this experience, the post-novice is only then in a position to learn from studying what happens in different conditions when different rules are broken.

*Never let a (BNIM) rule stop you from doing the right thing,… but then, whether you followed the rules or not, re-inspect the moment and the consequences to check how right it was, and what might have been just as right, or even ‘righter’.*

One must have thoroughly learned…technique before one is in a position to “forget” it—that is, to rediscover it for oneself [to create it afresh for each new session]to try to overcome what we have learned in order to be free to create [BNIM] anew [with each new interviewee]

(Ogden 2009: 3 and 68, recreated anew TW!)

I absolutely loved the week, it was a fantastic experience for me and what I learned will bring many benefits to my own job. BNIM seems to me not only a method, but representative of an overall philosophy (and ethic) of how to 'do' research and I'm delighted to have it to inspire me into the future (email November 2009).

Biographic narrative method might be said to restore not only the “dramas of the present” (the present as history, the present in its history) but also “the dramas of previous presents” (history as a potentially-intelligible succession of times-present)…..

…. previous presents in danger of no longer being seen or understood as such, either in themselves or in relation to each other

*“There is in each survivor an imperative need to tell and to thus come to know one’s story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against whom one has to protect oneself. One has to know one’s buried truth to be able to live one’s life”*

(Dori Laub in Feldman and Laub 1992: 78, cited Brodski 2007: 240).

I could neither think about my life in terms of bald fact, nor yet in terms of abstractions…. They seemed somehow to put out the living glow of experience so that there was nothing there… (Marion Milner 1986: 150)

*Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualising ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgements from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness – and that’s how you get…..*

(Mikhail Bakhtin, cited in Morson and Emerson 1990: 57)

But, in addition, lived experience struggles always with unsayabilities:

*I read in* Godel, Escher, Bach  *a reformulation of Goedel’s theorem, in which Hofstadter proposed that for every record player there were records it could not play because it would lead to its self-destruction. And it struck me that if you squared this you would get a hypothesis that for every language there were perceptions it could not express because they would lead to its indirect self-destruction. Furthermore, if you cubed it, you would get a hypothesis that for every culture there are languages that it could not use because they would lead to its indirect self-destruction. This made me wonder: what would happen to American culture if women did have and did use a language that expressed their perceptions?* (Elgin 1985: 4

"Many things we affirm and deny, because the nature of words allows us to do so, though the nature of things does not. While we remain unaware of this fact, we may easily mistake falsehood for truth. (Spinoza)”

*The unsaid is not absent. It is palpable…. Our bodies are proficient in reading the unsaid, even when we don’t notice that that’s what we’re doing. It’s like reading strata in sedimentary rock. And some of this unsaid is ancient. Some of it is inherited. Some of it we sorted away in the first six months of life. And because all forms of language are contagious, we readily contract somebody else’s unsaid I(Jen Hadfield 2013: 66-7)*

Ibn El-Arabi of Spain instructed his followers by way of this most ancient dictum :

There are three forms of knowledge.

The first is intellectual knowledge, which is in fact only information and the collection of facts, and the use of these to arrive at further intellectual concepts. This is intellectualism.

Second comes the knowledge of states, which includes both emotional feeling and strange states of being… This is emotionalism.

Third comes real knowledge, which is called the Knowledge of Reality. In this form, man can perceive what is right, what is true, beyond the boundaries of thought and sense.

Scholastics and scientists concentrate on the first form of knowledge. Emotionalists and experientialists use the second form. Others use the two combined, or either one alternatively.

But the people who attain to truth are those who know how to connect themselves with the reality which lies beyond both these forms of knowledge…. (Shah 1990: 85)

"Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow; He who would search for pearls must dive below (John Dryden)”.

A very unique qualitative approach to research that you share for others to make a difference in the world of research, and you do your teaching with a passion. The most impressive thing for me, was the space you gave to listen.

In the taxi home we did our evaluation on the 5 day training, and we felt that you do have a unique teaching approach, but we were all touched by the experience in many ways. This is now a past life experience, and, if pushed for, it would become an In-Pin. Many thanks for the BNIM event and experience. (email October 2011)

Relief and joy…I have had the results of my viva. I received the highest grade (excellent, as opposed to very good, good, satisfactory, referred or failed). Clearly the examiners thought the BNIM approach was very appropriate for clinical psychology research and effective in answering the research question (CRQ for those of you who like abbreviations!!). The external examiners thought the study was well designed (it followed the standard BNIM design) and that the amount of work was more than adequate for a doctorate in clinical psychology.

Thanks a bunch for all the help, advice and support you gave in getting the proposal accepted, re the small numbers and in explaining how to use the data from three people to answer the Central Research Question. Thanks in particular for the way you ran the course so as to ensure it met the personal needs of each person who attended, in terms of the projects we were planning.

At times during the research work, I thought I'd never do research again. I've never done qualitative research before and didn't realise what the experience of getting familiar with the data is really like. I got totally lost at times and was without a supervisor who understood the methodology, but faith in the practical steps of the methodology did win through in the end. Lots of highs and lows but a rewarding journey overall. I am very pleased with the result. Well chuffed in fact! I start [my new] job at the end of the month, no doubt there's scope for experiential research using BNIM there.

I understand there are a number of people using BNIM on the postgraduate course again this year by the way. My supervisor told me that my external examiner did a great job of challenging [the university’s] attitude towards qualitative research with small numbers, in his post-viva examination discussions of my grading with other internal and external examining staff.  Best wishes,

[email received September 2006].

Many thanks for this document [*BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual*] which is bringing enormous clarity to my research and ensuing analysis (March 2011)

*I was struggling with qualitative methods… During the training, this method proved itself to me time and time again…. It has given me confidence and security… (training course May 2008)*

I truly enjoyed the course and benefited greatly from attending. To be honest, I had looked at the *Guide* and found myself terrified by it – the diagrams and terminology were well beyond my level of understanding.  [The course] however, made the whole thing so accessible and clear that I do plan to use BNIM in my research… (*email received 25th February 2008*).

*I was gobsmacked by how far we got into [the subject’s] subjectivity in so short a time:*

*it was an eye-opener for me*

*[training course May 2008]*

By employing BNIM, we have furthered our understanding of motorcycle subcultures, and we have begun to understand their nuances. In doing so, the potential exists to make positive cultural change based on this insider perspective.

This becomes possible when cultural factors are addressed at the driver training stage,when they are incorporated into advertising campaigns, and when they become the foundation for policy recommendation

(Murphy and Patterson 2011).

The most intensive interview training course I have ever done (May 2008)

You can’t imagine the power of the procedure until you follow it (June 2008)

I must say it has been quite a roller-coaster journey for me with the research aspects of the study.  Obviously I had to learn so much and was suspicious of BNIM's rigor for a while during the early stages in terms of the panel process.  However, now I'm an absolute convert and couldn't imagine using another model if I were to undertake research again (2010)

I did indeed use your BNIM in the article you mention; in fact I used BNIM as the core method in my PhD (from which the article derives). Although I used an adapted version of BNIM (1 interview over 2 subsessions utilising the SQUIN and then TQUINs) and a different form of (IPA), may I take this opportunity to say that it was an incredibly effective method of gathering both inductive and deductive auto/biographical data from participants. In addition, as my research used victimology, the SQUIN gave my participants the opportunity to explore their life stories without assuming a 'victim status'…..Given the effectiveness of your method during my PhD I may well be employing this in future research. (December 2011)

*It was a wonderful and memorable experience. I feel very much shaken up (in a good way!): it's great to be brought to see the world a bit differently from before! (email November 2009)*

just to thank you once again for such an amazing training course. Having had time to reflect, I think I can confidently state it has been one of the most intense and useful learning experiences of my life. I expected to receive a lot of information on the specific methodology (which I definitely got), but what I hadn't expected was the considerable insights I got on both the interpersonal (in terms of communicating, listening and group interactions) and the personal level (email October 2011)

…..On a more personal note, I am very glad that I chose this research method for my research – it has since influenced my clinical approach (e.g. using life story question, asking follow up questions, getting the richest narrative material I can to work with, consideration of power in relationship etc etc) … and carrying out the research in this way was an important developmental step / process for me in clinical psychology (July 12 2009 email)

*Ian - Your course (that I suggested one of our PhD students attend) was one of the most enjoyable experiences (and intense!) I have had…(email 2013)*

I've just come back from my week in the north of Sweden and my interviews and it all went really well, and I just wanted to send a big thank you for helping me out with it all and tell you how much the method helped me!

I was interviewing women that are politically engaged and so aware of many of the themes and questions that I am looking into and because of that most of them in the first half of the interview tended to not really listen to the SQUIN but rather give me the information that they thought that I wanted, which was very theoretical and far away from their own experiences.

But thanks to reading your book and guide and getting your advice I managed to ask them narrative pointed questions in section 2 and that completely changed what they were telling me and they really 'opened up' and appeared to me more relaxed and honest about what they were telling me. It was really powerful.

I have to confess that I was really worried about using the method before this, and thought it wouldn't point me in the right direction and that it would just give random experiences rather than things that had to do with my research question, but it produced the complete opposite and had I not used it my interviews would never have given this much interesting and thought provoking material! So thank you!

*(email 4th February 2011)*

*More recently, the French historian Francois Hartog has similarly forged the notion of ‘presentism’ to describe a situation in which finally “the present becomes the horizon”…. We must today recognise how the present we live constantly works to expel and extinguish the troubling images of pasts that once commanded attention* (Harootunian 2008: 56, 159)

Thus, as we see it, while students of organizational studies may be instructed in classrooms and seminar rooms in detailed, complex, and sophisticated theories of organizational activities, which may seem to describe very accurately after the event the sequence of events that lead up to a particular outcome, such accounts are beside the point (Weick, 2003). *“What on paper is a set of dictated exchanges under certainty, on the ground is lived out in suspense and uncertainty*” (Taylor, 1995, p.177, italics added).

The issue here is this: *What counts as a useful outcome of inquiry to practitioners, to people actually at the point of contact with the reality of everyday affairs* –

(1) a retrospective, justificatory, reason-giving account of an already achieved outcome?, *or*

(2) a prospective, action-guiding account of the detailed struggles required to achieve, develop, or construct that outcome for the very first time in practice?

Conventional research portrays practitioners as people who simply reflect and then choose a course of action, and thus suggests that (1) would be most useful. However, it fails to portray them as participants caught up in an already ongoing process who must produce from within it – in the face of both the constraints and limited resources it offers them – recognizable, legitimate, and above all, successful (in relation to already existing criteria) actions and utterances.

*Our attempts to replace their ‘gut feelings’ and intuitions by objective, scientific theories, fails to do any justice at all to the actual conditions within which practitioners actually work. Respecting these conditions leads us to suggest that (2) would be more useful.*

(Shotter and Tsoukas 2007: 5 *italics added*).

The dominance of the ocular senses, both real and imagined, is so strong

that it affects our capacity for thought.

I may overcome the difficulty by being so abstract that what I say is incomprehensible, by being so concretethat it is comprehensible and misleading….We do in fact use comprehensible language. .The tendency is therefore for our listeners to say

‘But we know all this…what about it?’

The reply is a difficult one because it will have to be

‘But you don’t know; and if you study our approach to this subject, and you are able to benefit by it, …..you will

discover that you do not know’;

‘yes, I know’ is no more a solution

when said by grown men and women than when said by a child…

The analyst will say

‘Yes, I did say ‘envy’

but you don’t know what I mean when I say ‘envy’.

That is the problem.

It *sounds*

‘as if’ we are saying what everybody knows and using a language that everybody knows.

Time and again, we do not use what we understand by conversational language

(Bion 1990: 8, 10)

The past is not dead; it is not even past (William Faulkner *Requiem for a nun*)

*A quotation from the methodology section of a report that I came across while trawling the web:*

**The biographic narrative interview method was highly successful in eliciting in-depth qualitative data on experiences of teenage pregnancy and young parenthood. The method exceeded our expectations in situating these specific events and roles in broad, historical, social, political and familial contexts.**

**Hence, we have been able to appreciate participants’ identities and biographies in relation to their whole life course, including their upbringing, schooling, further education and employment, family and friendship networks, sexuality and relationship histories.**

**Most importantly, the use of this method has highlighted diversity across genders, generations and social class, and specific experiences such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol use, disability, depression, being a young carer, growing up in care, enforced abortion and bereavement.**

**These issues were raised by participants without direct questioning from the interviewer, and without them, our data would be partial and less holistic.**

Julia Hirst, Eleanor Formby, Jenny Owen. 2006. *Pathways into parenthood: reflections from three generations of teenage mothers and fathers*. Sheffield Hallam University: Sheffield Health and Social Research Consortium: p.63 (paragraphing added)

Currently, I'm running some panels of my own for the PhD and this is proving invaluable for developing my thinking about the three 'gold star' cases in the study. Yesterday was a mind blowing Thematic Field Analysis session - so much amazing material and invaluable input from other people really forcing me to stretch and reconfigure my thinking in exciting directions.

It seems this is a generous methodological approach, in lots of different ways! Thanks for the method! I'm really enjoying working with the data it has helped generate and am finding the panels of huge value (23 April 2009 email)

Dear Tom and Mariya,

I wanted to say a really big thank you for an inspirational five days. I feel I learned a great deal and find myself listening to people in a new way! I’m hopeful that I can use BNIM in my research ! I’m hopeful that I can use BNIM in my research and convey its potential to ‘the powers that be’ but even if I can’t, I will take what I have learned with me and have no doubt it will influence how I conduct, interpret and make sense of my research. It was a very welcoming, supportive and thought-provoking environment – both through your individual attention and physical environment. Many thanks again to both of you and very best wishes ……

(card 3 February 2012)

…Also I would like to say a massive thank you too for the wonderful BNIM manual and your book that has guided me this far, the detail is amazing and very helpful throughout the process (email received July 2012)

….the concept is always the enemy of the institution. It is said that

when you give a child the name of a bird, it loses the bird. It

never *sees* the bird again, but

only a sparrow, a thrush, a swan,

and there is a good deal of truth in this.

We all know people for whom all nature and art consists of concepts,

whose life, therefore, is

entirely bound up with objects known only under labels

and never seen in their own quality

(Joyce Cary 1961, cited Polster 1974: 42)

In response to any interpretation, the body of experience talks back with more

intricacy than was contained in the interpretation

(Levin 1997: 55; cited Todres 2007: 34).

No living word relates to its object in a *singular* way; between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an environment of other, alien words about the same object…. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualised and given stylistic shape.

Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already, as it were, overgrown with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary, by the “light” of alien words that have already been spoken about it.

It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed towards the object, enters a dialogically-agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex inter-relationships, merges

with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group

(Bakhtin cited by Morson and Emerson 1990: 51-2

"All that was the case, or is the case, or will perhaps happen to become the case,

……..and nothing more???"? OR?

xxxxx

In the end we all have the same tendency, that is,

to see ourselves in the different stages of our lives

as the result or the summary of all that has happened to us,

of what we have achieved and what we have done ,

as if our existence amounts to only this.

And we almost always forget that people’s lives are not just that:

each trajectory is compounded too by our losses and our vestiges,

by our omissions and our unfulfilled wishes,

by that which we once left aside or we did not choose or did not achieve,

by the numerous possibilities that were never explored (…)

by our vacillations and our dreams,

by the frustrated projects and the warm and false wishes,

by the fears that paralysed us,

by that which we abandoned or that which abandoned us.

People, in sum, perhaps consist as much of what they have not been

as of what they are. [[3]](#footnote-4)

xxxxx

We hypothesise and project thought and imagination into the "if-ness", into the free conditionalities of the unknown……Such projection is the master nerve of human action…. Language is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is. Without that refusal, without the unceasing generation by the mind of 'counter-worlds' -- a generation that cannot be divorced from the grammar of counter-factual and optative forms -- we would turn forever on the treadmill of the present. Reality would be (to use Wittgenstein's phrase in an illicit sense) 'all that is the case', and nothing more. Ours is the ability, the need, to gainsay or 'unsay' the world, to image and speak it otherwise. [[4]](#footnote-5)

xxxxx

The past is another country, they do things differently there; and we are no longer they.

*The shadow past is shaped by everything that never happened. Invisible, it melts the present like rain through karst. A biography of longing. It steers us like magnetism, a spirit torque. This is how one becomes undone by a smell, a word, a place, the photo of a mountain of shoes. By love that closes its mouth before calling a name.*

*I did not witness the most important events of my life. My deepest story must be told by a blind man, a prisoner of sound.*

(Anne Michaels. *Fugitive pieces.* p.17)

Earl Hopper (1882-1967)

*Hotel Room*

Thyssen Collection, Madrid

O what sadness unaware that it’s sadness!

What despair that doesn’t know its despair!

A business woman, her unpacked suitcase on the floor, sits on a bed half

Undressed, in red underwear, her hair impeccable; she has a

Paper in her hand, probably with numbers.

Who are you? Nobody will ask. She doesn’t know either.

Robert Hass (2011: 304-5)

At the edge of our thought processes we are all quantum cats, indeterminate quantum wave functions (patterns on the brain’s Bose-Einstein condensate) carrying varying and multiple degrees of reality and unreality.

If we reflect gently on the contents of our conscious minds at any moment, we are aware of a dim array of multiple thoughts, of ‘possible thoughts’. These borderline areas of consciousness, the ‘twilight of the mind’ spoken of by some poets, are most accessible just when falling asleep,in states of deep mediation, or under the influence of certain drugs, but they are always there, on the edges of any act of concentration. Their reality is fuzzy and their future indeterminate, awaiting some act of realisation…

Every act of concentration is an act of thought realisation. … By focusing on any one thought, that one becomes a classical reality and the other [possible thoughts] disappear like so many shadows in the night…..

Our logic does not make our choices – that is a determinist way of thinking. Rather, our choices, our free and undetermined (under-determined TW] choices, which are associated with a similarly superimposed set of reasons linked to those choices, give rise to our [next TW] logic…

.

I will say that I gave up smoking *because* I knew it was bad for my health. But, equally, if I had failed to give up, I would have said that this was *because* I was too weak-willed, or *because* I needed it to relieve my tension, etc. These *becauses* that I use to explain my choice tell something about me as a person, but they don’t determine the choice itself…..

In finally deciding between my two choices, I am deciding between two selves that I might become and between the different worlds they might occupy. The choice is free, nothing determines it. Though the character I have built and the life I have led till then will weight the probability of my choosing one or the other, I can, and often do, ‘act out of character’……

(Zohar 1990: 159-64, 179 *material in square brackets added,* TW*).*

*“.. And war, in that age, though not perpetual, was never far away. In one region or another of the planet there was nearly always war. No sooner had one ended than another began elsewhere. And where there was no actual war, there was the constant fear of wars to come.*

*The crux for this unfinished human species, half animal but potentially humane, had always been the inconclusive effort to will true community, true and integrated union of individual spirits, personal, diverse, but mutually comprehending and mutually cherishing. And always the groping impulse for community had been frustrated by the failure to distinguish between true community and the savage unity of the pack; and on the other hand between a man’s duty to the innermost spirit and mere subtle self-pride, and again between love and mere possessiveness.*

*And now, in this final balance of the strife between light and darkness, the newly won Aladdin’s lamp, science, had given men such powerful good and evil that they inevitably must either win speedily through to true community or set foot upon a steepening slope leading to annihilation. In the immediate contacts of man with man, and in the affairs of cities, provinces, states and social classes, and further (newest and most dangerous necessity) in the ordering of the planet as a whole, they must now begin some glimmer of a new spirit; or else, failing in the great test, man must slide into a new and irrevocable savagery. And in a world close knit by science, savagery brings death….”*

(Olaf Stapledon 1941/2006 5-6)

1. The vast majority of case studies… know only the *ready-made* hero… Movement in the fate and life of this ready-made hero constitutes the content of the plot: but the *character of the man himself, his change and emergence, do not become the plot.*

2. Along with this predominant, mass type, there is another incomparably rarer type of case study that provides an image of man in the process of becoming… the case history of human *emergence*…. Everything depends upon the degree of assimilation of real historical time.

2.a. In idyllic time one can depict man’s path from childhood through youth and maturity to old age, showing all those essential internal changes in a man’s nature and views that take place in him as he grows older…cyclical in nature, repeating itself in each life..

2.b. Another type of cyclical emergence which retains a connection (but not such a close one ) with man’s age, traces a typically repeating path of man’s emergence from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality. This path can be complicated in the end by varying degree of scepticism and resignation.

2.c. The third type of ‘case study of emergence’ is the biographical and autobiographical type. There is no longer any cyclical quality here. Emergence takes place in biographical time, and it passes through unrepeatable, individual stages….

2.d. The fourth type…is the didactic-pedagogical case study. It is based on a specific pedagogical ideal, understood more or less broadly…

2.e. The fifth type… is the most significant one . In it, man’s individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence…. In the four preceding types, man’s emergence proceeded against the immobile background of the world, ready-made and basically quite stable… Man emerged, developed and changed within one epoch. Man emerged, but the world did not… Man’s emergence was his private affair, as it were…. [However in the fifth fully-historicised type of case study of emergence]… human emergence is of a different nature. It is no longer man’s own private affair. He emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. *He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at a transition point from one to another*. This transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being [historically situated subjectivity in transition towards an unknown future, in process of always choosing between images of alternative unknown and unknowable futures TW]

(Bakhtin 1986: 20-23, some italics added, ‘novel’ replaced by ‘case study’, paragraphing added, material in square brackets [] added)

*All thinking is critical thinking….*[Re-enactment of past thinking] *is not a passive surrender to another’s mind; it is a labour of active and therefore critical thinking. The historian not only re-enacts past thought, he re-enacts it in the context of his own knowledge and therefore, in re-enacting it, forms his own judgement of its value, corrects whatever errors he can discern in it.* (Collingwood 1946: 215, as cited Inglis 2009: 216)

*Everybody is likely to suffer from*

*catastrophic events in the external world*

*and*

*at the same time to be a victim of*

*an internal psychic theatre that never closes down*

(Joyce McDougall 1986: 127).

### 1.1.2. Situations and the ‘dated situated perspectives’ of a given moment

The 19th century French historian Jules Michelet wrote about his own practice of writing history as follows

We have rarely made any total…judgement, rarely given a *portrait* as such; all, or almost all, are unjust, resulting from an averaging out of a character at a given moment, where good and evil cancel each other out and make each other false… How many men in one man! How unjust it would be to stereotype a definite image of this variable creature! Rembrandt made, I believe, thirty self-portraits, all similar, all different. I have followed this method: both art and justice equally urged me to it.

If you take the trouble to follow each of the great actors through these two volumes [Michelet’s *History of the French Revolution*], you will see that each consists of a gallery of sketches, each retouched at its particular date according to the moral and physical modifications which the individual had undergone . The Queen and Mirabeau come before us time and again, five or six times; at each appearance time has marked them in passing. Marat seems the same, but under shifting traits, all true, though different. The timid and comfortless Robespierre, hardly glimpsed in 1789, is drawn in profile before us in November 1790 in an evening session, at the rostrum of the Jacobins; we give a full-face portrait of him (in May 1791) in the National Assembly: magistral, dogmatic, already full of menace.

We have thus carefully and punctiliously dated men and questions, *and the moments of each man.* Again and again we have had brought home to us an idea which struck us greatly and which dominates the present work: *history is time*.

(Michelet 1952: vol.1: 290-91. Cited by Jameson (1971: 265, italics and paragraphing added TW).

The task of carefully and punctiliously *excavating and dating* *men and questions and the historically-situated moments of each man* (Michelet’s formulation) is a powerful default concern of BNIM.

Coming to understand different moments of “the questions and answers of a dated situated subjectivity” can be termed as struggling to understand people and groups (their subjectivities and practices) in the light of the successive moments of their situated perspectives.

I’ve recently (2012) taken to talking about *’subjectivity/perspectives’ ,* allowing for a desirable fluidity of elicited meanings and uses….. On paper, ‘subjectivity/perspectives’ can look like available alternatives (“choose one of the two terms”), but when spoken is like an adjective qualifying a noun…… *‘subjectivity perspectives’*.

What is the dated situated subjectivity that expresses itself in part by a certain set of apparent ‘perspectives’? *The dated situated subjectivity is always something more than the ‘apparent perspectives’ that it can partially articulate and a little more fully show.*

This is particularly true if you adopt (but you don’t have to) the notion that any subjectivity (individual or collective) is always ‘defended’ and therefore never ‘transparent’ and the accounts that it gives of itself (e.g. in an interview or in a Head-of-State peroration) should never be taken at its face-value.

My position (but not necessarily your own) is that we cannot help ‘defending ourselves’ against too much self-knowledge (a self-knowledge that at *this* moment, in *this* context is too much) and, when revealing ourselves to others, we also and in addition (not necessarily consciously) defend ourselves against their knowing too much as well: our self-presentations, I would argue, are inevitably somewhat strategic.

Hence, one could modify the last line in the previous-but two paragraph to read:

*The dated situated and at least partially defensive subjectivity is always something more than the ‘apparent perspectives’ that it can normally partially articulate and a little more fully show.*

A less voluntaristic model that you might prefer is that suggested by a quotation from Elgin (p. 23above.

For the moment let us stay with the notion of ‘subjectivity/perspective’, perfectly satisfactory for many purposes.

*If you go slowly through the ‘Kathy, Sally and the purple sweater’ extract on the next pages,* a “subjectivity and perspective” (or perspectives) may start to emerge as “moments” are grappled with – moments of a BNIM interview, moments of a situated subjectivity struggling to excavate earlier memories and states of being….. …... of the interviewee discovering an unexpected moment of herself when younger….. and differently situated.

*Reading aloud (with someone else would be ideal) is the optimum way of getting into any transcript, including the one on the next pages!*

### 1.1.3. Kathy, Sally, the purple sweater, and the driving test,

…..There is, however, a special circumstance in which a way of relating to people may… be described as a technique. This occurs when a natural form of experiencing life and relating to people has, for some reason, been forgotten by a culture (Lomas 1973: 148)…

*The following extract is from an interview by Kathy Brennan. It illustrates the process wherebye the narrative-seeking interviewer in the interview second Sub-session pushes –not always directly and typically with an only slowly-mounting success as you can see from this extract -- for particular stories of particular incidents (PINs = Particular Incident Narratives**)..... The ‘glosses’ in the right hand column show BNIM-thinking about it all.* Think about the words used by the interviewer in forming questions.....

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | INT: *You said that you got your friends to help get lots of driving practice. Can you give me an example of how that happened?* | ***Taking a generalisation, but asking for an example (a PIN)*** |
| 2 | Well, I would badger the ones who had already got their test to come with me in the car to wherever they wanted to go so that I’d be driving…… | ***No example, instead we get a generalisation about what would generically or typically happen (a GIN or TIN, not a PIN)*** |
| 3 | INT: *Can you give me a particular example of one occasion of all that happening?* | ***Again pushes for an example*** |
| 4 | Well, if my friends wanted to go to the beach or if my mother wanted to go shopping, then I would offer to take them wherever they wanted to go…. | ***Asked again for a PIN, she gives a similar but more scene-specific generalisation.”If my friends wanted.. I would...”*** |
| 5 | INT: *Can you remember any one* particular *example of this happening with a* particular *friend on a* particular *day?* | ***Tries again (3rd time), with even stronger (triple) emphasis on particularity*** |
| 6 | My friend Sally often wanted to go swimming and so she would want to go to the beach and I’d offer to take her so as to get my driving in | ***Despite the [intensifying] push (1, 3 and 5 )for PIN-specificity, the interviewee stays with generalisation but does however specify one particularity, one particular friend (Sally). The pushing for particularity is starting to work. Notice how Slowly. This is typical.*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | INT: *Can you remember anything about a particular day on which this happened?* | ***Repeats the request in (5) but in a short form*** |
| 8 | [Long pause…very hesitantly] No I can’t…….but…(laughter) … but I have remembered something completely abstract …… | ***She says "completely abstract", but in fact it is a further move towards some concrete particular*** |
| 9 | I do remember that one time Sally always wore a purple mohair sweater even to the beach! That’s 1980’s fashion for you! | ***Some specific something has emerged.... not a PIN (yet) but at least an (general) ‘image’.*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 10 | INT: *Can you remember any more about that one time when she wore that purple mohair sweater?*  (nb: interviewee didn’t mention “one particular time”, but rather a “time when Sally always”. Bad question. Interviewer should have used “period” instead). | ***Tries to get more detail too quickly about a particular moment: but fails… [It might have been better to ask for “any particular place where you recall her wearing it”.]*** |
| 11 | [Long pause….. firmly though regretfully] No, I’m afraid I can’t | ***Still no PIN, but by (9) some move to the concrete has occurred.. this should count as a success at some move towards the particulars of he past. How to handle her firm denials of being able to remember…?*** |
| 12 | INT: *Do you remember anything else in* particular *about that time when you were practising your driving?* | ***The interviewer decides to ask more generally about the “time when”. And gets results.*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 13 | [Long pause] Well, I can remember something else from around the same time. Sally had recently split up with her boyfriend and had offered me his ticket to go and see Duran Duran at Wembley…. My first ever big concert. I remember we went up to London by coach, it was so exciting, we stayed in London, and had a fantastic time, and I remember how [voice starting to get excited] I started to feel that I was really growing up and getting free now…… | ***A new item on the implicit agenda of the initial Sub-session One is broached, and the work of pushing for PINs is starting to pay off a bit more (notice the “now” in the last three words, they may be starting to come from her subjectivity then, not her subjectivity at the time of the interview). This is a Report almost a thin-PIN summarising 4 events, {but not yet a detailed PIN about any one of them[[5]](#footnote-6)). Progress!*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 14 | INT: *Can you remember any particular thing that happened on that weekend, how it all happened?* | ***Interviewer doesn't choose any one of the 4 events: provides a general PIN-query about any of them…open Q*** |
| 15 | Well, I had a fantastic time and I felt that I was really growing up, and breaking free, and meeting people and doing things on my own, what *I*  wanted to do, and it was great…..really liberating | ***She is expressing with increasing excitement the felt mind state of the time, but the interviewer is still not getting a PIN, just getting an overall Description. But is making progress in re-evoking the lived experience of that moment.*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 16 | INT: *You said you went up to London by coach. Do you remember any* particular *thing about that coach journey, how it all happened?* | ***The interviewer is probably taking the mini-narrative Reported in (13) and focusing on the second item mentioned in it, pushing for more detail about a sub-part of the Report, for the account of a particular happening...*** |
| 17 | What I remember is being in my seat, I had a window seat next to my friend, and I remember the fabric on the back of the seat in front of me, it was red and blue, a very rough fabric, and I remember really touching it, and then I remember tracing my fingers very gently over it so as to feel its texture better, and I remember thinking “I’m off on my first trip to London in a coach!” and suddenly feeling awfully excited like the world was at my feet . | ***This is getting brilliantly particular-concrete. It could be seen (a) as a sensory scrap or image (though much closer up and contexted than the purpleness of an ‘always’ sweater). (b) as a close-up PIN (seeing fabric, liking it, tracing it, thinking a thought, suddenly getting a feeling) or (c) as a close up Description of a complex single moment.***  ***It’s definitely progress – the pushing for particular incidentd (PINs) is really re-evoking old experiences*** |
| *The interviewer attempts to get more PINs about the visit to London, but without success.*  *The interviewee concludes that run of responding about the “fantastic time in London” by going back to the driving test theme and remarking* | | ***No immediate pay-off in clearly laid-out PINs (despite all that pushing for them), but the direction is certainly right. The mini-PIN of 17 is very promising!*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 19 | ……. But after I passed my driving test and got my license, I had a real let down. | ***Will the interviewer follow the shift by the interviewee?* Or will they hang on to the previous engaging topic?** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 20 | INT: *You said you had a ‘real let down’ after you passed that driving test. Can you tell me more about how all that happened?* | ***The interviewer follows the movement of thought of the interviewee, and lets go of the previous topic.***  ***Using her new cue-phrase, another interviewerpush for a PIN about a clearly shared understanding of an "all that".***  ***With what result? Will a PIN emerge?*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 21 | Well, the same day I passed my driving test, I was driving home and I crashed the car. Not very badly but enough to crumple the front of the car a bit. The bumper fell on the ground. It was just awful. Well, I pushed the car together again enough to drive home and I parked it in the drive. I then went across the lawn to the front door. It’s a really small lawn but I can tell you it felt enormous as I walked across it, and I was thinking all the time, ‘How am I going to tell my Dad that I’ve just crashed the car?’, and I was really anxious about what he was going to say or do when he heard it. I think I knew my Mum would just want to know whether I was alright, but I didn’t know what my Dad would say, and I was thinking or half-thinking these thoughts as I walked across that lawn, and it just felt so long, but I got there and…….. I’ve just remembered. I obviously had keys to the front door, and had had for a number of years, but what I did was that I didn’t even think of using that key…. When I got to the front door, I rang the bell and waited for my Dad to come to the door. I’m only now thinking… Why didn’t I use my key? Perhaps I wanted to tell my Dad on the doorstep so that if he got really angry I could run away or something which I couldn’t do so easily once I was well inside the house, or something like that, I don’t know…. Anyway, I rang the doorbell and he came to open it, and I said “Dad I’ve crashed the car” and he said straight away “Are you alright, was anybody else hurt?, lumps of metal can be replaced but people can’t” , and he wasn’t angry, and I was so relieved….. But it’s funny, I didn’t think at the time about my not opening the door with my key, I never noticed it, and it’s only just now that I’ve remembered that little detail, and I really wonder now why I didn’t use my key… | ***A PIN at last, and quite a rich then-felt in-PIN at that.!!!!!!!***  ***NB: The determined constant and re-iterated using of her generalisation-phrases about all friends to push for PINs gradually produced in order:***  ***1) a generalisation about one friend (Sally).***  ***2) a scrap of sensory image – a mohair sweater***  ***3) generalisations about "getting free" but partly situated in the subject's earlier subjectivity at age 17***  ***4) Report of a weekend***  ***5) Moment in the coach with fabric***  ***6) On the 3rd item, this complex rich PIN about the car-crash, the return, the lawn, and door-talk with her Dad….. with previously un-remembered detail about not-using her key***  ***Despite what she says, howeever, some bit of her did notice it at the time, but it seems she didn't think about it then or until now, when she is starting to "really wonder" why she didn't use her key -- and maybe why she kept that detail 'un-noticed' until now…. This may be a clue to her (past and/ or present ) situated-subjectivity…. the default focus of BNIM's open-narrative questioning*** |

Some of the features of BNIM interviewing are to be found here: the *strategic direction* of pushing for particular experiences and particular incident narratives (PINs) and the *frequently long struggle* (by no means always successful) to get to them. Don’t give up!

**I’ve counted a somewhat unusual high number of pushes (21) before the interviewer got to a full and extended then-felt in-PIN.**

(The ‘mini-PIN’ at point (17) was a sign of, and a basis for, emerging access to some past lived experience).

*Note also that, surprisingly, it doesn’t always matter so much what the PIN eventually turns out to be about.* The one that was accessed wasn’t about friends helping with driving practice, or about Sally, or about the concert.

There’s no way of being sure in advance where the PINs are going to be hidden. A bit like following a pig rustling about in the undergrowth hunting for truffles…….You push for PINs and follow the musing and remembering of the interviewee wherever it goes: eventually a PIN about something nearly always gets unearthed….

What matters is that there is a particular memorable moment about something, sometimes, that gets evoked. A fully-felt in-PIN with detail that surprised the narrator. In what areas the situated subjectivity provides such memories, depends…..on the history of that subjectivity which by definition you don’t understand and which, by the PINs you get and the PINs you don’t, luckily will surprise you ………..!.[[6]](#footnote-7)

When you do your first BNIM-practice pilot interview and, as always happens, you don’t get as many PINs as you hoped you would get or not about the topics you wanted to get them about, re-read again the above interview extract.

* To remind you how that the proportion of PIN to other material might be one-third or one-quarter
* To remind you how you have to persevere in the strategic direction of pushing towards PINs, even if you repeatedly don’t get them. **In this case, not three, not ten, not fifteen, but twenty-one pushes towards the first in-PIN was unearthed….. After the first, the others in the colony come more easily.**
* The determined but sensitive ‘pushing towards’ paid off brilliantly in the in-PIN that emerged but also from then on in the interview as a whole
* You may find yourself increasingly using ‘particular’ as in “anything in particular about a particular friend in that particular place at that particular moment”… to get them out of ‘normalised generalities’ (TINs and GINs, instead of PINs).
* To remind you how you first may get bits and scraps of lived experience and particularity (the purple sweater) long before any actual PIN emerges
* To remind you how you have to follow the ‘cue-phrases used’ and the movements of the interviewee’s thinking from one apparently unrelated topic to the next, trusting that with your ‘pushing for PIN examples’, they and you will eventually get to somewhere.
* How there’s no point in being in a hurry and every point in maintaining the PIN-direction while allowing or fostering a free movement of association from one topic that comes up in their mind to the next one

## #1.2. Technical Notes. Using the Guide, and then maybe the Manuals, thoughtfully#

### 1.2.1. SGDM and the 2001 QRI textbook

The SGDM ***Detailed Manuals and Appendices***– together with the **2001 textbook** -- provide the resources for a fully-professional use of interviewing and interpreting procedures to enable you – **with supported practice, see** p.**133** onwards -- to reach, if you so wish, PhD and post-doctoral levels of excellence in generating, using, presenting and where appropriate theorising from case material. It’s long, but it’s as complete as I could make it, and too much so for most tastes.

In general, the two chapters on BNIM in my 2001 textbook *Qualitative research Interviewing* (Sage) are now significantly updated (but not not entirely replaced) by this *Short Guide and Detailed Manual (SGDM)*

Ten years or more of further work and training and BNIM practice have occurred since 2001, and -- though other chapters in the 2001 text still stand – something but not so much would be lost if ch.6 and 12 of the 2001 text vanished from your copy of the textbook and were replaced by this text. Where the two clash, use this more up-to-date text. Use both: stereoscopic is better than single vision!

And there are technical details in the 2001 textbook *Qualitative Research Interviewing*  not repeated in the *BNIM Detailed Manuals,* and available only there.

### 1.2.2. Growth of BNIM Detailed Manuals II-IV

This text has grown a lot – originally 25 pages, now over 1,200 pages. Why is it so long? *The Short Guide* hasn’t grown so much (up to say 75 pages); however, it is now bound together with (and is cross-referenced with hyperlinks between itself and with) other texts, the *two Detailed Manuals and the final section of Appendices* that serve a different purpose.

The *Detailed Manuals on Interviewing and Interpretation*  have developed to meet the variety of questions that people doing BNIM raise implicitly and explicitly over the last seven year, and to thus to support you in achieving chosen levels of excellence in BNIM interviewing and interpreting. The *Appendices* likewise.

### 1.2.3. Footnotes and the 5 volumes as dated ‘assemblings’

The SGDM as a whole amount to the equivalent of five books. Given my conditions of work, they are therefore always an untidy work in progress, with gaps and repetitions within and between volumes. They are ‘assemblages of dated materials’ with traces of partial and incomplete reworkings and re-thinkings.

To avoid confusion I have often tried to leave clear traces of these in the text, and often to comment on them as I doing now. My own subjectivity and perspectives and terminology have changed over the periods in which *QRI (2001) emerged and then through the periods in which SGDM has emerged and continues to evolve.*

*I think that the ‘perspective’ of SGDM is actually quite coherent below the textual surface.*

*However, the surface texture of the five volumes is much less so. My ‘mad numbering of sections and sub-sections’ is a device to promote mental organisation and retrieval.*

Unfortunately, during the subsequent year or so, the text as a whole gets overgrown by further footnotes, added bits, changes of acronym, afterthoughts and examples until the next year’s always partial summer spring-cleaning. *So: apologies in advance for ad hoc footnote proliferation, and repetitive and contradictory bits, and don’t get lost or confused by them.* As I said before, there may well be a fault or at least a typo in reality…….

The number of **footnotes in this text** develops sharply, but those exploring the area for the first time should probably avoid them. They are generated one -by-one as a result or on the occasion of particular research team meetings, particular musings, and particular trainings. Consequently the same point may be treated once in the main body of the text and twice or more in footnotes written at different times.

Once every two or three years, I sometimes have the time to go through the text as a whole and ‘rationalise it’. The next version then is much tidier and coherent and less duplicative. You will need to learn when to skim over contradictions and duplications, and when they need to be thought about carefully so that my confusions in the ‘assemblage as a whole or on one page’ don’t confuse you.

**Contradictions**

*An exchange…..*

“Which statement should one choose if two sayings contradict one another?

“They only contradict one another if viewed separately. If you clap your hands and observe only the movement of the hands, they appear to oppose one another, You have not seen what is happening.

“The purpose of the ‘opposition’ of the palms was, of course, to produce the handclap.

(Shah 1974: 99.  *abbreviated*).

Mark Twain (cited somewhere by Maxine Green) says:

“Your judgement may be flawed if your imagination is not in focus.” .

Compare two more recent writers:

“Learning from [our] experience is at the heart of our method, because it enables a particular quality of knowledge without which the quality of our interventions… will be shallower and more attenuated than they might be (Cooper and Lousada 2005: 9-10)” [[7]](#footnote-8)

***1. To familiarise yourself with BNIM interviewing***, you use this ‘Short Guide’ (SGDM vol.1) , and, ideally, chapter 6 of the textbook (Wengraf 2001) as well.

***When you want to move towards a practice interview****,* you should then read the *‘Detailed Manual on BNIM Interviewing’* (SGDM vol II).

BNIM interviewing procedure on its own is a very powerful technique. You can use it, and then interpret the material in a non-BNIM way.

You do not need to read about BNIM interpretation until much later, if at all.

But, you can ….

***When you want to explore BNIM interpretation,*** you might later on (after your first pilot interview, for example) choose to read the ‘Detailed Manual on BNIM Interpretation ‘ (SGDM vol.III, plus appendices vol.IV), and the much shorter chapter 12 of Wengraf (2001).

The sequence of BNIM interpretation procedures combine to make another very powerful triangulated technique. They too require persistence and practice (and, ideally, tutorial and/or peer support) to get right.

### 1.2.4. Using SGDM as a whole

**How to use the text [*SG+DM: Short Guide + Detailed Manual*] as a whole?**

The advantages of printing out (at least of relevant sections) are obvious. The disadvantages of printing out and wading through over 1,500 pages, even more so…. I have not printed out the whole text for half a decade and have no intention of doing so.

*Working electronically*

You can – and in my view should – work, if you possibly can, with this text in WORD largely electronically. Thus saving paper and the cost of colour or black/white printing.

Use PRINT LAYOUT and especially ‘FINAL SHOWING MARKUP’ to see the embedded ‘COMMENTS’

You can print out the [**Brief or] the** **Detailed Table of Contents (p.11)**, and then routinely use WORD’s VIEW-> ‘DOCUMENT MAP / NAVIGATION PANEL’ on- screen facility to locate particular headed sections and subsections.

Having done that, you can also get to such numerically-headed sections and sub-sections on the contents pages straight away by CONTROL-CLICK on the page-number on the screen ‘Table of Contents’, or a straight click on the line of the screen ‘Document Map/Navigation Pane’.

[You can also WORD-SEARCH for a chosen keyword. This is a partial substitute for an Index].

Where there are PAGE CROSS-REFERENCES, you can in WORD jump-click on the page number to the page referred to. (But remember the page where you jumped from, or click on the RETURN-ARROW command, to get back to your original page. Try p.**39** to test.). You may need to get rid of VIEW-DOCUMENT MAP temporarily for this to work.

If you are working on the material, you could use the INSERT COMMENTS control in WORD to add to, disagree with, and keep track of your own experiences with the text and your own interviewing and interpretation practices and experiments.

### 1.2.5. Technical note on cross-references in the text

There are many cross-references in this text of the “..see p.**XX**” sort.

WORD **sometimes needs to have its Cross-Referencing Fields Updated**. You know it needs this when many of the **page cross-references** have the same number. They all say “See p.**0”** or some other number.

Then there is a simple updating technique.

This is easy.

You select “Control-A” to cover the entire document, and then press “F9” to update.

You will first be asked to update the two Contents pages and the Figures **page-numbers.**

Just instruct the computer to update their page-numbers. This will happen three times. Then the rest will be done. Quite quickly the whole text will turn black. The renumbering has been completed.

Then ‘deselect’ the control-A with one left-click. The text will then clear and the page-numbers and all other references will have been updated.

Then SAVE the renewed text.

### 1.2.6. Volume references and trans-volume references

The references within each SGDM volume (this is volume I: Short Guide) are normally adequate, except that, where there are references to books and articles, these are ALWAYS to be found in vol. V BNIM Bibliographies.

Should you be wanting to explore references to Vol. V – or other forward references to vol. II, III, and IV – then you should not load this volume (SGDM I) on its own, but instead load the SGDM as one file, (in WORD-speak, as a single Master Document).

### 1.2.7. End of technical notes

To conclude, therefore, the five volumes of this SGDM have grown untidily for over 10 years after the original textbook (QRI: Wengraf 2001) was published and will continue to grow. Untidily.

Untidily. As an assemblage, they are and will remain – despite my constant struggles to tidy up – obstinately untidy historical deposits of old and new formulations.

I think you will find that the depth structure of the BNIM approach is coherent and powerful, but you have to be aware that its surface structure is at times not easy (the same could be said of BNIM transcripts and the detective work involved!).

For full cross-referring, you need to load the SGDM Master Document as a whole, but otherwise you can deal with each volume separately. To begin with, go for the simplicities and ignore the footnotes and qualifications…..

The two relevant chapters of Wengraf (2001) should be seen as a complement to this and the other volumes of SGDM.

## 1.3. Start here

### 1.3.1 Introduction

If you haven’t already, go slowly and carefully through section

1.1.3. Kathy, Sally, the purple sweater, and the driving test, p. **39**.

Only then, i.e. now, read on……….

The *Guide* as a whole is divided into three main parts:

* **the ‘Short Guide’ (Volume I, this section 1.3 – 1.6 onwards, about 150 pages);**
* **the ‘More Detailed Manual’ (about 500 pages):**
* **(Volume II on interviewing,**
* **Volume III on interpretation);** 
  + - **+‘Appendices on interpretation’ Volume IV : (about 280 pages)**
* *Volume V Bibliographies, diagrams, details of BNIM trainings and Tutorial support (about* ***140******pages****)*

It’s been designed in sections so that – after the Short Guide section -- you need only read (and occasionally or never print out) sections (and sub-sections!) for the area and level of *Detailed Manual* that you need.

To get an *overview* of BNIM, the **Short Guide** section 1 (this section) of about 70 pages (with a technical core of some **40 pages in sections 1.4 to 1.6**) is quite sufficient.

You might wish to enrich this overview by looking at **some of the non-technical** **Appendices** the titles of which interest you, but this is very much a rare optional extra!

### 

### 1.3.2. Given where you are in your research, why might you want to bring in BNIM?

Many people move towards open-narrative interviewing when they start getting dissatisfied with the results of semi-structured depth interviewing (SSDI). As one research team reported, they moved from a semi-structured study to a BNIM-based one :

*…. In [our previous] study, a qualitative method, namely semi-structured interviews, combined with a constant comparative content analysis, was used. However, the resulting analysed data were not of a sufficient depth to provide a possible explanation or interpretation…. [it was] a less complex qualitative method….. Therefore, our aim with this [new] study was to apply a qualitative method [BNIM] that would potentially lead to more detailed data analysis and explanation of the findings….* (Stamm et al 2008: 659, *re-arranged*).

Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (1997) and other researchers report similar experiences, justifying a change of method giving better materials and increased depth and quality of interpretation.

* Many people want to get closer to the lived experience and the subjective culture of a given individual, family, grouping, institution or situation. BNIM is a powerful method for doing this.
* Many people want a systematic method of both doing and interpreting interview material because they find that without a clear system of doing that practice, without a rudder and a direction, they are constantly finding themselves uncertain what they should be doing. BNIM is very systematic.

This text (especially the *BNIM Detailed Manual* section) has many examples of practice to help you, especially of ‘not-quite-good-enough practice’ with explanations of what’s the problem with them. The way to better practice is through recognising and recognising error, as the French philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard pretty much wrote. Hence my systematic Bachelardian provision of examples of the ‘not-quite-good-enough-in-this-way’ and not-quite-good-enough-in-that-way’, and then ‘how-it-could-be-better’.

* Many people want the bulk of their research project to deal with a relatively large number of semi-structured depth interviews, but wish to precede that phase by an earlier one in which, by doing a small number of cases (one , or two, or three) in greater detail, they develop the best ‘rich theory’ (conceptualisation) to guide them in that later phase of larger number of semi-structured interviews: *The ‘pre-quel’ principle.* BNIM provides a basis for very rich and theory-innovative interpretations. [[8]](#footnote-9)
* Many people want to do a research project primarily using BNIM interviews and interpretation in the foreground, but these being supported by rich contextual material from both primary and secondary sources. *BNIM’s two-track approach fosters the organic and systematic integration of extra-interview material into the interpretation of any particular case or set of cases.*

Sometimes, people are in the unfortunate position of having *completed all their interviews in a non-BNIM fashion*, and wonder whether they can use any of the BNIM interpretive methodology on their non-BNIM interviews.

I replied to one such inquirer:

*The Micro-analysis part of the interpretation methodology can be used pretty much on any puzzling piece of interview text (if enough of the hesitations etc appear in the transcript, or you have access to the spoken voice).*

*The Biographical Data Analysis part can be used pretty much on any self-report.*

*The cost/benefit utility of the TFA on the interview depends on the amount of ‘guiding response’ and above all on the amount of ‘interviewer guidance’ in the section of your interviews that you are considering for possible ‘BNIM treatment’.*

*The more ‘interviewer guidance (and response)’ you gave, the less you can infer what an unconstrained response would have shown.*

*On the other hand, if you have (unfortunately from a BNIM point of view) a lot of interviewer guidance and response, you can nonetheless do some TFA ‘hypothesising’ about what the impact of such ‘strong interventions’ might have had at different parts of the interview flow.*

*Unfortunately, you may not have enough spontaneous flow to help you confirm or disconfirm such hypothesisings, but I guess the process will certainly help you conduct future interviews in a different sort of way!*

*(my email to LT August 2011, slightly revised)*

### 1.3.3. What are the as*s*umptions and uses of the method?

BNIM started off as an off-shoot of the interviewing method of Fritz Schütze (open narrative), combined with the interpretive methods of Oevermann (objective hermeneutic micro-analysis) Wolfram Fischer (temporality) as worked over and crystallised by Gabriele Rosenthal, Wolfram Fischer, and others associated with the Berlin *Quatext* group.[[9]](#footnote-10)

Prue Chamberlayne is responsible for bringing their *Quatext* elaboration to the UK (and to me) and for many of the ideas (not the many bad ones ) in this *Guide*.

The first extensive angloworld study was Chamberlayne and King’s (2000) *Cultures of Care: biographies of carers in Britain and the two Germanies* researched at the start of the 1990s*.* The translation of Rosenthal’s (1998) multi-authored research into *The Holocaust in three generations: families of victims and perpetrators of the Nazi regime*  presented a great wealth of valuable short studies to the angloworld reader to learn from

Roswitha Breckner gave the first angloworld sketch of the methodology (Breckner 1998), which was then laid out for angloworld researchers to follow in detail in chapters 6 and 12 of Wengraf (2001). See also Breckner (2002). For details of BNIM’s evolution, see Wengraf (2001: 112-3) (plus a few remarks later in this *Guide and the Detailed Manuals*), and, on *Quatext* itself*,*  see also Rosenthal (2004).

I shall first suggest characteristic BNIM concerns in quite a general way, and then provide a more concrete account of the ‘objects of study’ of different BNIM-based researches that people have carried out.

#### 

#### 1.3.3.1. Characteristic BNIM concerns

BNIM is concerned to clarify both (evolving) situations and (evolving) subjectivities by exploring locally-historically ‘situated subjectivities’. This is done by eliciting self-biographising narratives and interpreting them by way of clear (and initially largely auditable) procedures which involve thinking about the historical context of the life and of the interview interaction: a ‘situated telling of a whole story’ by an equally-situated subjectivity.

“[People] truly manifest themselves

in the long patterns [and tiny detail] of their acts,

[and of their inter/action with you]

and not in any nutshell of self-theory [or self-description]

– Iris Murdoch

*“If subjective confidence is not to be trusted,*

*how can we evaluate the probable validity of a subjective judgment?*

*..The answer comes from the two basic conditions for acquiring a skill:*

* *- an environment which is sufficiently regular to be predictable*
* *An opportunity to learn these regularities through prolonged practice*

*(Kahneman 2011: 240)”[[10]](#footnote-11)*

In the light of Kahneman’s remarks above:

*1. Careful adherence to the BNIM interview procedure for subsessions one and two provides the regularity. Doing the same procedure lots of times provides the prolonged practice*

*2. The same is true about careful adherence to the BNIM interpretive procedure. Doing the same procedure several times provides the prolonged practice*

For a general discussion of biographical and narrative approaches in social research, see *The Turn to biographical methods in social science: comparative issues and examples* (edited by Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf). The ‘Introduction’ by the editors and the opening essay by Michael Rustin together provide a strong context.

For something of a ‘personal story’ about me and BNIM, see a short practice slightly-BNIMish interview (2011) of me by Lenka Formankova, starting on p.**236.**

A purely ‘discourse-focused’ concern is always in danger of re-cycling the narrative discourse, ignoring the constructed nature of any narrative self-presentation.

If all you had to do was to search for, and condense aspects of, narrative, you would not need to do **re**/search, just search. However, since all humans are partial, fallible and unreliable narrators, you need to do **re/**search after you have sought for, elicited and obtained narratives. A detective story with a detective who obtained their first story from their first participant and then stopped there….. would never attract interest, and the detective would not be a very good detective: in fact, the detective would be at best a spin doctor, at worst crap.

In a recent draft article about research into teenage pregnancy, there is a subtle shift from the first sentence to the illustrative quotation:

When people talk about their own lives, they invariably select what is important to them:

**“Through the recounting of stories, people reveal what they perceive as the dominant influences which have shaped the course of their lives”**

(Andrews, Sclater, Squire & Treacher, 2004, p. 2), Middleton (2011)

My comment to the author (Middleton 2011) is to be found in the adjacent ‘Comment’.

Assuming that “biographic narrative expression” is expressive both of conscious concerns and also of unconscious cultural, societal and individual presuppositions and processes, BNIM supports research into the complexities of the lived experience of individuals and collectives, and their transmission over time.

**“Narratives also recount those events that happen unwilled, unpredicted and often uncalled for by the actors, even if those very actors set the events in motion in the first place**”

(Mattingley, 1998, p.8, cited Middleton 2011**)**

BNIM facilitates understanding both the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ worlds of ‘historically-evolving persons in historically-evolving situations’, and particularly *the interactivity and mutual-constitutiveness* of such inner and outer world dynamics.

As such, BNIM lends itself particularly to both psycho-dynamic *and* socio-dynamic approaches, serving specialists of both the ‘psycho’ and the ‘societal’, and without requiring any particular allegiance to any particular theoretical approach.

However, it particularly serves those researchers wanting tools that support a fully psycho-societal understanding in which neither sociological nor psychological dynamics and regime-structures are neglected or privileged, and in which both are understood not statically but as situated historically. Biographic-narrative interviewing can provide a firm basis for better practice (individual and team) and better policy.

A key feature of biographical research into people’s lived experiencing of their lives and situations is a concern for distinguishing *the variety* of dominant and less dominant or suppressed *perspectives on those experiences*: both those configurations of sometimes contradictory perspectives that they *currently* hold (not necessarily consciously) on the one hand and, on the other, also those configurations that they held *earlier* before, during and after such experiences but which are currently apparently absent or forgotten…. but are still detectable… and maybe even occasionally operational, covertly….

*BNIM focuses in its interviewing in Sub-session One on the elicitation of what you might call Whole Stories (of the life or part of the life) and in Sub-session Two on the elicitation of detailed  Particular Incident Narratives (known as PINs) arising from or lurking behind events and generalisations and feelings mentioned in the Whole Story of Sub session 1.*

*What you typically get when you're asking informants for their whole life narrative in Sub-session one is a general view of what for them has remained the same and what has changed, along with some sense of how they currently understand that change (some element of self-theory) over the period they’ve been asked to talk about* (whole life, or other).

*The (pausefull) pushing towards PINs in Sub-session two produces accounts of particular incidents in the past, particular incident narratives, accounts which often encapsulate attitudes and ways of seeing the world and orientations which are not simply those which the interviewees in Sub-session One now- think of themselves as having or as having had.  Consequently, in the interpretive process after the interview, the researcher has both the explicit self-theory/story of continuity and change from Sub-session One but also the implicit data from PINs and argument and description etc….. which sometimes enriches and sometimes strongly qualifies any explicit initial perspective and self-theory.*

Other data-collection research methods (such as ‘attitude’ surveys and ‘attitude’ interviews) elucidate mostly dominant and explicit and ‘official press-release’ self-theories and present-time perspectives.

BNIM, through its focus on eliciting narratives of ‘past experience’ rather than (just) copying down explicit assertions of present (or remembered) ‘position’, facilitates the expression and detection of implicit and often suppressed perspectives and practices in the present as well as the expression and detection of perspectives, practices and counter-narratives at various moments in the past (see a detailed discussion of the key – though disposable -- term ‘Perspective’ in the *Interpretation Detailed Manual*).

Consequently, BNIM is particularly suited for retrospective and ongoing longitudinal process studies of complexity, since it fosters accounts of earlier and ongoing experiences in particular incident narratives (PINs). It can access vanished and mutated times, places, nuanced states of feeling and ways of doing and living.

The individual must be free to wander in and out of recovered memories, in particular those that are seemingly trivial…very small incidents…. Recollection of very small details is a kind of screen function within the self, as the small memory evokes the self state that prevailed at the time: remembering the small episodes of life revives selves from the past, even if the past as a totality [as a grand narrative or encompassing and overarching Report, TW?] remains chained to its dumb facts and reveals comparatively little. …

It is only in the displaced mentation of the subject, in his asides, in his *sotto voce* mumblings – in the details of the seeming trivia of his life – that one can discover the true response to the deeds done …. This kind of work defeats trauma and revives the selves [and experienced relations] that have been consigned to oblivion

(Bollas 2005 in his chapter *‘The functions of history’ ,* pp. 138-41, rearranged, and material in brackets supplied, TW).

The main function of Sub-session Two of the BNIM interview is precisely to push for such small particular incident narratives (PINs) that may not be easily accessible or obviously significant. In addition, the search is for a narrating of such incidents that feels as if they were told -- at least partly -- from ‘within the original experiencing’ (‘in-PINs).

It is less satisfactory if the interviewer stops at the ‘about-PINs’ (possibly well-worn anecdotes) narrating that appear to be ‘about’ a mostly forgotten-experiencing recalled at some emotional distance by the interviewer in a self-state firmly and completely located within the present interview moment’.

However the overall structure of the form of the ‘wandering in and out of recovered memories response’ to an open-narrative question is not as trivial as the out-of-context citation above from Bollas seems to imply *(“it is only in the details…*.”).

BNIM’s open-narrative interview structure – as opposed to semi-structured strongly-guiding part-narrative methods – allows or requires the interviewee to *give their own form and sequence* to what they choose to recall and tell.

Hence, we not only get *the detail* of important events and experiences from the interview, but we also get the added value and insights that come from their *structuring choices of form* in relation to the open-narrative question.

Indeed in a later work, Bollas implicitly corrects his earlier (2005) over-statement just cited (“*only in the details*”….). He writes “*By just talking freely, any person reveals a line of thought … linked by some hidden logic that connects seemingly disconnected ideas* (Bollas 2008a: 8-9)”. [Replace last word “ideas” by “details”. TW]

Free talking that enables that exploration of the further material that emerges is the other clue to the ‘situated subjectivity’ of the interviewee.

*The more free talking, the better….. both for freed-form and for freed-content, especially maybe seemingly trivial content*.***[[11]](#footnote-12)***

We should conclude, therefore, that value is derived *both from the “seeming trivia of particular incident narrations”* (and the extensive and vital material thrown up around it by asking narrative questions) elicited and explored particularly in Sub-session Two *and also from the sequence of the whole-story as it was free-form generated* in the freely-improvised and rigorously unguided initial Sub-session One. [Hence the need for two Sub-sessions of different types].

So far we have stressed the importance of the BNIM interview as a *data-collection* method.

However, the value of BNIM lies also and as much in in its *data-interpretation* protocols.

A key (not exclusive) feature of the BNIM interpretation of the BNIM interview material is its concern to follow the structured choices or compulsions of form, it follows the actual meandering of sequence.

It interprets the ‘performance’ (not a word I’m too keen on, what about ‘improvised happening’?) of the interview as a sequence of historical movements and actions by the interviewee over the period of the interview. It sees the transcript as the track record of a myriad of micro-decisions over the period (history) of the interview. It is a micro-action frame of interpretation. To cite Bollas again:

The individual must be free to wander in and out of recovered memories, in particular those that are seemingly trivial…very small incidents…. Recollection of very small details is a kind of screen function within the self, as the small memory evokes the self state that prevailed at the time: remembering the small episodes of life revives selves from the past, even if the past as a totality [as a grand narrative or encompassing and overarching Report, TW?] remains chained to its dumb facts and reveals comparatively little. …

It is only in the displaced mentation of the subject, in his asides, in his *sotto voce* mumblings – in the details of the seeming trivia of his life – that one can discover the true response to the deeds done …. This kind of work defeats trauma and revives the selves [and experienced relations] that have been consigned to oblivion

(Bollas 2005 in his chapter *‘The functions of history’ ,* pp. 138-41, rearranged, and material in brackets supplied, TW).

The most common method of qualitative interpretation of interviews – so common that it appears as if no other is there to be seriously considered, especially now given the dominance of ‘cut-and-paste’ technologies of abstraction from sequence -- is that of ‘thematic interpretation’.

*Thematic interpretation.* Using the common principles of ‘thematic interpretation’ within and even across ‘cases’ , the 2-3 hour or so interview transcript is treated as if it all emerged at one moment as a ‘symptom’ of a static ‘state of mind’ (or even ‘state of social relations’) whose internal historicity or sequence is of no methodological interest. Like a ‘painting’, it emerges as if at one ‘moment’ to be grasped as a ‘one-moment expression’. It is experienced as a detailed ‘single expressive act’. Not internally historical.

*BNIM is different.*

*BNIM is different.* The singularity of BNIM interpretation protocols is that, at least to begin with,  *it insists on grasping the ‘expression in the interview transcript’ not as a ‘single expressive act’ but primarily and to begin with as a myriad of micro-agentic-actions in sequence.*

The sequence over the long history of the long interview has to be understood if the significance of the details taken in abstraction from that sequence is to be properly understood.

It should also be stressed that the two-track interpretation of ‘the case’ (lived life + told story, not just told-story) means that the study of the ‘self-expression within the told story’ (expressive whole or BNIM’s preliminary chunk-by-chunk future-blind) is always (but always later) related back to a study of the ‘objective events of the living of the lived life’.

Very often ‘thematic analysis’ of a transcript suffers from a BNIM point of view from two defects; (i) it takes its data solely from the ‘narrative’ point of view; (ii) it does not explore that ‘narrative expression’ as a ‘myriad of micro-agentic actions in sequence’. It therefore does not looks not at the subjectivity of the teller as BNIM interpretation does but, – very much in the tradition of ‘themes of English literature analysis of a given polished/published book or short story -- only at the ‘themes’ of the ‘interview narration’ (the whole interview treated as a single transparent expressive act of an honest and transparent social actor telling it as it was.

The default notion of a ‘theme’ can be superficial: it can be merely a ‘list of topics’ (first he talked about his mother, then he talked about his school, then his school-friends, etc.). A little more useful is one which stays at the level of the explicit, but concerns itself with ‘naming’ a family of explicit topics (e.g. his initial theme was that of ‘family and school’).

It can then be pushed towards a deeper use (The initial theme of ‘family and school’ was treated positively; he regards his ‘early life’ as ‘a positive period in my life. As he treats of his later life, his theme is that of “How I failed to fulfil my adult goals”).

At the opposite end of the spectrum from theme being reducible to explicit topics or families of topics, we get reference to the the implicit (which may never become explicit, and might be vigorously denied) ‘theme of the interview as a whole’: e.g. “As an adult I never fulfilled my childhood promise, and it was my own fault”.

From an infinite long list of ‘topics mentioned’ to a single implicit structuring principle of ‘all of the interview as a whole’, our interest in ‘theme’ is more towards the latter end of the spectrum – the implicit principle of seriously substantial chunks of the interview as a whole, or *of* the interview as a whole. Not a list of explicit topics but an interpretation of ‘structuring theme’.

The use of the notion of ‘theme’ is so loaded with preoccupation with ‘narrative theme’ that the notion of a ‘case theme’ tends to be neglected or corrupted.

This is partly why I now prefer to avoid the use of the term ‘theme’ altogether, to ensure BNIM’s concern to understand **the evolution of a case-history** is *not* hidden behind the ‘extraction’ of the themes of the individual narrative treated as a single expressive act (a single datum) but – instead -- the sequence of the interview  *is* examined as a sequence of a myriad of micro-actions and micro-decisions of a dated situated subjectivity over the period of the interview.

BNIM enables a ‘;case-understanding’ to be achieved. This enables you – but does not oblige you – to produce ‘case-accounts in some of the things you might choose to publish. Even if you never publish a single ‘case-study’, the act that you acheve a casr-understanding means that anything you publish about or on the basis of BNIM work will be that much more interesting and convincing.

Let us return to the uses of BNIM.

In longitudinal studies (for example on people with a chronic illness, or in human-service programmes like education) , a small series of BNIM interviews can be used: later interviews may elicit later retrospectives from potentially new perspectives on the period originally covered by the earlier BNIM interview, as well as on the subsequent period since that earlier BNIM interview.

Nicholson’s successive ‘shortitudinal’ interviews with frail elderly people (2009), O’Neill’s (2011) study of treatment decision-making around (but rarely of, and never just-by) frail elders in hospitals, and also Brown and Aldington Hall’s research (2008) using 3-monthly BNIM interviews for over a period of 18 months on people with motor neurone disease, --- all exemplify this use of successive BNIM interviews.

BNIM can also be used as part of before-and-after particular *intervention* studies.

The methodological component of *biographic-narrative-based* research does *not* mean that the *research product* has to take the form of a collection of accounts of individual biographies or experiences; it may do so, but at least as often it doesn’t. *You could decide to make your BNIM-based research report contain no BNIM case-studies at all.*

On the other hand, before you get to a BNIM-based research report that ‘contains’ no BNIM case-studies at all, there are very strong reasons for doing, along the way towards such a case report, a number of *mediating case studies*. Without doing that, you may well fail to get a ‘sufficient sense of cases of evolving situated subjectivity’ to guide your ‘case-study-less’ eventual report.

You will benefit from doing at least one BNIM case-study, even if your final report is/gets designed to have no ‘presented cases’ in its chapters.

Your research purposes and research questions dictate whether you choose to dwell in the dimension of case-description and understanding, or whether you wish, from further work on the cases researched and described, to focus more on drawing theoretical, policy or practice conclusions of a generalising/particularising sort.

Exploring the particularity of individual experiencing and mutating subjectivity in unique historical and societal locations and processes through biography-*based* research lays the basis for systematic later ‘whole case’ comparisons of people, yes. It also lays a basis for comparisons of historically-situated practices and processes of different interest to the researcher, thus enabling well-grounded description and theorisation about a frequently *different* object of study. Very often, this can be that of ‘situated practice’, understood in different ways including that of Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus.*

#### 1.3.3.2. Labov’s ‘narrow’ notion of narrative is core

The notion of ‘narrative’ used in BNIM is a comparatively narrow one: you have to grasp what a ‘narrow aim’ you are undertaking when you undertake to elicit ‘narratives’ (in BNIM terms, not necessarily those of other interview methods) from your interviewees.

BNIM operates with Labov’s concept of narrative, and particularly with a notion of the ‘central event sequence’ which is at the heart of what BNIM means by narrative.

Bear in mind that the occurrence of a feeling or a thought is as much an ‘event’ for such a sequence as is an action. An event sequence might start

*‘I felt angry about him, I thought he doesn’t have to behave like that, and so I said to him “You’re a shit”. Then I felt guilty. Afterwards, I felt silly.*

In BNIM/Labov terms, there are no less than *five* events in this central event sequence so far……this will be important to remember……. as potential points for asking follow-up questions …..

This carefully narrow notion of ‘narrative’ is discussed at length in (Wengraf 2001), and to avoid extending this text any further, we refer you to that discussion, just providing on the next page a diagram to summarise Labov’s concept of ‘narrative’:

‘Narrative’ is a specific way of giving an account: namely, an account that is oriented towards story, a temporal sequence of event-in-time following one after another: one thought after another, one action after another, one event after another, etc., but always one thing after another in temporal sequence.[[12]](#footnote-13)

‘Biographic narrative’ means the individual generating a story about part or all of their own lives and lived experience(s).

‘Interpretive’ means a number of things: (a) that people are constantly interpreting themselves and the situation they are in; (b) that researchers are constantly attempting to describe those (narrative plus) interpretations; (c) that to understand the generation of a narrative, you have to interpret it in the light of the real historical context and evolution, not just re-cycle the artful presentation of self in narrative as if it were an unproblematic and self-sufficient truth of a transparent and artless narrator [[13]](#footnote-14)

A narrative exists only where, in an account, there is a relation of two or more events with one following another in a time- sequence:

* Internal-world events like a thought, or a feeling
* External-world events like an action or an input from outside

E.g. *I thought X and then I did Y*

*A happened to me and then I felt Y*

*I did Y and then I felt N and thought P and then did Q,*

Etc.

This is Labov’s ‘narrow’ definition of narrative, which is the one employed by BNIM.

This diagram on the following page includes references to the BNIM textsorts, including DARNE/GIN [[14]](#footnote-15)

**Abstract** *Report*? *Condensed situation?* ABSTRACT

‘what it is going to be about’  *‘Argumentation’* *moral of future story?*

**Orientation**

‘relevant background’  *description1* BACKGROUND

**Complicating action** *often first story/subjectivity-item*

‘something disturbing the normal’

**Events, experiences, action** *thin Reports*

[internal & external arguments?] & CENTRAL EVENT

PINs *rich* *Particular* SEQUENCE

*Incident Narratives* NARRATION

**Climax**

‘turning point, resulting in’  ‘

*sometimes the last story-item*

**Resolution**

’returning to [ a new?] normality’ ( *description2* )

*evaluation/subjectivity item* (closing) EVALUATION

‘moral of story’

**Coda**

‘that was it’ ‘but one last point’

W. Labov (simplified and modified from Linnell and Jonssen (1991) p.97

Figure 1 Labov's model of narrative

1.3.3.3. Objects of study

Consequently, the *object of study -- the focal unit of research, analysis and presentation of research using in part or in whole elicited auto/biographies-- can be highly varied*.

NB: All bibliographical references are given in the final ‘Bibliographies volume V’: either Bibliography A (BNIM material) or Bibliography B (all references).

So far, it includes for example: *multi-generation families* (Rosenthal; Bar-On; Brannen*); intimate citizenship and public policy* (Roseneil et al, forthcoming); *organisations and their cultures* (Sostris Phase 2; Wengraf 2002a; Froggett et al 2005); *learning/training and mentoring cultures* (Volante); *relationship patterns between clients and/or service professionals* (Bolton; Snelling; Curran and Chamberlayne; Grant); *vulnerability to breast cancer* (Aydin); *cancer stories of the over-75s* (Hughes); *informal cultures of caring* (Chamberlayne and King; Jones; Jones and Rupp), *the experiences of film audiences* (Cohen).

More generally, users of BNIM have been concerned with *modes of cultural transmission of patterns of feeling and behaviour*… A main focus has been on *individuals experiencing historical changes and institutions experiencing struggled-over uncertain transitions between historical regimes* at micro, meso and macro levels (Rosenthal; Sostris Phase 1; Breckner et al.; Chamberlayne and Spano; Bar-On; Ackermann; Brannen; Semenova; Humphrey et al; Domecka and Mrozowicki; Tatiana Bajuk Sencar and Jeffrey Turk; and many others – see Bibliography A below).

**BNIM tends towards the holistic and the historical.**

The ‘historical’ is relatively self-evident in the notion itself of a biographical narrative, that which asks for a historical account to explain the movement towards the present by way of starting with a chosen moment of the past when the person and/or the situation was held to be (perhaps) different.

The ‘holistic’ is not so evident, perhaps. The concern for ‘whole cases in whole contexts’ (whole subjectivity in whole situation) as a default outcome/object of concern for BNIM is fairly significant.

Ollman (2003) has argued strongly that *the more the concept of ‘system under study’ is widened* (the individual person as micro-system is the least wide system; the family is a wider object of study, the neighbourhood, organisation, networks are all wider still, for the humans-on-earth the ‘planet’ is the widest*), the more powerful and insightful the study can be.*

*Taking both points together, the ‘wider’ the object of study can be made and the longer the period of time under study can be, then the more adequate an understanding can be reached.*

Biographical narratives of individuals may well be our primary working data-generation/collection source, but the ‘case we study’ may be wider in scope and longer in history.

“What do they know of a single case, who know only one case at one point in time?”

The desire to get a ‘freeform whole story’ from the interviewee in Sub-session One – prior to any attempt to elicit more particular story-telling in Sub-session Two – can be thought of in relation to the *Gestalt* notion of early twentieth-century *Gestalt psychology*, and its insight that the same set of ‘parts’ could be configured in a number of distinct ‘whole ways’, and consequently a key focus was the ‘understanding of the role of parts in this or that whole into which they were configured’.

The ‘sensing of the particular whole’ was key to not misunderstanding the significance of the parts as they functioned in *that* particular whole at that moment, but not the one next door, the *other* particular whole just a moment away.!.

Different sorts of ‘systems thinking’ and ‘synthesising apprehension’ continue this ‘holistic insistence’, and BNIM is a moderate part of this methodological insistence, and, of course, by eliciting ‘narratives of the past’ it cannot but help to undermine contemporary historical amnesias in societal life and in social research.[[15]](#footnote-16)

**Is there a case for using BNIM as part of your study?**

As a broad answer, if you are interested in ‘situated subjectivity’ – *in the subjectivity shaped by* and perhaps shaping situations; *and/or in the situation that shapes* and is partially and potentially at least perhaps shaped by subjectivities – then you are likely to find BNIM useful.

The BNIM interpretive approach produces a historically/societally contextualised ‘interpretation’ of the situated subjectivity of the interviewee. Bourdieu notes as follows:

Sociologists cannot be unaware that the specific characteristic of their point of view is to be a point of view on a point of view (...). And it is solely to the extent that .[sociologists] can objectify themselves that they are able, even as they remain in the place inexorably assigned to each of us in the social world, to imagine themselves in the place occupied by their objects (...) and thus to take their point of view, that is, to understand that if they were in their shoes they would doubtless be and think just like them. (Bourdieu et al 1999, pp. 625-6, cited by Susan O’Shaughnessy 2011)

As O’Shaughnessy notes, this requires situating not just one’s interviewees *but also oneself rigorously* in a clear concept of a societal-historical field (a technical concept in Bourdieu).

Given that both situations and subjectivities are liable to mutate and change form over time, if you happen to have a concern for developmental change over some or all of the (life) time, then you are likely to find BNIM particularly useful for exploring changes in lived experience. We might call this**, *dated situated*** *subjectivity*.

A more active term for a key ‘action’ component of any ‘situation’ is that of ‘practice’.

The *Journal of Social Work Practice* vol.23 (4) – and also vol.25 (1) -- has an exciting set of papers emerging from an ESRC seminar on ‘practice-near research’. The editors conclusions from the ESRC series are in part:

…2. The [ESRC] series understood ‘practice-near’ to have a close affinity with many practice concerns, including ‘thick description’ of the social world and an emphasis on the experience of service-users and professionals, which has an immediate relevance for a critical appraisal of policy.

3. ‘Practice-near’ research employs a range of methodologies which have points of contact with each other. They are linked through concern for the study of emotionality and relational approaches to practice and policy. There is an ethnographic dimension to these research practices..

4. A range of theoretical approaches were evident…

6. Practice-near research is a useful way of conceptualising a cluster of methodologies which share a common aim of ‘getting closer to practice’

(Froggett and Briggs 2009: 378-9).

The ‘practice’ of individuals and groups can be detected both in a direct but sometimes all-too-obvious way by ethnographic and other forms of ‘observation’ and (in a different way, more indirect and mediated but also often a more ‘inner fashion) way by interviews, including BNIM interviews. The two ways (interview and observation) are NOT perfect substitutes for each other, however tempting it is to think they are! We discuss multi-method approaches in an Appendix. Here, however, we are concerned with just BNIM interviewing.

Optional assumptions – made by some but by no means all users of BNIM – are that:

* Both the ‘situations’ and the ‘subjectivity’ are internally contradictory and often not fully congruent with each other, therefore also relationally contradictory with each other,
* Both individual and collective subjectivities are liable to be ‘defended’ subjectivities

Were you to accept both of these further assumptions, then we would talk of *Dated, Situated, Contradictory and Defensive Subjectivities* as a provisional approach to our interpretation procedures or perspective.[[16]](#footnote-17)

### 1.3.4. How and where has the method been used and taught?

The BNIM methodology for exploring lived-experiences through biographic narrative interviews (originally laid out in angloworld textbook detail eleven years ago in Wengraf 2001) has been used over the past twenty years or so in a variety of collective research projects, either more or less directly starting with Chamberlayne and King’s *Cultures of Care* project in the early 1990s: (e.g. Chamberlayne 1996; Rosenthal 1998, Chamberlayne et al 2002, Froggett et al 2005); or in a modified version, for example in Heggie et al (2007) ; and often in combination with other methods (for example, Firkin et al 2004, Froggett et al 2005, 2011; and Robinson et al 2006, Knox et al. 2012).

BNIM and BNIM-style work has already been used in an increasing number of successful individual PhDs – as well as in a similarly-increasing number of collective postdoctoral funded research projects. A larger number are currently in process.[[17]](#footnote-18)

For a sense of how the method has been used, and the types of publications that have been produced using BNIM, see below and the BNIM Bibliography, Bibliography **A** in Volume V.

*1.3.4.1. Where?*

*Where* have *BNIM/Quatext-style* studies been undertaken or are under way? Where are BNIM-using researchers located? The core nodes so far are still seems to be (from an angloworld perspective) the UK (*BNIM*) and Germany (*Quatext*). The list includes:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Israel/Palestine, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Uganda, the UK and the USA.

The numbers of biographic-narrative trained researchers in each country vary from one or two through to several dozens. In the UK and Ireland, over 200 pre- and post- doctoral researchers have already had this training.

*1.3.4.2. MAs, PhDs and professional doctorates*

With a few exceptions, this list does not include studies reports on which are not for the most part in English. A large number of biographic-narrative studies have emerged directly and indirectly in Germany (many through the *Quatext* group) and readers of German will find many more excellent biographical-narrative studies that are not listed in this angloworld publication

We haven’t begun to have a list of undergraduate work or of MA dissertations that have been completed using BNIM. Our knowledge of PhDs and post-doctoral research, though better, is still sketchy. If you can add to our knowledge, please do tell us.

**Completed BNIM Theses**

We know as *Already completed* some 65 or so theses – PhDs and dissertations at Masters and at clinical/professional doctorate level -- using BNIM in whole or in significant part. The trend is rising sharply**. 24** were submitted in the eight years between 2001 and 2009: **33**  more were submitted just in the three years between 2009 and 2011.

For those interested in Masters and doctoral research, I give below a list of such theses completed in the past three years 2009-12. If you think of the BNIM group as a sort of (small) ‘virtual methodological training and research institute’, then we have in the last three years averaged 10 theses per year. Not bad.

**Mostly Doctorate (five Masters) level theses 2009-**

T.H. Andersen. 2009. *Vulnerable and strong: Men exposed to sexual abuse growing up. A qualitative study of social and cultural factors influencing reality-construction and coping.* PhD. Trondheim University, Norway.

Caroline Barratt. 2009. *Netting the benefits now or later? Exploring the relationship between risk and sustainability in Lake Victoria fisheries, Uganda*. PhD University of East Anglia.

Everton Bolton. 2010. *Identity and multiple admissions to psychiatric hospital: A biographic narrative study of the experiences of patients.* PhD. University of Bournemouth

Stef Buckner. 2012. *Older people’s experiences of recent urban regeneration: a psychosocial approach.* PhD. University of Central Lancashire

Sandra Bulmer. 2012. *How do brands affect national identity?* PhD. New Zealand: University of Auckland.

Ciaran Burke. 2012. *And what then? A critical examination of the role of habitus in graduate employment.* PhD. Belfast: Queens University

Jacinta Byrne-Doran. 2011. *A narrative study of ‘lived experiences’ of working mothers in Ireland.* University of Leicester: PhD

Melissa Corbally. 2011. *Making sense of the unbelievable: a biographical narrative study of men’s stories of female abuse.* PhD. Salford: University of Salford

Sarah Collings. 2010. *The experience of women with faecal incontinence: A Biographic narrative approach.* Kings College, London. M.Phil thesis

Zaheera Esssat. 2010. *Zehana: the birth stories of migrant women in Britain.*  PhD. De Montfort University

Elizabeth Fistein. 2011. *How can compulsory detention for psychiatric treatment be justified? An analytic and empirical investigation.* PhD. University of Cambridge.

Stephanie Gilbert. 2013. *Women and constructing re-membering: Identity formation in the stolen generations.* New South Wales: University of Newcastle

Raelton Gibbs. 2012. *Standing in the shadows: faith, homelessness and troubled lives.* London: University of East London

Jane Helen Graham. 2010. *Full of empty promises?: exploring what drug use achieves for the individual.* PhD Thesis. University of Central Lancashire

Anne-Marie Haigh. 2009. *The Alzheimer’s Disease Life Events Study.* Oxford: Oxford Brookes PhD Thesis *(compares LES with BNIM)*

Gabrielle Hebert. 2012. *Searching for a Uunicorn”: emotional dimensions of environmental eduators*. M.A. Arizona: Arizona State University

Lucy Y Her. 2010. *Relational healing: a biographic narrative interpretive method study of musician and composer Odell Brown.* San Diego, Alliant International University PhD.

Kimberley Hieftje. 2009. *The Role of Social Networking Sites as a Medium for Memorialization in Emerging Adults.* PhD: Indiana University.

Nicholas Hughes. 2011. *Living with cancer in old age: a qualitative systematic review and a narrative inquiry.* PhD thesis. University of Glasgow. <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2651>

Maria James. 2010. *The exploration of HIV related stigma within the context of Kerala, India.* M.Sc thesis. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba

Martha Kamara. 2010. *Indigenous female educational leaders in northern territory remote community schools: Issues in negotiating school community partnerships.* PhD thesis. Australian Catholic University.

Melissa Kelly. 2013. *Onward migration: the transnational trajectories of Iranians leaving Sweden.* PhD submitted. Sweden. Uppsala University

Hannah Kotjan. 2011. *Parents experiences of cochlear implantation for cochlear nerve deficiency.* M.Sc. Thesis: Vancouver: University of British Columbia.

Alison Ledger. 2010. *Am I a founder or am I a fraud: music therapists’ experience of developing services in healthcare organisations.* PhD. Ireland: University of Limerick

Katherine Ludwin. 2011. *Negotiating normative heterosexuality: a biographical-narrative study in the New Town of Milton Keynes.* PhD. London: Birkbeck College

Margaret McCulloch. 2009. *From school to faculty: stories of transition into teacher education.* D.Ed Thesis. University of Glasgow

Sue Middleton. 2010. *Hearing the voices of young women: interpreting teenage pregnancy narratives individually and collectively*. PhD Thesis. Middlesex University.

Adam Moore. 2011. *Bryan Stovell: a legacy of musical inspiration.* Canada: MA Thesis, University of British Columbia

<https://dspace.library.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/37058/ubc_2011_fall_moore_adam.pdf?sequence=1>

Adam Mrozowicki. 2009. *Coping with social change. Life strategies of workers in Poland after the end of state socialism.* PhD thesis. University of Leuven, Belgium, February 2009. Summarised at <http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/doctoraatsverdediging/cm/3H05/3H050291.htm>

Caroline Nicholson. 2009. *Holding it together: a psycho-social exploration of living with frailty in old age.*: PhD thesis, London: City University

Amanda Nielsen. 2009. *“It’s a whole lot more than just about my pain”: Understanding and Responding to the Social Dimension of Living with Chronic Pain.* PhD, University of Queensland.

Catherine O’ Neill. 2011. *Ethical Decision Making in Care of Older People: An Ethnography of Treatment Decisions in Irish Hospitals* PhD, University College Dublin.

Judith Overbeek. 2009. *When words fail: on the consoling capacity of the aesthetic.* MA thesis. Holland: Barneveld [in Dutch]

Colletta Peta. 2011. *Making Sense of Each Other: Lived Experiences and Told Stories of Asylum Seeking Families and Child Protection Social Workers.* PhD. Queens University Belfast (in process of revision)

George Roberts. 2011. *What do you do with your community IT centre? Like stories, community action and the Third Space: a biographical narrative interpretive study of adult users of a community IT centre.* PhD Thesis. University of Southhampton. <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/174235/1.hasCoversheetVersion/What-do-you-do-with-your-community-IT-centre_G_Roberts-PhD.pdf>

Jane Robertson. 2010. *Making sense and finding meaning: comparing narratives of older people with dementia and carers about the quality of an ordinary life.* PhD: University of Stirling <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/2530>

Anne-Greet van Rootselaar. 2010. *In your face: interpreting facial expressions: a contribution to the Biographic narrative interpretive method.*MA Thesis, University of Utrecht.

Merja Sallinen, 2012. *Women’s narratives on fibromyalgia, functioning and life-events.* Thesis. Finland: University of Jyvaskyla (in process)

Philipp Schorch. 2011. *Te Papa: a forum for the world? A narrative exploration of a global public sphere.* PhD thesis. New Zealand: University of Wellington

Paul Taylor. 2011. *An incongruous duality: care, control, and the social world of the mental health worker*. PhD thesis. University of Chester.

<http://chesterrep.openrepository.com/cdr/bitstream/10034/192606/1/Paul%20John%20Taylor.pdf>

Ivo Wengraf. 2009. *Places and practices of automobilities: case studies of British motoring.* PhD. University of Liverpool.

Nancy Wemm. 2009. *A different view from the pulpit: the life stories of female Episcopal priests.*PhD. Ohio University: Scripps College of Communication

Anthea Williams. 2010. *Priests in the Making or Priests Already? Life Stories of Candidates for Ordination in the Church of England*. PhD Thesis . University of East London:

Asta Zbarauskaite. 2009. *Adolescents who live in foster care, their identity experience: a biographical narrative interpretative analysis*. PhD Dissertation. Vilnius: Vilnius University, Lithuania. [English summary of 20 pages available from her]

As said before, the full list of published BNIM publications going back into the 1990s including articles, research reports, chapters, etc. can be found in Bibliography A.

From it, I’ve compiles the following list of known Theses:

**In the UK**, including Lisanne Ackermann (Oxford University), Elvin Aydin (Essex University), Caroline Barratt (University of East Anglia), Everton Bolton (Bournemouth), Stef Buckner (University of Central Lancashire), Ciaran Burke (Queens University, Belfast), Jacinta Byrne-Doran (Leicester), Tanya Campbell-Breen (University of East Anglia), Sarah Collins (Kings College, London), Melissa Corbally (Salford), Zaheera Essat (de Montfort University), Elizabeth Fistein (Cambridge), Raelton Gibbs (University of East London), Anne-Marie Haigh (Oxford Brookes), Debbie Holley (Institute of Education, London University), Kip Jones (de Montfort University), Robert Little (University of Central Lancashire), Katherine Ludwin (Birkbeck College), Margaret McCulloch (Glasgow) Marilyn Mackay (Thames Valley), James McGurk (Exeter), Ann McNulty (Newcastle University), Caroline Nicholson (City University), George Roberts (University of Southampton), Jane Robertson (University of Stirling), Emma Snelling (Plymouth University), Paul Taylor (University of Chester), Manuel Villaescusa (Middlesex University), Margaret Volante (University of East London), Nicola Ward (University of Birmingham), Ivo Wengraf (Liverpool), Anthea Williams (University of East London), Mark Worthington (Exeter University) (33)

**Outside the UK**, including Torbjoern H Andersen (Trondheim University, Norway), Hakon Berntsen (Bergen University, Norway), Ines Blitz (Utrecht University for the Humanities, the Netherlands), Stian Bong (Nordic School of Public Health, Goteborg); Sarah Brennan (NUI-Galway), Sandra Bulmer (Auckland); Jessica Davis Breen (Ireland), Lee Davidson (Monash), Arona Dison (South Africa: University of the Western Cape, Stephanie Gilbert (Newcastle, NSW); Gabrielle Hebert (Arizona State University); Lucy Her (Alliant International University), Kimberley Hieftje (University of Indiana), Martha Kamara (Australian Catholic University at Sydney), Melissa Kelly (Uppsala University), Hannah Kotjan (University of Vancouver, Canada), Alison Ledger (University of Limerick), Liu-Chuan Liu-Hang (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium), Carina Meares (Massey, New Zealand), Oyfrid Moen (Karlstad University, Sweden), Alan Moore (British Columbia), Bente Nicolaysen (University of Bergen), Amanda Nielsen (Queensland), Catherine O’Neill (University College Dublin), Judith Overbeek (Barnevelde), Merja Sallinen (Jyvasyla, Finland), Erin Seaton (Harvard); Theresa Standish-Kuon (Rensallaer Polutechnic Institute, New York), Margrethe Tangerud (University of Stavanger); Diana van Bergen (Amsterdam VU University), Nancy Wemm (Ohio University); Richard Wilson (Idaho University), Katrine Woll (Oslo, Norway), Chunyan Yang (Griffiths University, Australia), Asta Zbarauskaite (Vilnius University, Lithuania) (35).

Altogether, so far, we know of over 40 universities as having been involved or being currently involved in supporting and awarding higher degree and/or post-doctoral research explicitly using BNIM in whole or in part (see below).[[18]](#footnote-19)

We are increasingly finding, in addition, that there are other researchers who have not made contact with us, just working on their own from the textbook (Wengraf 2001), earlier versions of this *Guide,*  and other published materials (for a list, see Bibliography A in volume V. Except by pure accident, unfortunately we tend not to be told about Masters’ dissertations using BNIM.

*……..****If you complete (or have completed) an MA, PhD, research report or other publication using BNIM,*** *please let us know so that we can put this information into this Guide and so that other BNIM-using researchers know about it. Every piece of research and writing is an experiment in the applications and mutations of method, and therefore of value to others doing their own experimenting…….*

***If you have already completed such a piece of BNIM-based or BNIM-using research****, you can see whether we know about it* by looking in Bibliography A. If it’s not there, please do tell us about it in full detail so we can insert it. *Ideally, you would send us an electronic copy…*

**Any benefits you get from this Guide and the earlier textbook are based on and improved by knowing about other people’s work. *Make your contribution in turn by feeding back your experience and exploration to the BNIM research community…..***

*1.3.4.3. Collective post-doctoral research projects using BNIM*

Apitzsch and Sioutie (2007) remark on the expansion of biographical research projects – using of course a variety of approaches to biography, not just BNIM. They write:

An indication of this expansion are a number of international research projects which have been funded by the European Commission during recent years and have used biographical research methods. Among them are the projects: ‘*Self- employment and activities concerning women and minorities*’ (1997-2000) coordinated by Ursula Apitzsch; ‘*Social strategies in risk society’* (1996-1999) coordinated by Michael Rustin and Prue Chamberlayne; ‘*Between integration and exclusion: A comparative study on local dynamics of precarity and resistance to exclusion in urban contexts*’ (1998-2000) coordinated by Daniel Bertaux in cooperation with Thomas Boje and Susan McIntosh; ‘*The chances of the second generation in families of ethnic entrepreneurs: intergenerational and gender aspects of quality of life processes*’ (2002-2005) coordinated by Ursula Apitzsch; and the on-going project ‘*Integration of Female Immigrants in Labour Market and Society. Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations’* coordinated by Maria Kontos.

(Apitzsch and Siouti 2007:14, typography modified TW).

Collective projects using BNIM-type biographical research procedures in whole or in part with other data-collection and interpretation methods so far include: –

Projects with a red hash sign (#) are those where the research group as a whole was formally trained in BNIM usually as part of the funded base of the project

* [from the Berlin *Quatext* group], a long and crucial collective project looking at multi-generational studies of the families of both victims of the Nazis and of Nazi perpetrators (*Families of perpetrators and victims* Rosenthal et al)
* (#)a research project comparing cross-nationally (UK, East Germany, West Germany) regimes of caring and the different informal cultures that the different regimes gave rise to (*Cultures of care*  Chamberlayne and King) (#)
* (#)an EU-funded three-year multi-country study comparing the social strategies of people in disadvantaged categories coping with increasingly risky societies in Europe and of innovative agencies that have tried to measure up to such new challenges of what is euphemistically called and ideologically labelled as ‘modernisation’ (*SOSTRIS* *Social strategies in risk societies* – Chamberlayne et al, especially 2002). [an EU-funded Targeted Socio-Economic Research Project] (#)
* (#)an ESRC-funded study of work and caring in the UK over the 20th century looking at change and continuity across four generations of twelve families between 1910 and the late 1990s (Brannen et al: *Working and caring across the twentieth century*).*.* (#)
* a study of professionals immigrating to New Zealand (Firkin, Dupuis and Meares; Meares)
* (#)a study of the interaction between front-line professionals and their clients in agencies dealing with the homeless (Curran and Chamberlayne); (#)
* ethnic entrepreneurship and ‘new professionalisation’ as twin gendered strategies among immigrant minority groups in Europe (Apitzsch, Kontos, Kupferberg), [an EU-funded Targeted Socio-Economic Research Project].
* (#) a multi-method psycho-societal evaluation of one innovative institutional regime, that of a Healthy Living Centre in a deprived part of East London [using BNIM biographical and other interviews, institutional observation, and participant action research (Froggett, Chamberlayne, Buckner and Wengraf 2005)]. (#)
* An evaluation of inter-generational work in a Community Centre in Speke, Liverpool (Jude Robinson, Lindsay Hobby and Andrew Kirkcaldy 2006)
* A study of ADVANCE Women towards Employability (Joan Heggie, Barbara Neil, Eileen Green and Carrie Singleton 2007)
* A study of the changing needs of people who lose their eyesight or wgere eyesight deteriorates (Clare Thetford et al 2008; 2011, 2013
* A study of people living with rheumatoid arthritis (Stamm et al 2008; 2009)
* A study of the impact of BNIM-evoked cancer-survivor stories on African-American women (Kreuter et al 2008)
* (#)a currently ongoing study of the habitus of Slovenian managers between 1960 and 1991 with historians and economists exploring the context in which the managers operated, and with researchers with specialist expertise and narrative-researchers eliciting accounts and exploring the narratives the managers told about their strategies and courses of action, followed by team exploration of the relation between the two (Fikfak, Princic, Turk and Sensar *as yet no publications*). (#)
* An EU-funded project FEMAGE (female immigrants and their integration into ageing societies) has used BNIM-style interviewing and interpretation as part of its multi-method research: see Kovacs and Melegh 2006 for its interpretive methodology, and also Kovacs and Melegh 2007.
* Another EU-funded project, (FeMiPol). *Integration of female immigrants in labour market and society. Policy assessment and policy recommendations* (FeMiPol) (Maria Kontos, Floya Anthias, Mojca Pajnik and others). Final report (2009) available from

<http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/> and

<http://primts.mirovni-institut.si/>

* YIPPEE. An EU funded study across five countries studying *post-compulsory educational pathways among young people who spent at least one of their childhood years in the care of public authorities or child protection agencies*. This project uses BNIM and many other methods to look for factors - cultural, social, psychological and practical – which encourage and enable such young people to continue their education beyond the school years. (Sonia Jackson, Claire Cameron, Hanan Huari and Katie Hollingworth, Institute of Education, London University, et al). Their January 2010 Bulletin indicated that some 169 young people have had BNIM-type interviews for the project. <http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee/>. [Now see Cameron et al 2010, and other National Reports from other countries]. And Jackson and Cameron (2011) for the Final Report.

*Some studies starting in or after 2008 based on or using BNIM-type methodology to varying extents*

A UK study of community mental health nurses working with people with an early diagnosis of dementia (Weaks and Johansen).

A UK study of the experience of nurses acting as workplace mentors for mental health nurses during their training (Volante and Gurney *started in 2008*).

(#)*FEMCIT.* A 4-country European study of intimate citizenship: women’s movements, cultural diversity, personal lives and public policy [an EU-funded Targeted Socio-Economic Research Project] (Roseneil et al, 2008-10, 2012). See their website for details

. (#)

An EU-funded Targeted Socio-Economic *Euro-identities* Research Project on a biographical approach to the evolution of European identities (Robert Miller et al *2008-11*). [www.euroidenties.org](http://www.euroidenties.org). This has now produced a collected volume: Robert Miller with Graham Day 2012.

“Gay and pleasant land”: A study of *gay and lesbian older adults* living in South-West England. This study is part of the ‘New Dynamics of Ageing’ programme, the UK’s largest study of the quality of life of older people: the ‘New Dynamics’ seven-year research initiative, the largest research programme on ageing to date in the UK, is a unique collaboration between five UK Research Councils – ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC (Kip Jones et al *started in 2008*).

(#)A multi-generational UK study into *fathering among white inmigrant families*, funded by the ESRC, (Julia Brannen, Ann Mooney, et al *started in 2008*). (#)

Gunilla Bjeren and Atakilte Beyene: *A study into livelihoods, gender and ethnicity in an Ethiopian village (Shashemene) 1973-2008*. Based on BNIM, and starting in 2009, it was due to be completed for Stockholm University 2011.

A study of *graduate career projects and activity in small and medium enterprises* (SMEs) (Walmsley, Jamieson and Holden 2010)

Funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, the project *Making of Modern Motherhood* is completed. A further project *The Dynamics of Motherhood* is in progress.

*Living Apart Together: a multi-method analysis  (2011-13) ESRC funded* (Sasha Roseneil, Simon Duncan and Alison Park) is researching the increasingly socially significant phenomenon of relationships in which the couple is “living apart together” (LAT).

The project employs a multi–scale quantitative and qualitative analysis involving: (1) a representative national survey of types of living apart together relationships, and of motivations, attitudes, experiences and everyday practices;(2) a large purposive sample, drawn from the national survey, using semi-structured interviews to explore meanings and understandings about living apart together; and (3) a small purposive sample, also taken from the national survey, using a psychosocial methodology, the biographical-narrative interpretive method, to examine in depth individual biographical histories, subjectivities and narrative meaning-making practices.

*(#) Disabled intimacies: sexual and reproductive citizenship of disabled women in Portugal. 2012-14*. Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal.. Ana Cristina Santos and others (#)

(#) **In early 2011,**  three further research teams were seeking funding for their projects, including as an integral part of their funding application provision for a training in BNIM for the whole research team [2012: Sorry, I’ve forgotten which ones they were and so don’t know what success they had!; must keep better notes! TW]. (#)

***1.3.4.4. BNIM in triangulated ‘applied’ research***

**Practice-near research**

BNIM is particularly suited to explore the experienced interaction between individual situated subjectivities and purposes, on the one hand, and, on the other, organisational and societal roles, constraints and processes. It does so in a form of *practice-near research* that practitioners and managers of practice can both engage with and engage in. It is *practice-near* because it describes lived experiences of practising, as Lynn Froggett pointed out in an ESRC seminar in July 2008 at the Tavistock Institute. London. It has been adopted for sensitivity-training for professionals (e.g. Chamberlayne and Chamberlayne 2005) and for use with service-users in forum debates.

On a nearby page, Greenhalgh et al (2005) provide a useful summary of the research power of narrative methods (which includes points one might however wish to debate!) (p.**89** below).

An increasing proportion of the studies using biographical methods now deal with *‘applied’ issues.* Many researchers use BNIM to explore how professionals (such as health workers and social workers) do or don’t intervene effectively with people in ‘difficult situations’ and how policy and practice of managers and frontline-workers in respect of actual or potential ‘service-users’ should be developed accordingly.

See for example, studies in Chamberlayne et al (eds.) *Biographical methods and professional practice* 2004]; a study of dance in an acute mental health setting (Froggett and Little 2012) and two 2011-12 theses: Elizabeth Fistein on doctors and social workers involved in decisions to detain people under the Mental Health Act.; Catherine O’Neill on hospital treatment decisions about the extremely-ill. Raelton Gibbs of the Salvation Army has completed a study of five homeless people in a hostel for the homeless and what implications there are for policy and practice in that context (2012). In addition, Kjetil Moen (early 2012) is just starting a PhD study in Norway about the impact on doctors, nurses and chaplains of caring for the terminally ill. [[19]](#footnote-20)

**Narrative policy analysis**

A quite different sort of ‘applied research’ is that of ‘policy research’, using narrative interviews.

One sort of research is into ‘routine practices’ which are laid down for normal and fairly repetitive situations. It is ‘ruling policy’ (and policy-makers) who lay down and authorise such ‘routine practices’ for institutional practice at various levels (including the low-level manager, the professional and the client in the human services).

Another sort of research is into ‘non-routine interventions from a higher or top level’ to deal with non-routine and maybe emergency situations. These can be the subject of another sort of narrative inquiry.[[20]](#footnote-21)

Emery Roe’s (1997) *Narrative policy analysis: theory and practice* suggests very strongly about how, when policy analysts are faced with “issues of high uncertainty, complexity and polarisation”, even “if the only things we have to analyse are the scenarios and arguments that animate them”, it is still – with the aid of the narrative accounts of actors and bystanders in such situations, to do important work. He suggests that one conclusion from the very concrete case studies in his book is that

Unless you are able – not just willing, but able – to treat seriously people’s stories about those situations where facts and values are in dispute, you are not taking the situations seriously (Roe 1997: x).

Roe is talking about narrative interviews with a completely open initial question – very much in the spirit of BNIM interviewing. However, as far as I know, nobody has used BNIM for developing his very interesting approach in terms of policy analysis for practice and policy situations where “both facts and values are in dispute”.—i.e. most of them!

Perhaps you will be the first one to do so?[[21]](#footnote-22)

**The notion of regime-situatedness.**

In respect of research questions that inquire about changes of national, organisational and departmental *regimes*, biographic narrative interviewing is a valuable resource. They enable the researcher to capture the felt experience of the 'same person' in institutional regimes previous to the currently existing one Mcnamara et al (2013), researching the evolution of one particular professional specialist role , for example, remark that

BNIM was considered suitable because our objective was to examine the

“historical changes . . . [and] struggled-over uncertain transitions” of a professional role over a 20-year span, as revealed in the personal stories of individuals who were both driving and experiencing these transitions…

…The interviews enabled us to examine a new form of nursing practice as an object of study, not the historical development of the role of the infection control nurse per se (Mcnamara, Feely and Geraghty 2013: 57)

People try to maintain or to change a given identity or practice *within the constraints, demands and facilitations of successive previous, current and emergent internal and external historical and institutional regimes and regime-mix struggles.*

*To ignore enmeshment in broader and narrower institutional and historical regimes is to ignore reality*. *A regime-mix is one of the situations (or is the situatedness) that an always dated-situated-subjectivity (such as our own, and you now) is always in.*

* Sometimes you have a record of somebody – for example a UK probation professional – struggling to maintain value, quality and direction as they are under increasing attack by a worsening welfare regime.
* Sometimes you have a record of somebody – for example an immigrant whose life-circumstances change markedly for the better – at last managing to develop capacities and aspirations previously frozen and neutralised by a regime from which they have escaped.

Distortions and facilitations, mutations and stasis, of inner and outer worlds can be traced in *the partial co-constitution over time of regimes and subjectivities* in a way that enables scenarios of possible futures to be painted with more confidence than before.

This does not just enable better ‘descriptive histories’ to be told; it also enables better policy and practice to develop. Greenhalgh remarks on the value of narrative for ‘quality improvement’ as follows:

Box 1: **Ten unique selling points of stories in quality improvement research** (compiled from various sources)

Stories are *perspectival.* They are told subjectively from the point of view of the narrator, thus drawing attention to the individual rather than the institution[[22]](#footnote-23).

Stories *make sense of experience.* The structuring devices of time and plot retrospectively align events and actions so as to modify mental schemas.

Stories are *non-linear*. They convey multiple and complex truths, depicting events as emerging from actions, relationships and environments.

Stories are *embedded in a context*. A particular story about what went on in an organisation is nested within an over-arching meta-narrative of “what tends to go on around here”.

Stories have an *ethical dimension.* They depict both acts and omissions, reflecting… expectations about what a “good doctor” or a “good daughter” should have done in such circumstances.

Stories *bridge the gap* between the formal codified space of an organisation (roles, job descriptions, and lines of accountability) and informal uncodified space (relationships, feelings, “unwritten rules”, and subcultures).

Stories offer insights into *what might have been* (what Bruner calls “subjunctivisation”). The imaginative reconstruction of… a story allows us to consider different options for change.

Stories are *action-oriented*, depicting what people did (and what happened to them) and also igniting and shaping their future action.

Stories are *inherently subversive* since (in Bruner’s terminology) they embrace the tension between the canonical (i.e. an organisation’s standard routines and procedures) and the unexpected (i.e. new ways of thinking and working).

Leadership is related to story-telling. *“Leaders are people who tell good stories and about whom good stories are told”.*

(Greenhalgh et al 2005: 444)

***1.3.4.4.1. More than one separate BNIM interview in a team***

Hannah Kotjan (2011) researched the experiences of two parents of a hard-of-hearing child who had a cochlear implant which eventually failed to be of any value shows the importance of separate BNIM interviews with members of a ‘team’, in this case a parental one. She remarks:

In terms of data collection and analysis, this study shows the merit of conducting separate interviews with each parent, but analyzing them individually and together as a dyad. When both parents, or two caregivers, are involved in the life of a particular child or children, dyadic analysis allows the investigation of each person‘s experiences, but also lends itself to the analysis of overlaps and contrasts between them (Kotjan, 2011: 128)

Her remarks would be true, not just of a family, but of any ‘team’.

Nicholson’s study of early-dementia sufferers shows how difficult within a ‘close (family) team’ it is to implement a policy of separate individual interviews, but also how, even where such an attempt at separate BNIM interviewing at least partly fails, considerable value can nonetheless be extracted in a thoughtful psycho-societal interpretation process (see p**.107** below).

To get separate stories of identical or overlapping events is of great value – as any historian or reader of detective stories will tell you.

***1.3.4.4.2. Program/ organisational evaluation: a note.***

Where is BNIM in respect of program evaluation?

In the bibliography you’ll find a reference to Froggett et al (2005) and a URL from which you can download the report of their 3-year evaluation study of integrated programmes involving older people of a Healthy Living Centre in Bromley-by-Bow, East London. This involved BNIM interviewing as well as other methods (BNIM-plus).

There is the SOSTRIS Phase Two study of thirteen innovative organizations in Europe (summarized in Wengraf 2002a). Although a very brief and under-resourced experiment, I would not call the accounts ‘evaluations’, they do have some suggestive interest.

There is an evaluation of the working of the Speke (Liverpool) Intergenerational Project (Robinson et al 2006).

Slightly to one side, there is a study of a program of using BNIM-evoked stories of African-American breast cancer survivors as a basis for ‘cancer education’ videos (Kreuter et al 2008). Note, though, that BNIM was not used for an *evaluation* of that programme. [Compare the use of videos worked up from London research with homeless people and homelessness officers: Chamberlayne and Chamberlayne 2005)

Nicolaysen has completed a study of volunteering in Norway using BNIM plus a surprising number of other sources for constructing a 50-year history of the Norwegian Women’s and Family Association (Nicolaysen 2011).

The study of the practice of a particular British Columbia music teacher based on interviews with him and with some 20 of his actual and former students (Moore 2011)

Arona Dison (2007) has written an interesting PhD, using BNIM interviews to compare three university research centres and to evaluate the impact of their significantly-different regimes in fostering the research capacity development of individual postgraduates.

There are studies oriented to actual and potential consumer patterns: Burgess on electric vehicle drivers and reported perceptions of the public; Bulmer on brands and national identity in New Zealand; Ivo Wengraf on chains of automobilities.

Stephanie Gilbert (2012) has researched the experiences of child victims of settler colonial programmes that ‘stole and appropriated’ aboriginal children in Australia – not too unlike the ‘stealing’ of Aryan-looking children by the Nazis in Central and Eastern Europe.

Thetford et al (2013) have used before-and-after BNIM interviews on the experiences of eye-patients receiving eye-injections for age-related macular degeneration.

Slightly to my surprise, at the moment this handful seem to be the only ones that come to mind.

I say, “surprise” because a lot of the work undertaken with BNIM has been concerned with BNIM interviewing of front-line professionals or of their clients, and so has been “about programs” even if not formally focused on them.

In the bibliographies,(SG\_DM Volume V) you will find references to BNIM research on the lived experiences and subjectivities of the education and training, and the professional practice of  *front-line (or close-to-front-line) professionals*.

There are studies of officials dealing with the homeless (Curran and Chamberlayne); human resource officials (HRD) dealing with disability (Abbott and Williams). mental health workers in different contexts (Bolton; Fistein, Little; Taylor; Weaks and Johansen); and nurses in nurse education (Volante; Sochan and Singh); occupational therapists (Campbell-Breen; Ashby et al); clinical psychologists dealing with mental ill-health sufferers (Worthington, McGurk, Snelling); teachers and school principals (Tucker; Kamara; Zhao and Poulson; McCulloch; Rippon). There are also studies of informal carers (Chamberlayne; Chamberlayne and King; Jones ; Nicholson;); of clergy being ordained or in function (Williams, Wemm), of soldiers (McGarry and Walklate), and of music therapists (Ledger). Coming in 2013 is a study of the history of infection control nurses in Ireland (McNamara, Fealey and Geraghty).

Also, there are studies directly of *those affected* *by conditions that involve actual or potential programs*:

Young people with physical disabilities (Curtin and Gill); homeless people (Curran; Chamberlayne and Chamberlayne; Tejero and Torrabadella; Feher), clients of occupational therapists (Campbell-Breen), young migrant women (van Bergen), teenage mothers and fathers (McNulty; Hirst, Formby and Owen); migrants (Kelly; Meares; Firkin et al; Breckner, Rosenthal and Bogner); Congolese refugee women (Pavlish); Congolese children affected by war and transmission of violence (Seymour); refugees in Norway (Valenta); prisoners and prisoners’ families (Breen), Lithuanian children fostered in orphanages (Zbarauskaite); young people across Europe engaging in post-compulsory education after spending at least a year in public care institutions (YIPPEE); parents experience of services intervention (especially the police) after the sudden bereavement of a child (Denise Turner), people suffering bereavement (Overbeek), drug users (Graham); migrants to Slovenia sending remittances home in times of economic decline (Pajnic and Balt); homeless people (Raelton Gibbs); carers for people with mental health issues (Krayer et al), a retrospective study of those involved in family and other networks around a fatal suicidal crisis (Owens et al 2011).

*people undergoing physical illnesses* such as cancer (Hughes; Aydin; Corner and Harewood); rheumatoid arthritis (Stamm); Crohn’s Disease (Blitz); heart attack (Hare), women with faecal incontinence (Collins); people suffering from sight loss and/or having treatment for sight loss (Thetford et al, Knox et al), older women with hearing loss (Lockey et al), people with teeth problems (Bond); people with prostheses and their varying use of them (Hogsteyns and van der Horst), people suffering from chronic pain (Nielsen); those liable to detention under the Mental Health Act (Fistein); people at the end of life in hospitals (O’Neill).

*people with less physical perhaps health issues* such as the mentally handicapped (Berntsen); the mentally ill or vulnerable (see  Bolton, Mackay; Snelling; McGurk, Worthington; and Brooks/Dallos, with other studies currently being done, see references in Bibliography A); women suffering from anorexia (O’Shaughnessy et al) or having fear of giving birth (Tangerud).

*older people* and those in terminal decline needing palliative care (Nicholson, O’Neill, and another study in the UK just starting; dementia (Cowdell; Robertson).

Also *students:*  young people with physical disabilities’ experience of education (Curtin and Gill); apprentice engineers and motor mechanics in Germany and Britain (Brockmann), student teachers (Tellez); part-time and mature students (Lucas, Issrof and Paton); of students using new technology (Holley; Holley and Oliver), first-generation university students (McQueen *et al*), foundation learners, (Williams et al), ordination of priests in the Church of England (Williams), adult users of a community IT centre (Roberts), student researchers in three South African research centres (Dison); Chinese stuents studying abroad (Zhang)..

Also *faculty:* academics flying abroad to do intensive teaching on short stays (Smith 2013, 2014)*.*

Using the concept of ‘program’ very broadly until it becomes close to synonymous with relatively ‘institutionalised practice’, then we can perhaps enlarge the scope to note:

*Occupational categories:* the Polish miners studied by Mrozowicki and his collaborators (2008, 2009), the ex-traditional workers across several European countries studied in the SOSTRIS project, occupational therapists (Campbell-Breen 2004) veteran soldiers (Zinn 2010, McGarry and Walklate 2011) ….migrant and non-migrant domestic service in Hanoi (Thi Nguyet Minh Nguyen 2010)…..; British soldiers (McGarry) and the ‘front-line professionals’ itemised on earlier pages.

Also *gender-specific categories*: fathers (Mooney, Brannan), male victims of domestic violence (Corbally), men who’ve been subject to sexual abuse when young (Anderson), men suffering from suicidal impulses and substance abuse (Bong). cross-cultural experiences of childbirth and breastfeeding in Britain by migrant women not used to Western medicine (Essat; Brennan), maternal smoking practices (Holdsworth and Robinson), women suffering from anorexia (O’Shaughnessy *et al*); women handling maternity leave and career choice options (MacDougall) and fear of birth (Tangerud); women in football (Stirling and Schulz),

Indeed the *SOSTRIS*  *Social strategies in risk society* European project (1997-2000) was concerned with a whole variety of categories of people across Europe in ‘precarious situations’ from one viewpoint or another: (i) single parents, (ii) minorities, (iii) unqualified youth, (iv) the early retired, (v) ex-traditional workers, (vi) recent unemployed graduates, etc [for a variety of theorized and presented cases and grounded policy-conclusions, see Chamberlayne, Rustin and Wengraf eds. 2002), and *SOSTRIS Working Paper* references in the Bibliography]

Risk is a central focus of Caroline Barratt’s (2009) study of fishing communities in Uganda, and the work of Jens Zinn (2010a, 2010b). See also a recent study of risk-taking of motor-cyclists (Murphy and Patterson 2011).

In addition, Phase 2 of *SOSTRIS* dealt (very briefly) with innovative programs/ organizations in each country dealing with one or more of the categories involved (*Sostris Working Paper* no.8, and also Wengraf 2002).

So, to sum up. There have been many BNIM study of frontline professionals in what one might call ‘human service organizations/programs’ and a fair amount of study of actual or virtual clients of such services. The power of doing one or more BNIM interviews with professionals and clients (as well as managers) has been clearly demonstrated. There is lot of practice-near research, usually by professionals researching their own or their colleagues' experience. However….

However, *formal* program evaluation studies using BNIM are only just starting to happen (with perhaps *SOSTRIS* Phase 2 and certainly the Bromley-by-Bow study (Froggett et al 2005), the Speke Intergenerational Project (Robinson et al 2006) being the first experiments in doing this that come to mind) and the before-and-after interviewing of Clare Thetford and her colleagues (2013) as a more recent one.

Why?

***1.3.4.4.3. Triangulation by 3-category (multi-category) interviewing?***

Few BNIM studies have looked simultaneously at *the dyad of both practitioners and clients*, and *the most frequent policy working triangle --of practitioners, clients and managers* -- seems to be particularly *well-avoided*.

Practice-near research has so far often meant professionals doing practitioner-focused research through interviewing only other (same-type) professional practitioners. I would argue that such single-category research is necessary but not sufficient for understanding practice-triangles. On its own, such single-standpoint investigation can even reinforce the illusion of the single standpoint, let alone the epoch or generation or social location.

Indeed, I would argue *that single-category interviewing by somebody from the same (or pretty similar) category is virtually guaranteed – this may be a bit strong -- to make at least some of the most universal common prejudices and assumptions of the category very likely to become pretty invisible to the researcher and to the researcher’s audience – particularly if the audience for the product also comes from the ‘members’ whose illusions and blindnesses are in danger of being reinforced.*

New insight which challenges identity-illusions comes most powerfully from the criss-crossing of multi-category perspectives.[[23]](#footnote-24)

For program evaluation or other research into collective practices -- or into policies supposed to be being well-implemented through such collective practices --the fully triangulated study of a (professional or other) practice (“practice-near research”) requires not just the exploration of the lived experience of the (professional) practitioner themselves but of at least one other category, that of the service-user (which might be individual or collective).

When the professional is acting as an employee of an institutional regime ( teacher in a school, a GP in a practice within the NHS, a volunteer for an NGO), then there are a complex of other institution and regime practitioners to be investigated as well (line-managers of the practitioner, peers involved in cross-professional teamwork with the practitioner, etc.).

A front-line teacher researching a front-line social worker is likely to share the “illusions – and ideologies -- common to frontline workers”; the same is true for junior management consultants researching only junior managers, or activist user groups researching only (activist) service users.

“Getting closer to practice” should mean engaging closely and critically with the *multiple perspectives of practice, on practice*…… *The pitfalls of proliferating identity politics should not be unnecessarily reproduced by identity researchers, politically comforting and personally-reinforcing/collusive though that is.*

There certainly are political problems in moving towards a 360-degrees research project, but studying one partner in a complex multi-partner collective practice such as a family or an organisation is likely to be less than satisfactory and may merely and unwittingly at least in part – whatever else its merits -- (re)produce single-category-standpoint ignorance and ideology, albeit at a high academic or single-practitioner level of discourse and argument.

*For radical dialogue, and re-thinking and re-designing, -- or even effective resistance -- to occur, single-category studies by same-category researchers are not likely to be fully sufficient.*

This is not just true about ‘objective categories’ (e.g. work position or family position) but also about ‘subjective categories’.

For example, maybe ‘white maleness’ needs to be investigated by non-white women doing BNIM interviews of men; maybe ‘working-class radicals’ need to be researched by ‘middle-class or ruling class conservatives’, etc.

I argue elsewhere that if properly interviewed according to BNIM rules, the ‘liberated expressive material’ of the category interviewed will confront the ‘interpreting researcher’ with material that will probably confound the ‘initial prejudices and stereotypes of the interviewer’.

BNIM may also lead the ‘sufficiently-perceptive interviewer’ to develop insights into the ‘category interviewed’ from a ‘contrary perspective and experience’ that an interviewer/interpreter from “the same category” (a white male leftwinger interviewing another white male leftwinger) might well not be able to muster, given the “common sharing of the illusion of the category”.

Hence the importance of heterogeneity: both objective and subjective.

If we wish to promote more adequate knowledge of professional/practitioner work and improve practice, then there is an immense reservoir of under-used experience locked up within both professionals and users and those involved in experiencing and implementing and determining policy for different regimes of practice (see for example Sinclair 1970, Campbell-Breen 2004, Berntsen 2008, and especially O’ Neill 2011).

Unfortunately, regimes of collective practice operate within a context of State-Business regulated regimes of governance which are happy often to fund (but not always publish) explorations of lower-level practice but are unlikely to fund explorations of how such governance policies themselves came into being.

A radical US sociologist once said something like, “the hands of the sociologists are turned upwards to receive money and funded research projects from the up people; the eyes and the interviews and the surveys of the sociologists are turned down upon the down people”.

My general point, however, is that *putting the experiences of several categories together generates far more insight than just working with the insights of one category only. The historical dimension of biographic narratives from selected complementary categories brings earlier and different regimes more into focus And no partner in a multiple division of labour/user speaker/listener positions, no category, is epistemologically privileged.* [[24]](#footnote-25)

There are encouraging signs of both 2-category and even 3- (or more) category work:

*Two-category*

* Tanya Campbell-Breen’s thesis (2004) studies both occupational therapists and their clients.
* Jane Robertson has used BNIM interviews as ;part of her PhD study, based on interviews with people themselves suffering from dementia and with those caring for them (2010).
* Colletta Peta (2013) is currently completing research interviews with both members of families seeking asylum and with child protection social workers engaging with them.

*Three-category and above*

*Families and beyond*

* Robert Fleming initially used BNIM in order to study the experiences of birth-parents, adoptive-parents and adoptees. Note, however, that he decided that it would not be feasible to collect biographic-narratives from interviewees who were part of the same ‘adoption triangle’.
* Multi-generational family studies in Germany, Israel and England (Gabriele Rosenthal, Daniel Bar-On, Julia Brannen, for example) involve studying at least one person in each of three or four generations of the same family.
* Julia Hirst et al (2006) have studied both male and female teenage parents and also *their* parents.

*Institutions and communities*

* Catherine O’Neill ‘s PhD thesis (2011) uses BNIM interviewing (and institutional ethnography) to do institutional research on the treatment decisions around elderly patients in two Dublin hospitals. It is based on BNIM interviews with patients, with family members, and also with a great range of different types of medical personnel (nurses, doctors, consultants). This is very encouraging and pioneering triangulating work.
* The Bromley-by-Bow Healthy Living Centre study (Froggett et al 2005) did BNIM interviews
* Stef Buckner’s PhD thesis London (Bromley by Bow, as above)) and in Lancashire (Burnley Wood) (2012) compared older people in neighbourhood institutions both in with a variety of differently-situated people within the organisation (as well as using observation and document research, as well as insider/outsider participant action research): outsider-professionals and CEOs, local community clients and clients-turned-volunteers, etc.
* Aine Macken Walsh (2009, 2010) has very successfully explored the ‘barriers to change’ in Irish rural communities using BNIM-deploying interviews and focus groups with a large variety of ‘rural actors’ and ‘development institutions’.

*Production and consumption chains*

* Ivo Wengraf (2009) – a very distant relation -- studied purchasers and users of cars, caravans and motor cars (oil, electric) via BNIM interviews; manufaturers and dealers via semi-structured elite interview; -- and also used audio in-car –diaries and fieldnotes on motor shows, rallies and other events -- in his engrossing study of British automobilities.

In other areas, there may be other triple-category ‘triangles’ where people from the same triangular situation could be interviewed, but….. each case is different.

These study of organisations and institutions – and particular programs within and between them – also need to be explored using a BNIM approach to the *‘consequential policy-practice chains’* of the sort suggested by Emery Roe’s (1997) study of stories, counter-narratives and non-stories in controversies and struggles. One of his chapters has a revealing title: *‘A salt on the land: finding the stories, non-stories and meta-narrative in the controversy over irrigation-related salinity and toxicity in California’s San Joaquin valley’.*

We need more *interview triangulation* of the diverse ‘categories’ (in many cases, three is insufficient, O’Neill’s work shows the value of going further in an institutional context) whose interwoven and often discordant experience is being explored in the context of practices where chronic controversy exists and maintains itself over ‘practice chains’ with issues that are marked by “high uncertainty, complexity and polarization”.

##### 1.3.4.4.4. Triangulation by more than just one type of interview

BNIM has built into it the opportunity of using non-BNIM interviewing methodologies. The Sub-session 3 can be used for such interviews, for example and quite typically semi-structured depth interviews in Sub-session 3 are common.

For example,

* Thetford et al’s (2009, 2011, 2013) studies of people suffering from sight loss used both BNIM and semi-structured interviews.
* Yang (2005) in her study of the learning strategies of Chinese social science PhD students also used simulated recall interviews.
* Robertson (Stirling University, 2010) interviewed people caring for dementia-sufferers using BNIM and interviewed those with the dementia using more casual conversation:
* Robinson (et al 2011) reporting on supporting carers for people with mental health problems included surveys, semi-structured phone interviewing, and BNIM interviews.
* Nicholson (2009) studying frail elderly people developed a fluid methodology drawing on elements both of BNIM and of Hollway and Jefferson’s FANI (Free Associative Narrative Interview) to achieve greater flexibility than she felt BNIM on its own could achieve.
* Katherine Ludwin’s 2011 PhD thesis on normative heterosexuality in Milton Keynes also drew on both BNIM and FANI.
* Duncan et al (2012) used both semi-structured and BNIM interviews in their study of people ‘Living Apart Together’

##### 1.3.4.4.5. Triangulation with more than just interviews

Also, ideally, we need triangulation *with methods of data-gathering* *other* *than interviews* so that, for example, in conjunction with (BNIM) interviewing we find, for example, *document* research and *observation of practice*.

On this latter point, see also notes on a full-spectrum psycho-societal methodology (p.**221** onwards), and my later provocation recommending the impossible: fully psycho-societal approaches in Volume IV.

A full-spectrum methodology for psycho-societal research would include data-gathering primarily about the ‘inner worlds’ of people (conversation, in the form of formal interview and informal conversation), about the ‘outer worlds’ of people (observation, both formal ethnographic and informal) and the ‘learning by experience’ of PAR (Participatory action research) together with formal and informal documentation to include statistics.

* Liu Hang’s PhD study of Chinese restaurant owners in Belgium (Liu Hang 2008) provides a history of an evolving methodology, as well as an example of good historical grounding.
* Wilson (2007) discusses his (biographical interview + documentary research) strategy for his PhD on the Idaho State Library.
* Jude Robinson’s research (Robinson 2006) into trans-generational relations also used a variety of methods and researched a variety of stakeholders.
* Erin Seaton (2007) used both observation and narrative interviews for her study of rural girls in New Hampshire.
* Froggett, Chamberlayne, Buckner and Wengraf’s (2005)’s study of a Healthy Living Centre at Bromley-by-Bow East London UK used a rich mix: different types of interviews; existing and specially-generated documentation; different modes of observation; and also a component of joint action research.
* Macdonald’s (2009a,b,c) study of dyslexia with a social realist framework used a prior quantitative component prior to his biographic-narrative study.
* Aine Macken-Walsh (2009, 2010) used interviews together with focus groups in her studies of rural development in the West of Ireland
* Susan Mowbray (2005) combined BNIM with public-policy documents in her study of a long-serving Australian primary school teacher.
* Robinson (et al 2011) reporting on supporting carers for people with mental health problems included statistical surveys, semi-structured phone interviewing, and BNIM interviews.
* Froggett, Little, Roy and Whittaker (2011) used BNIM plus a variety of ethnographic methods for their research into socially engaged arts practice and new model visual arts organisations.
* Bente Nicolaysen. 2007*.* *Giving, receiving, rendering. A study of volunteering in local housewife associations in the Bergen and Midt-Hordaland region, Norway. 1950-2000.* Doctoral dissertation. Bergen, University of Bergen. Her thesis combined 32 BNIM interviews plus private and organisational documents from local housewife organisations. [[25]](#footnote-26)
* Linda Johnson’s (2011) ‘notions of student belonging’ project is using a small number of BNIM interviews along with descriptive statistics and questionnaires.
* Hannah Kotjan’s study (2011) into cochlear implants with separate interviews with two parents of a CI child (“Ellie”) used, as well as the interviews, also professional and medical records to provide a strong chronology and a variety of timed professional and medical perspectives on assessment and treatment.
* Bulmer (2012) in her study of brands and national identity in New Zealand used BNIM interviews, in-depth interviews with friendship pairs, and the creation of co-created narratives in response to watching TV advertisements
* Gilbert (2012) in her study of Australian aboriginal children being stolen from their parents used both BNIM interviews but also a national archive of oral-history testimonies to illuminate the personal and collective consequences of this government policy.
* Duncan et al (2012) used both semi-structured and BNIM interviews and also population statistics in their study of people ‘Living Apart Together’

Two researchers into frail elderly people used BNIM interviews with two different powerful methods of observation: institutional ethnography, and Tavistock-style observation practices.

* Nicholson (2009, 2012) used the open-narrative BNIM-based interview methodology along with a less-narrative-focused FANI-style approach, combining both with the *Tavistock Observation Method*.
* O’Neill’s study (2011) of treatment decisions involving the elderly in hospital is a vital resource. An extensive and intensive PhD study of two Irish hospitals developing a combination of BNIM and other interviews (with a variety of categories of medical staff and with users and the families of users) and observation (including Dorothy Smith’s *Institutional Observation*) is exemplary.

Both make for very good combinations, one oriented to the societal-institutional, the other towards the psychological-internal. See also the unfortunately short report of Fiona Cowdell on people with dementia (2007). Van Bergen’s study of suicidal behaviour of young migrant women in the Netherlands (2010) has not much more than a slight use of BNIM approaches, but shows an interesting integration of qualitative and statistical method.

One report on a completed PhD may indicate a flavour of such an operation:

Dear Tom

Just writing to let you know that I have now been recommended for the award of a PhD here at the University of Cambridge. In the end, my thesis was entitled

*‘How can compulsory detention for psychiatric treatment be justified? An analytic and empirical investigation’*

I used BNIM to collect the *professional life stories* of doctors and social workers who are involved in decisions to detain people under the Mental Health Act. The method worked really well to gather information about the practice itself (the lived life) and the practitioners’ ‘moral intuitions’ regarding the circumstances that justify the practice (the told story).

This was really helpful for me, as I could *combine it with direct observational research* to describe the ‘practical wisdom’ of people trying to make decisions in an ethically contentious area of clinical practice. I then *compared and integrated these findings with the results of more conventional legal and philosophical analyses*, in order to make suggestions for law reform. It was a complicated but rewarding process!

Thank you for introducing me to the world of BNIM. It has certainly enriched my research and I look forward to using the methodology again in the future (Elizabeth Fistein 2011) *italics added*).

No one methodology is best for all purposes; real-life understanding typically demands more than one methodology. Obviously funding and expertise limit how far a study can go in triangulation strategy.

However BNIM sets itself firmly towards ‘triangulating’ the narrative discourse in the interview (track 2 in BNIM interpretation) by external-to-that-narrative context, of which the independent study of the living of the lived life (track 1 in BNIM interpretation) stands as a minimum integral version.

Building up an independent and independent-minded sense of historical context is integral to BNIM’s readiness to always ‘triangulate’ the story as said (by regarding that story as said as a dated and located interpersonal construction).

We have so far only discussed *‘triangulation of data-gathering’.* Another research project using BNIM and a strong ‘visual ethnography’ component works with a more inclusive methodology involving ‘participatory involvement’ right from the start:

To engage the voices of older lesbians and gay men who are not typically captured in traditional research, a range of qualitative methods were bridged within the study to explore the intersectionality between sexuality, rurality, and age.

The project incorporates a strong participative research element throughout (Bradbury & Reason, 2003), and this is facilitated at various levels within the project through an number of mechanisms: (a) an Advisory Committee made up of a mix of older gay people and service providers who are central in the development and overview of the project; (b) focus group meetings with older gay people to elicit their narratives about rural life; (c) citizen panels which involved a group analyses of interview data; and, finally, (d) the inclusion of older gay people in a theatrical improvisation workshop, which contributes to the development of the performative element within the project

(Fenge, Jones and Read 2010)

We should note that probably a majority of those who use BNIM interviews use one form or other of thematic ‘text-interpretation procedure’. Some use theme-extraction after going quite far with individual BNIM case-analysis (at least in initial gold-star cases, see Nicholson et al 2012); others use it instead of any case-account presentation at all.

My impression is that those who extract themes without doing any case-interpretation produce less interesting discussions than those who do do some case-interpretation and *then* focus on the extraction of themes.

Obviously, though, it depends largely on your research question and your strategy for what sort of presentation-to-audience you want to produce.

Longitudinal research using BNIM with either quantitative or mixed modes are also developing. BNIM was used in the Economic and Social research Council’s earlier *Making of Modern Motherhood* research project. A sequel – *The Dynamics of Motherhood –* can be accessed through <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/> . See Thomson (2011) for further details, and also the case of repeatedly-interviewed ‘Cheryl’ in Thomson et al (2004).

See also Jackson and Cameron (2011) on YIPPEE in 5-countries on young people from a public care background and access to further and higher education. This used some 170 biographic narrative interviews as part of a large multi-method study.

Another BNIM-using project was recent FEMCIT research into intimate citizenship and women’s social movements: also multi-method:

The biographical narrative method was only one of many methods used within FEMCIT as a whole; the wider research team also carried out: semi-structured interviews and focus groups with “ordinary people”; “expert/key informant interviews” with women's movement activists and NGO workers, policy makers and politicians; surveys; participant observation; discourse and mapping analysis of policy documents, parliamentary debates, media and women's movement texts; and secondary analysis of statistical data (see Halsaa, Roseneil, & Sümer, 2011).

This multi-method approach was vital in attempting to understand the range of ways in which women's movements have impacted upon the different aspects of gendered citizenship with which we were concerned, but the focus on biographies and narratives was particularly appropriate and generative for researching intimate life and citizenship (Roseneil 2012).

You do not undercut the use of BNIM by different modes of triangulation; you enhance the power of the method by its use in multi-method research designs. In any case BNIM twin-track interpretation is a multi-method triangulation in itself….

*1.3.4.5. When NOT to use the method – counter-indications….*

No tool in a tool-chest is best for all purposes. Indeed, a proper tool-chest of research methods like any tool-chest, contains an array of highly specialised tools each particularly good for one set of purposes, reasonably OK for others, and particularly not-useful for yet another set. When is BNIM counter-indicated?

***1.3.4.5.1. Are there types of people who should not be (BNIM) interviewed?***

The only *types of interviewee* for *whom BNIM-interviewing is probably technically not suitable are people who cannot* *be expected to* *even half-successfully* *attempt* to tell stories of particular incidents in their lives – e.g. perhaps people with advanced dementia or those similarly impaired., perhaps and perhaps not including the intellectually disabled. [[26]](#footnote-27) .

However. Caroline Nicholson (2009) was doing work on **very aged interviewees**. She did fascinating interviews with a very articulate and educated man, Eli, both talking about and exhibiting his growing failure (from one interview to the next) to access coherent memories and sentences. She remarks that these were much more immediate stream of consciousness’ rather than reflected-upon accounts.

In Eli’s first interview, the asking for narratives produced a powerful self-expression in the transcript of his lived experience of being able to do so only partially……

In Eli’s second interview, Nicholson’s questions were much less narrative-requesting, much more “tell me anything’, and he generated virtually no ‘complete narratives’ but did provide material powerfully expressive of a particular dated situated subjectivity struggling against the failing of his narrative capacities, against a downward bio-mental trajectory……

It is the ‘would-be telling’ of the would-be narrator that is crucial for understanding subjectivity; a partly failed attempt, a frustrated will-to-tell, may tell as much or more about (perhaps awkwardly) dated situated subjectivity than would a perfectly successful seamless polished complete narration. Nicholson remarks:

The modification of the method to be responsive to the participants in the study evolved, and was related to the dynamic between myself and the participants. For some participants, ‘classic BNIM’ continued to be appropriate… For other participants, BNIM was supplemented by an open approach based on the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) approach (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) (Nicholson 2009: 91 slightly modified).

Jane Robertson (2010) in her research used a modified BNIM approach in respect of carers for people with dementia and non-BNIM conversations for the carees with dementia.

**A note on de facto and other ‘couple interviews’.** An interview that was planned to be with just one person suffering from some or other form of disability, or with family members who insist on attending, may turn into a ‘couple interview’ either from the start or after a point. How to interpret the consequent material is an open question. See also Bjornholt (2011) on quite deliberate couple interviews. For a further discussion, see p. **113** below.

**Younger people, too, may be problematic**. Froggett and her collaborators (2007) reported that biographical interview methods such as BNIM were on their own unsuccessful with a group of youth offenders for which filmed interaction was a more powerful method of study. She suggests a couple of possibilities:

The research team eventually concluded that an open interview style, while markedly different from social work or judicial interviews, offered too little containment for this group, especially in relation to anxieties about family relationships… it may also be that the production and performance of something like a life story required by BNIM-style interviews depends on a coherent identity narrative (however provisional) which these young people cannot easily achieve (Froggett 2007: 348; Froggett, Poursanidou and Farrier 2011). [[27]](#footnote-28)

Robert Hesketh has modified the BNIM introductory sub-session to enable young people with no experience of non-interrogative open-questions to respond to the method.

Haubl and Liebsch (2009) write very interestingly on methodological issues of facilitating good intersubjectivity in interviews with children. They argue that

Children have not yet fully developed the ability to share personal experiences with a stranger. … Hence an important precondition for a successful interview is the willingness of the adult interviewer to share a status reversal. While usually adults exchange the world to children, the particular situation of the interview asks for an atmosphere that convinces children that this time they are the knowledgeable ones . This is by no means an easy task… The ongoing effort to understand [their] meaning is, however, a mode of thinking that is constantly in danger of being abandoned hastily (Haubl and Liebsch 2009: 231).

Memory-work (Haug 1992) can elicit ‘image memories’, charged with desire and frustration, love and hate, but most people are resistant to accessing their ‘infantile perspectives’ and experiences. Instead most of us spontaneously start – for the most part leaving ‘images’ aside – with stories coherently commencing no earlier than the emergence of the self-storying self at or around primary school age. There are great personal and perhaps cultural variations, however, and certainly ethical problems.[[28]](#footnote-29)

To access childhood and early childhood memories of younger people and of vulnerable (older) people requires particular ethical and technical thought and modification, -- often modification as the interviewing proceeds from moment to moment -- and often legal clearance (the discussion on ethics in Volume V may be relevant here).

**Where the mother tongue of the interviewer and the interviewee are not the same**, **and an interpreter needs to be used,** then the quality of both interview and interpretation may become compromised. There is the start of a discussion – but only a start, like a Wikipedia ‘stub’ – in the Appendix dealing with this in Volume IV.

**In addition, interviewing people during a chronic or acute life crisis – or who have suffered such a crisis, especially recently** – requires great skill and great caution. The researcher needs to feel fully responsible for supporting those who are known to be psychologically vulnerable – or who reveal themselves as such during the interview.

See Rosenthal (2003) on how working with refugees from Kosovo forced her to re-think some aspects of *BNIM/Quatext* method (briefly summarised in Volume II. You need to be fully aware of how to reduce the danger that your interviewee runs of being inadvertently re-traumatised by an insensitive re-traumatising running of a BNIM (or any other) interview.[[29]](#footnote-30)

***Another difficult category: the already known interviewee with a habit of conversation****.*

One BNIM researcher emailed me recently (July 2012):

….I found that some participants, especially those who knew me struggled with my lack of ' questioning' and wanted to know why I wasn't asking the questions or would wait for me to interject. However great narratives came out of all of them….

*I replied*

I’m not at all surprised that people who knew you found it difficult to respond – “as if” they didn’t know you and especially vice-versa-- to the SQUIN which implicitly assumes non-knowledge. Where there is a known person and a habit of conversation, BNIM’s minimal-response professional questioning seems ‘unnatural’ in a way that is less so when the interviewees know that you don’t know them, and know that you are (just) a BNIM interview professional.

It is interesting that you managed to adapt flexibly and got great narratives from all of them. It would be worth, perhaps, in any methodological discussion in your discussion chapter dwelling on the special difficulties of ‘the interviewee being known and being already a conversation partner’, and on how you managed to get good narratives nonetheless.

To conclude, therefore, there are categories of people that with whom it is technically and ethically (and for under-age children, legally) ‘difficult’ to use BNIM interviewing .

This doesn’t mean that you should decide that you simply won’t explore the possibility.

It does mean that you should think particularly hard before you embark on a research project entailing such difficulties about how to guard against problems that might arise.

It also means that you should be particularly alert to such issues once you have started contacting people, and doing the interviews, and even about what and how you should use the results of such interviews in different forms of presentation and publication.

An example of a would-be BNIM subsession one or two not working can be found in an interview passage cited by Brannen (2013).

 I: *Uhuh. (pause 7) um (pause) and did your dad work long hours, was it hard work?*

 R: It was (inaudible) (Uhuh, uhuh) that time there there was no work, only on the farm (Yeah yeah) and there was no money. Nine shillings a week you used to get, dole money. (?) To feed seven of us.

 I: *Yeah yeah. I've spoken to some grandfathers about your age who have come over (pause) who came over to Ireland (?) and they didn't have electricity in the farm or -*

 R: No such thing. (No) No such thing as a tap in the house. (Yeah) All they had was turf for the fire. Everything was cooked on the fire.

 I: *Everything was cooked on the fire was it? Uhuh.*

 R: A turf fire.

 I: *Was it cold in the bedrooms when -*

 R: It certainly was (inaudible)

 I: *Yeah yeah.*

 R: They were all thatched roofs. Mostly all (?)

 I: *Thatched roofs, yes. And because your dad was working a lot, did he have other jobs or just on the farm?*

 R: Just on the farm.

 I*: Yeah yeah. Did that mean that you didn't see him much? Or were you able to see a bit of him?*

 R: I was only there until I was 14, going to school. (Yeah) After that I was gone away, working for the postman.

 I: *Yeah you worked on this other farm then and you had to leave home.*

 R: I had to leave home

(Brannen 2013)

The questions of the interviewer are (with the occasional exception) not of the sort that should be asked in BNIM subsession one or two. They are not-narrative questions.

From Brannen’s article, it is not possible to know whether this not-narrative and even anti-narrative line of questioning came out of the failure of story-indicing narrative-indicing uestions to produce anything at all (so that the interviewer had to jump to the equivalent of subsession 3 non-narrative questions) or whether the researcher didn’t have sufficient mastery of BNIM narrative questioning technique. [[30]](#footnote-31)

However, bear in mind that often you may have chosen somebody to interview (perhaps like Eamon) that seemed perfectly promising as a BNIM interviewee, and that, for whatever reason, it doesn’t work well. Maybe one or both of you weren’t in the right mood on the day, maybe there was a failure of technique on your part. All you can do is to make sure that you do practice interviews and self-training review of such interviews several times before you try your first sample interview, and, in any interview, think hard about what is not going right – even asking the interview in or after the interview to help you in this.

And since such ‘disappointing’ results may occur with anybody at any point, always interview several more people. If you need a sample of six, always get interviews with 9 people.

But do and carefully review several practice interviews before you do your first pilot interview, and do (and carefully review) at least one pilot interview before starting on your ‘real’ interviews….

You should never tire of reviewing ‘disappointing’ and ‘successful’ interviews. When you find yourself saying “I should never have interviewed them; they were clearly not the right type”, this can be a way of not seeing that you may have contributed to that result in a way that you don’t want to look at.

One way of learning from a disappointing interview is to do a post-interview interview with them, asking them how they felt about the interview and whether you could have done anything differently. (eventually see section 2.6. starting on p.494).

***1.3.4.5.2. Are there types of research purpose for which BNIM interviewing is a bad idea?***

The only *type of research purpose* for which BNIM-interpretation practice is *obviously* *irrelevant* is *any type of purpose in which the* *subjectivity of the subject is of minor or no concern* either in itself or even as data for some other concern.

*If you are interested in precise factual details of [types of] behavioural episodes already known to you,* and ‘witnessed’ by them, then …..don’t do BNIM-style minimally-structured open-narrative depth interviewing. Instead, for such purposes, do strongly-structured surface (perhaps tightly-prescribed narrative) interrogative interviewing.

BNIM interviewing is a tool for exploring historically-situated subjectivities and the lived experience of situations and processes over time. As such, it is or should be *irrelevant* to those who are not interested in individual or multi-individual dated situated subjectivity and lived experience. It is a tool for exploring the *deeper structures* of dated experiencing.

BNIM’s central focus is on understanding the (desiring and exploring but also inevitably limited and partly-defended) deeper structure and dynamic of the subjectivity-in-situation of the person narrating part or all of their history and the socio-historical situations and transitions that can be accessed by such biographic narrative interviews.[[31]](#footnote-32)

For those *not* particularly interested in the unique subjectivity and biographical specificity of particular people or categories, other methods of data collection and of interpretation may well be more appropriate.

In the *Sixth Narrative and Memory Conference* (Huddersfield UK April 2006), a strong case was made for ‘excited arguments between dialogue opponents’ as a way of exploring how ‘defended subjects’ deliver and defend against attack. For such research questions, the specificity of each subjectivity is of little or no interest, and recording and interpreting ‘excited forums’ may be a better way of answering research questions that are less individual-specific and more focused on present-centred ‘situated collective subjectivity’. Or it may not.

Certainly, those interviewing the aged and the infirm often find themselves in the presence of their would-be interviewee *plus a carer*. This makes exploring *confidentially* the experiencing of the cared-for-interviewee pretty close to….. almost impossible or plain impossible.

If you find yourself in such a situation in – for example – institutional or family cultures where you *cannot successfully insist* on a private confidential interview, you may be obliged to compromise. Either right at the start or after the private individual interview is manifestly not happening, you may have to develop skills of exciting a debate between carer and caree (perhaps acting as if you had intended such a mini-focus group action all along)

Don’t pretend there isn’t a carer (or other relevant person) in the room. Take advantage of the situation and provoke a (controlled by you) debate in which (even if the isolated subjectivity of the interviewee can’t emerge in the clinical isolation of the confidential BNIM individual interview) the *intersubjectivity of the dyad or multi-person group* can be provoked to emerge for inspection and interpretation (see, for example, Jerry Gale et al 1995, 2008; and also Nicholson 2009 dealing with the case of ‘Alfred and Elsie’).

But act in such a way as to minimise ‘bad repercussions afterwards’ between your focal interviewee and their ‘intimate’ people that you couldn’t get to leave your interview room! *The ethical is key.*

*Not everybody is interested in subjectivity (individual or collective).*

For example, some sociologists of a strict Durkheimian school do not want to understand ‘social facts’ by doing psychological exploration.[[32]](#footnote-33) Some texts of some contemporary sociologists come close to this at certain points in their argument. For example, Andrle (2001) in an otherwise useful and illuminating – though not always fully-informed – critical account of BNIM-type work declares his intention to critique “those narrativist approaches that claim or assume…a notion of the psychological subject”. [Curiously, an article he commends by Jones and Rupp is in fact the result of BNIM research, though he does not seem to realise this].

Despite Andrle’s strictures, however, I think *some notion of the (historically-) ‘situated subject’ is invariably inherent in any interesting social research,* as Cavalletto’s work now strongly suggests (2007)  *The only question is about its degree of sophistication and adequacy and the researcher’s reflexivity about the notion or model of situatedness and subject(ivity)being used.*

*Those who think they have no concept of the ‘psychological subject’ have just an under-examined one and therefore probably a too-simple one .[[33]](#footnote-34)*

Many sociologists *do* find depth-interview material relevant, even in the pursuit of relatively abstract ‘sociological theorising’ about situations in transition.

For example, Archer (2003) makes a persuasive case that the ‘realist social theory’ she advocates requires the clarification of ‘subjective self-talk’ (internal conversation) to understand the dialectic in historical time between the causal constraints and enablements of objective structures and the social action of persons forming and pursuing and modifying their concerns, projects and practices (see discussion on CR in Volume IV, starting p. **1244)**

Hence the importance of interview as one mode of accessing such present but particularly past ‘subjective self-talk’ (‘internal conversations’) – even if Archer neglects other methods.

For example, observational ones and documentation ones highlighted brilliantly by Dorothy Smith and her school of Institutional Ethnography (see e.g. Campbell and Gregor 2002; O’Neill 2011) of looking at observable practices of such persons pursuing and reflexively evaluating their projects-practices.

Most contemporary sociologists *are* interested in the ‘collective psychology’ that is often termed ‘subjective culture’ of families, groups, organizations, societies and historical transitions. Max Weber was particularly concerned with the social psychology of religions. Although often other sources of insight (e.g. ‘media’ and ‘observation’) may be seen to be as important or more important, and certainly as complementary, such a search for ‘historically-specific states of collective psychology’ can certainly use individual interviews.

However, both in psychology and in sociology, there are research purposes for which BNIM (and often any interview) is a waste of time.

Where the description of *mass* *behaviour* is concerned (not its understanding), then *mass observation* *and statistics* is called for, not individual depth interviews. Interviewing 10 Sainsbury shoppers (or all of them) will describe the mass of buying habits much less well than will interpreting the till receipts of 1,000,000 shoppers. The study of rational-action strategy (chess, military, economic) might be another – though Norman Dixon (1979) discusses the psychology of military incompetence.[[34]](#footnote-35)

In addition, it should be said that researchers using ‘polished’ biographical narratives (written out and corrected) are *not* likely to benefit from the core focus of BNIM – interpreting the telling of the told story -- since crucial to the understanding of subjectivity by way of BNIM is exploring the details and the whole form of the vocal and embodied expression of the *improvising of storying.[[35]](#footnote-36)*

Before you embark on mastering BNIM, make sure that what you want to study, describe and interpret is best served (at least in part) by some interviewing, by some narrative interviewing, and in particular by some of the type of narrative interviewing embodied in BNIM.

Bear in mind that complementary forms of non-BNIM interviewing and any other data-collecting and data-generating practice can be well-prepared-for and well-located in BNIM’s *third Sub-session* (p.**509** onwards).

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##### 1.3.4.5.3. Are you ready for the obstacles and difficulties of doing BNIM?

This section is in course of construction. It largely arises from my presentation to RC38 Conference in Lodz in three days time. Probably most of it will have to be moved to another place to avoid premature demoralisation BEFORE people have decided to learn BNIM. Maybe it should go into a Booklet Three, or something? How to be realistic but not demoralising? A light bite at the cherry, here, and then more detail in Vol.II and Vol.III is probably the best solution. Meanwhile, it is here as it is helping me gather my thoughts on’epistemological obstacles and emotional difficulties in learbing, doing, teaching BNIM’.

Anybody who wants to do BNIM research is in principle the right type of person in principle to do it. On the other hand, it is important to be sensitive to the typical difficulties and obstacles of using this method: I focus on the ones relatively specific to (a) open-narrative BNIM interviewing, and (b) twin-track future-blind complex BNIM case-interpretation.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.1. Engaging with human suffering

One BNIM trainee recently sent me a practice interview with a woman. In her notes on the interview, she noted

I was shocked about the story [she told] , so I refrained [from asking further questions about it, to get more story]. This happens to me often, I am a bit shy about intimate things or conflict situations (Maria Eugenia)

I found myself writing as follows:

A generality. If you interview people who have quite an amount of suffering in their life (i.e. most people, including her), then at least some (maybe most) of the potential [incident narratives] will be about experiences of suffering at the time or current regret. Trying to work through this may be at least part (maybe an important part, maybe the most important part) of why they have accepted to be interviewed.

If you don’t take up their leads towards ‘PINs of suffering’, you add to their current suffering (to be rather blunt and extreme about it), discouraging them in the future from starting to ’open up their personal history’ to others. This will result in ‘disappointment to yourself’ (but then you are the one who freely chose not to follow up the promising PIN-lead) but ‘discouragement for them’ which in my view is ethically more important (email , slightly modified).

Put more formally, my argument might be like this.

A) There is a lot of suffering and conflict, trouble and difficulty, in most people’s lives

B) BNIM asks for people’s life stories, or self-biographies of parts of their life

C) Sometimes – not always -- people agree to give up their time for BNIM interviews because, usually not very consciously, they need to work out some trouble or difficulty in their lives by talking about it.

D) You can never predict what unexpected ‘narratives of suffering and conflict’ your BNIM interview may provoke; your interviewees may know some of them in advance , but may be as surprised as you by others

E) If your interviewees themselves allude to or bring up such episodes, then you have an ethical obligation to over-ride your personal preferences for non-suffering, non-shock, and non-sadness to enable those allusions or difficult episodes to be talked about.

F) If you aren’t in principle prepared to learn to cope with narratives of suffering and conflict, then you should not set out to learn to do BNIM interviews. It will lead to technically-bad interviewing and ethically-bad behaviour, and may inflict further damage and suffering.

In the case of the BNIM trainee in question, she wrote that she had been unaware of her difficulty with narratives of suffering and conflict until she looked carefully at the transcript of the practice interview.

This may well be the case for many.

* The question is not whether you are aware before you start that you have difficulties in learning about or asking for more story about painful and difficult episodes and dimensions of other people’s lives.
* The question is whether you are determined to learn to recognise and cope with such resistances in yourself. If in principle you aren’t determined to do this, then you shouldn’t start learning to do BNIM interviews.

There is much more to be said and thought about such issues.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.2. Limited capacity to tolerate ‘opposing’ identifications and identities

Another point is that it is an advantage not to be fully identified with a particular ideological or cultural community in order to study it more sensitively .

If you are fully integrated into a given subcultural community – for the sake of argument, let us say a heterosexual one – then you may not be the best person to study ‘normative heterosexuality’. It may be better for you to use your BNIM interpretive powers on research into – staying with the example – a subcultural community opposed to the one you are in, such as a gay or lesbian community or category. You are more likely to pick up complexities of feeling and action which are denied or non-evident to members of that community. Thus Marxists should study members of the ruling class, black researchers should study ‘whiteness’, etc.

This is a rather extreme hypothesis, and I am unsure how strongly I think it is worth exploring. Certainly, it goes against ‘identity politics in research’ in which only the member of a category has the right or capacity to research members of that category. The advantages of at least ‘partial outsiderness’ should at least be considered!!

I wrote to one BNIM researcher something like this:

Being outside the direct rule of some particular normativity – e.g. of capitalist commonsense -- might enable a BNIM researcher to detect and understand ‘normative cases’ (e.g. business leaders and middle managers) and their contradictions and complex varieties in a way which would be more difficult for somebody pretty fully subordinated to that rule themselves. An at least partly ‘outsider interpretation’ working on the wealth of subjective insider material released by BNIM may be a strong combination…..

However, this is made a better strategy because of the wealth of material released by a BNIM interview where the researcher has pretty much no control over sub-session 1, and – provided that BNIM rules are obeyed – not very much control over sub-session 2. With other modes of interviewing – classic semi-structured interviewing – the ‘non-normative interviewer’ can reduce cognitive dissonance by strong intervention and interviewer interruptions, etc.

It is the strength of BNIM that the interviewer gives up a lot of control to the BNIM interviewee, and hence gets material of insider self-expression that they might compulsively and subtly impede if they had more control over content.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.3. Delaying gratification in the interview

Qualitative interviews typically take two simple and extreme forms:

(a) pre-structured by a number of interview-questions determined by prior theoretical-practical interests of the researcher (this is the fairly-structured depth interviews discussed in Wengraf (2001) – and this can be either asking for purely narrative answers to pre-structured ‘narrative-topic’ areas or asking for non-narrative answers as well as, or instead of, narrative ones or a mixture of both. The common feature is that the researcher’s ‘theory-questions’ determine a number of pre-set initial ‘topic-area questions’ (narrative and/or non-narrative)

(b) under-structured in which (aided or not by a pre-determined topic guide) the interviewer starts a ‘conversation’ in which he or she raises ‘issues that seem important to the interviewer’ as they emerge within the ‘conversation’. This is marked by a lot of turn-taking -- at least after the initial question has started to be answered – and a lot of ‘covert interruption’ by the interviewer. ‘Natural conversation’ variants of this involve phrases like “Isn’t the problem with your position that…” and “You haven’t mentioned X, but wouldn’t you agree that…”. These are beloved by talk-show hosts on the massifying media, but in less bullying forms can be part of (usually rather unequal) ‘natural conversations’.

The BNIM interview does not have one all-purpose session; it has three very distinct sub-session. It is only by delaying ratification in the first two sub-sessions that a higher level of ‘gratified knowledge’ can be achieved by the end of the third sub-session.

‘Natural conversation’ and the asking of ‘any sort of question’ and ‘free flow’ is only allowed in sub-session three. This is very frustrating, since all the narrative and other material that emerges in the first two sub-sessions stimulates any number of ‘further non-narrative questions’ in your mind, and you aren’t allowed to put them until sub-session three! That material even stimulates some narrative questions in your mind – e.g. about topics they haven’t raised -- which you also aren’t allowed to ask until sub-session three.

The narrative-only part is itself divided into two sub-sessions, and each has rules that engender their own frustrations.

In the first sub-session you can only ask one initial open-narrative question – the SQUIN – and after that you can ask no further questions and give no further guidance as to its answering until the end of the meandering response, however long it takes and in whichever direction it meanders. No ‘follow-up questions’ at all can be out in this first sub-session, and any desire in yourself to ‘direct or guide’ the interviewee away from his or her lengthy irrelevancy…. must be quashed. You can see how frustrating this must be!

In the second sub-session, still only narrative questions can be asked and they can only be asked on the basis of cue-phrases previously used. Topics not mentioned previously – however obvious and urgent they seem to you – cannot be mentioned in sub-session two: they are reserved for sub-session three. The topics that have been mentioned *can* be asked about, but only using the cue-phrases used by the interviewee and only in the order in which they occur in the talk. You have to keep clear cue-phrase notes both on the actual cue-phrases used and on the precise sequence in which they were used. You can then ask questions (only ‘more narrative, please!’ questions) about them, but only in sequence. You can miss cue-phrases out, but once you’ve passed them you can’t go back to earlier ones. And, as I said before, all the non-narrative questions that arise in your mind as all this goes on cannot be asked or even hinted at: they all must be postponed to sub-session three.

As I said, gratification of the desire to ask the questions that come up as you think of them has to be very firmly delayed for the methodology to work. And, until you’ve done one such interview sticking to the rules, you have no previous experience to offset your frustration.

There is one good thing, however. By looking at the transcript of your BNIM sub-sessions one and two carefully, it is easy for you to see how the rules have been broken – particularly with free tutorial help on your pilot interview.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.4. Delaying gratification in the interpretation

The BNIM interview has three sub-sessions, and you have relative freedom after the end of the second sub-session. You see the results quite quickly after the end of sub-session three when you review the situation.

The BNIM interpretation protocol has not three but eight steps, and you only have relative freedom after the end of the seventh step, after you have completed the ‘History of the Case Evolution’ and are just about to start on your final ‘Case-Account’.

The writing up takes the form of separate interpretive effort along two tracks and three columns. The first track might be called ‘Objective Data Analysis’ and the second ditto ‘Subjective/Perspectives Data Analysis’.

The second track, Subjective Data Analysis’ is itself divided into two different activities: an analysis of the flow of the telling in the interview (TFA) and an interpretation of the phases of successive states of subjectivity (SSS) in the life.

This generates a summary of the first six (analytic) steps in 3 columns, and then these are the basis for writing the History of the Case Evolution and the eventual Case-Account. Typically, these two final case-description steps form the basis of any non-methodological publication of your work.

The first six steps of the BNIM interpretation are as sharply distinguished as the sessions of BNIM interviewing. Problem. There are six of them and not three. Problem. It is much harder to distinguish whether you are writing up the three columns properly or not. It is hard to learn the three ‘unnaturally constrained genres’ of writing up models describing ‘phases of the objective lived life’ (with close-to-zero subjectivity), describing phases of the telling of the told story (with close to zero reference to objective reality) and, finally, describing phases of the successive states of subjectivity (also with close to zero reference to objective reality).

While the interview is going on, qualitative researchers want to ask *all* the questions that arise *when* they arise *in the form* that they arise. And have to systematically frustrate that until at least sub-session three.

While the interpretation is going on, qualitative researchers want to use their rich data straight away and write *all* the interpretations that arise, *when* they arise, and in the *form*  that they arise. They want to interpret on the basis of the transcript – and are required to process the data twice and then work most of the time only on the processed data – and they are required to think and write quite differently to produce their three column analytical summaries. The case-synthesis steps (the last two of eight) are what they want to do straight away and what they find themselves serruptitiously doing even when they are trying to write up the ‘three unnaturally constrained genres’.

In addition (and this is starting to feel like a real horror story; I’m surprised that most people enjoy it so much) they have to learn how to run BNIM kickstart panels (with 4-5 people) and take what they say seriously, joining in the synergy, which for introverts amongst us (I include myself) takes a bit of doing.

They also have to use disciplined imagination (imaginatives hate having to be disciplined; disciplinarians hate having to imagine) in the panels and afterwards on their own. Positivists who want to ‘stick to the facts’ have to advance ‘speculative hypotheses’; ‘holistic interpreters’ are kept getting brought back to the facts: “a brilliant theory spoiled by a measly nasty fact”.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.5. Capacity for delayed gratification - general

###### 1.3.4.5.3.6. Controlling for subtle difference of states of mind and required practices: reflexivity and self-correction

**Your readiness for complex shifts and combinations in your own state of mind, and BNIM practice**

A different point. At different moments of BNIM interview and interpretation procedured practice, BNIM calls on ‘particular states of mind’ (and shifts and combinations of different states of mind) which not everybody finds at first not easy to ‘get into’.

I’ve recently read what I think is a brilliantly illuminating text about the difficult and asymmetric workings of the divided brain (McGilchrist 2009). It suggests to me that some of the personal difficulties that we as individual researchers have in ‘doing BNIM’ can be traced to the unsmooth functioning of the types of brainwork that the methodology calls on us to do at different moments of BNIM interviewing and especially of BNIM interpretation

Technically, if you were to have had serious damage to (or removal of) either your left or your right brain-hemisphere, you would not be able to do the full range of things that BNIM asks you to do…. This is unlikely to be the case. However, what might be the case particularly in the current ‘Western world’ according to Gilchrist is that you have a working epistemology (and, if you are unlucky, a dogmatic explicit epistemological theory, which will definitely make your practice worse) that does not invoke the fluid constant re-balancing and re-hierarchisation of left and right brain functions.

On the other hand, learning to do BNIM is likely to help in developing your personal capacity to do just such balancing and appropriate hierarchisation not only for BNIM but in other spheres of practice and relationship.

I hope to clarify these issues further – after reading and digesting the ‘sense of the whole’ provided by Gilchrist. For the moment, if you have time and opportunity – his book is well-written but lengthy and not always easy to assimilate for those like myself with no knowledge of brain physiology at all – I strongly recommend his work as a way of making sense of the ‘experience of doing BNIM’.

Sensing one’s own difficulties – and those of other people – in learning and engaging in a new complex practice – and treating them as explicable in terms of ‘states of mind/brain’ is rather unusual. However, developing such well-informed reflexivity about one’s wn learning and operating processes can be an invaluable asset!

You can then choose to engage in epistemologies and practices -- like BNIM, it turns out – which foster optimum left-brain/right-brain coordination, and make sense of what happens when you fail to do so.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.7. *Summary of a few of the obstacles and difficulties*

A readiness to cope with unexpected states of suffering in yourself and in others is one capacity you need before you start doing BNIM interviews, or one that you must be ready to develop if you are not to harm your interviewees…. and spoil your own research.

Similarly, ‘doing BNIM’ – both the interviewing and the interpretation – requires quite complicated shifts and movements of ‘states of mind’, including the capacity for ‘not quite knowing what is going on’ and ‘letting things settle of their own accord’, while trying to note such processes going on in you and the others around you.

###### 1.3.4.5.3.8. The enhanced richness provided by disciplined imagination and ‘unnatural self-constraint’

Both for the eventual richness of interview material thrown up by the disciplines of three-subsession BNIM interviewing and for the eventual richness of interpretive understanding thrown up by the disciplines involved in the panel-aided the ‘six steps’ of interpreting case-material, mostof those who have completed one BNIM interview and interpreted according to the protocol acknowledge its power and value.

‘Unnatural self-constraint’ is something which is difficult to acquire – both epistemologically and emotionally – and understanding the obstacles and difficulties in yourself is the only way to progress.

Unfortunately, the proof is only at the end of a long period of delayed gratification in the construction of your first genuinely successful pudding – or at least the appreciation of other people’s puddings who in the past followed something like the same recipe!

If you interrupt a joke before it’s fully told, the joke collapses. If you interrupt a complex pudding-making before all the preparation-processes are complete and it’s fully cooked…….?

On the other hand, if you let the joke unroll to its end, then you do see the point. If you complete the multiple preparations for a complex elaborate dish, and then serve the dish, the result can be amazingly gratifying.

Delayed gratification and learning the un-natural can be a positive advance, and you acquire news kills of writing and new ways of seeing.

### 1.3.5. BNIM Resources other than this Guide

A **dedicated e-mail list** on “Biographic-narrative-BNIM” at [www.jiscmail.ac.uk](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk)>. was set up in 2002 and continues to provide a basis for ongoing discussion and mutual peer support.

**Do join** and consult the archives, and get discussed what BNIM-questions you want to have discussed!

**Write to me to join the list**: [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).

#### 1.3.5.1. Trainings and individual tutorial feedback

***1.3.5.1.1. BNIM ‘Tasters’ and 5-day training courses***

These have been run in at different places in the UK, in Ireland (Belfast, Dublin, and Galway), in the USA (New York), in Slovenia (Ljubljana), in Rwanda (Kigale), in New Zealand (Auckland) and Australia (Sydney). Sessions have been run under the aegis of departments or research centres in several universities: Birkbeck; Central Lancashire; Dublin City University; East London; Middlesex; the Teagasc Rural Economy Research Centre and the National University of Ireland Galway; Newcastle; New South Wales; Oxford Brookes; the Open University; Queens University Belfast; Plymouth; Surrey; Swansea; Ulster, the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (Trinity College, Ireland), and under the aegis of the Tavistock Institute in London and the UK Economic and Social Research Council’s NCRM (National Council for Research Methods).

In 2008, ‘Tasters’ (two-day or less) were held in Southampton, Belfast, Coleraine and Galway. ‘5-day intensives’ took place in London in January, March, May, and June and November, and another in Queens University Belfast in September.

In 2009, further 5-day intensives took place in March, June and October in London, and another in October at the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (Trinity College, Dublin). Another took place in mid-November (arranged by the National University of Ireland - Galway, and the Teagasc Rural Economy Research Centre).

In 2010 further BNIM 5-day trainings took place in January, March, and October,. Shorter one-day or two-day workshops took place in the Grand Canaria (in Spanish) in May, and in Dublin in a DCU summer-school in June.

In 2011, two five-day trainings took place in January/February and in June, one under the aegis of the Tavistock Clinic in London, and a further one in October. A one-day ‘taster’ (in French) was held in Paris in April.

In 2012, three 5-day trainings in London (January, June, October) , and one in Coimbra (Portugal).

In 2013, three 5-day trainings in London (January, June, October) , and maybe others by arrangement to be arranged!

##### 1.3.5.1.2. Further tutorial feedback (see 1.3.6. below)

***1.3.5.2. Textbook + complementary BNIM resources***

A textbook has been published (Tom Wengraf. 2001. *Qualitative research interviewing: biographic-narrative and semi-structured method.* Sage Publications). Its technical detail and exercises complement the *Guide* that you are reading at the moment. especially in respect of doing BNIM interpretation.

In order to see what are the outputs of working with BNIM, we recommend that you look at the studies in Bibliography A. Some are available as free downloads.

For further information about training, see the end of the Detailed Manual Volume V (p.**1415** onwards) and/or contact [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).

**1.3.5.3. Other non-BNIM resources**

There are a plethora of other resources in respect of biographic-narrative and other psycho-social research work. A few that come to mind are suggested below:

You might want to subscribe to [narrative-health-research@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:narrative-health-research@jiscmail.ac.uk) or the [biog-methods@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:biog-methods@jiscmail.ac.uk) or the rather more general list devoted to ‘performance’- in social research, [performsocsci@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:performsocsci@jiscmail.ac.uk).

The very vigorous German tradition stemming from Schutze (of which BNIM is an anglophone off-shoot / derivation) often publishes work in English in the free-access on-line electronic journal ***FQS***. Many items in Bibliography A of this *BNIM Detailed Manual* are available there. Go to

<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/index>

There are large and vigorous biographical sections in the European Sociological Association and in the International Sociological Association (*RC 38 Biography and Society*: [*biography-and-society@gmx.de*](mailto:biography-and-society@gmx.de)*.*

There is now also a British Sociological Association study group on Sociology, Psychoanalysis and the Psychosocial, very suitable for ‘psycho-societal approach’ that is particularly compatible with using BNIM to the full. . This group is established as of mid-2011. <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/specialisms/spp.htm>

In France, and in French, there is the Association Francaise de Sociologie RT 22. <http://www.afs-socio.fr/rt22.html>, but Google can translate it for you.

In addition, there are strong sympathetic currents within psychology, especially the critical psychology branch – see particularly Hollway and Jefferson (2000, 2013). A good start might be <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_psychology>.

A UK Psycho-Social/societal Network is emerging, with a potential ‘methodologies’ sub-group (join in!). For the P-S Network, see <http://www.psychosocial-network.org/>.

The Centre for Narrative Research (CNR) at the University of East London [centrefornarrativeresearch@listserv.uel.ac.uk](mailto:centrefornarrativeresearch@listserv.uel.ac.uk) also has interesting news and postings, though biographic-narrative is not its main focus.

There is also a Dutch Network for Narrative Research (Nederlands Netwerk voor Narratief Onderzoek) – in both Dutch (mostly) and English. Check it out in Google.

I argue for the importance of a full-spectrum psycho-societal approach for studying /situated subjectivities/subjectively experienced and acted-in situations/ in the polemical appendix later on in Volume IV p. **4.6.2. Fully psycho-societal or…. self-weakening** ‘part-models in denial’: sociologies and psychologies?

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### 1.3.6. Tutored Self-Training, this Guide and this Manual

This *Guide* should be of interest to those with no knowledge and experience of the method. Sections 1.2 – 1.5 should provide such an account.

There then follows the *Detailed Manuals.*  Their function is to serve those using or starting to use the method who are interested in some of the lessons learnt by BNIM-users with whom they are not in contact.

* Volume II on BNIM interviewing. This supplements *Wengraf QRI: chapter 6*;
* Volume III on BNIM interpretation. This supplements *Wengraf QRI: chapter 12.*

This SG+DM is updated regularly on the basis of people’s experiences in BNIM research trainings and research practice. Given that it is free, you can easily avoid using an out-of-date version. If the copy you are reading is dated more than six to twelve months ago, -- the date is on the cover page of this *Guide* -- contact me for the most recent free electronic version. [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).

A warning: the *Guide and the Manual* have been and continue to be written over more than a decade. Within the text, you may find shifts of perspective and definition which are not fully clear. This may well be because I haven’t noticed these shifts myself (the ones I *have* managed to notice, I signal explicitly in the text, but I’m sure there are others).

Think of *BNIM as an ‘area of situated practice’* which different bits of this text view from slightly different vantage points and historical moments within the past decade.

Ideally, I would have created a finished completely coherent text. In practice, this is a loose baggy post-modernist construction under construction, from which you will need to extract not a coherence-in-itself for all who use it, but a this-time-round coherence/usability-for-you.

I am constantly trying to improve and develop this text. Parts become clearer; other parts become more obscure. And then, in the next update, things change again. I apologise for the repetitions and contradictions…………..If there are any particular things that for you do not fit together at all, then it would be a great favour if you could write and let me know, so that I can try to respond and clarify the issue as far as I can. Do not adjust your (mental) set: there may well be a fault in reality!

*There is a fair degree of repetition and probably divergences between and even within sections.*

This is because – in the Detailed Manual and Appendices Sections – people look up different bits one at a time, and some common points get reiterated because they are necessary for the understanding of each section.

This is also because the text as a whole is roughly equivalent to four 100,000 word books put together – more than three times the length of my 2001 textbook – and remembering what has been written already somewhere in the four books is…. Bloody difficult.

And because I tighten up the text *relatively speaking* only in the summer vacations! In between, I add things!

On how we can support your self-training in BNIM interviewing, see Volume II 1.3.7.2 below and p.**546**

On how we can support your self-training in BNIM interpretation, see Volume III, 1.3.7.3. below and p.**666**

*1.3.6.1. Learning about an artificial practice from a text?*

Like any interview, BNIM is ‘artificial’ compared to spontaneous conversation, and, until you get used to it, BNIM will feel ‘more artificial’ than other genres that you have practised and that have therefore by this time become experienced by you and others as ‘non-artificial’.

There are different strengths and weaknesses of collecting ‘spontaneous talk and ordinary conversation’ and of creating the ‘artificial situations’ of different types of carefully structured interview: complementary, neither are ‘replacements’ for the other. See e.g. Greenhalgh et al 2005. This  *Short Guide and Detailed Manual* and the associated textbook (Wengraf 2001) explores a particular type of ‘special conversation situation’ and a particular way of interpreting the material generated there. [[36]](#footnote-37)

Much scientific advance depends on inventing new technologies for generating special sorts of data and interpretive procedures – this is obvious in the natural sciences, and those qualitative researchers who wish to ‘rule out’ such artificialities in social research are limiting what they can achieve as social researchers. The same is true about the acquisition and improvement of concepts as it is about technologies.

Writing about a computer-aided software programme *Atlas-ti,*  Konopasek (2008) writes about *data-interpretation (reading*) as follows.

How is a new quality…, which we call "sociological understanding", created during the process of qualitative analysis [data-generation and data-interpretation, TW]? A methodological (conventional) answer to this question usually speaks of mental processes and conceptual work. This paper suggests a different view—sociological rather than methodological; or more precisely a view inspired by a contemporary sociology of science. It describes qualitative analysis [and data-collection and processing, TW] as a set of material practices. [These worlds of constructed and linked different procedures can be seen as] *complex virtual environments* for embodied and practice-based *knowledge-making*. (Konopasek 2008, italics added)

[In the square brackets, I add that a new quality of ‘understanding’ is also generated in the material practices and procedures of BNIM *data-generation*]:

BNIM is like that. To acquire a new perspective and to *practice differently* in the well-trodden field of semi-structured depth interviewing is not easy, and requires what cannot avoid first being experienced as a determinedly-unnatural practice.

To learn about BNIM through reading a text like this *Guide* together with the relevant chapters of the textbook *Qualitative research interviewing* (Wengraf 2001) requires an effort of the imagination in the acquiring of a new disciplined practice.

The BNIM perspective or mind-set is best encountered through a text by the *stressing of* *those ‘rules of BNIM practice’ which make it different from other practices* of interviewing and interview interpretation.

In the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, grasping and obeying such rules (however uncomfortable) gives a chance for a new ‘habitus’ (or sub-habitus?) to start happening in you that you can add to, or integrate into , your portfolio (I know that Bourdieu would hate what he would see as a mis-use of his concept!). *The discomfort you will feel in starting to do this (conceptual, psychological) is a mark of the difficult and hesitant growth of such a new (sub) habitus, which will become comfortable only later.*

*This growth of a new usable sub-habitus* is what this text attempts to support.

As in the 2001 textbook, I have used real and occasionally imaginary examples of ‘bad practice’ to make it easier for the reader to see what the generalisations are driving at, and to indicate what a ‘reasonable misinterpretation’ might produce, apparently close to what is wanted but, actually, significantly different. My methodological guide here as elsewhere has been the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s dictum that “truth emerges from corrected error” (Bachelard 2006). [[37]](#footnote-38)

I am very grateful to all those who – over the last 10 years or so -- have come on BNIM trainings and shared both positive and negative experiences of doing BNIM.

Any value that the *Guide* may have comes from that ‘data-base’ of particular BNIM incidents and our struggles to interpret and understand them better. [[38]](#footnote-39)

Self-training is crucial in acquiring a new ‘material practice’ and I provide support for this, both in running the 5-day BNIM intensives to start you off on self-training and in supporting tutored self-training where you are not in a position to attend a 5-day intensive.

Many people have been entirely self-tutored, working originally from the textbook (and references) and then from both textbook and earlier editions of this SG+DM.

Before I outline below the tutorial support I offer free to any reader of the SG+DM, which for many people is sufficient, I want to indicate the further tutorial feedback facility I offer for anybody who completes the 5-day BNIM intensive: the basic level is included in the course fee; the advanced level, which takes you all the way through your first case, is highly intensive but costs.

Remember: the key to understanding is a succession of mini-practices prepared and supported by (i) reading of the relevant sections *on that practice* of the Detailed Manual, before and after the practice; (ii) after the practice, getting detailed feedback from me (or somebody else who has been using BNIM, or both) on the record of that mini-practice.

I now discuss what this means in practice.

#### 1.3.6.2. Further Tutorial Feedback Facility (on drafts up to case-account level)

The cost of the BNIM 5-day trainings include post-training free feedback on trainees’

* first practice and pilot interviews – via inspection of transcript and notes
* draft BDC and draft sequentialisation (of the first 4 pages of transcript)

In 2012 rather by accident, for one post-trainee I agreed to provide considerable additional feedback on one or more trainee drafts of her

* full Sequentialisation of the full sub-session 1 interview (TSS)
* the Biographical Data Analysis – both process and structural pattern
* the TFA, Teller Flow Analysis - both process and structural pattern
* the Successive Subjectivity model -
* Case-Analysis, both (HCE) History of the Case Evolution (case phases) and structural pattern

All those who start using BNIM find difficulty in the subtly-different types of writing/thinking required in each stage of the BNIM interpretive process. Knowledgeable feedback on draft versions of each type of writing/interpretation is very powerful in maintaining the relevant level of awareness and separate focus.

Since the feedback dialogue with the post-trainee on her drafts of each of the stages and sub-stages proved powerful and effective in enabling her successful full completion of the BNIM interpretation procedure, I’ve decided to explore providing this ‘Further Tutorial Feedback to Case Account level’ as a facility available for others who have completed a BNIM 5-day training.

In 2012-13, given the amount of work involved, the cost of this Further Tutorial Feedback facility – should anybody want it -- is £600.

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#### 1.3.6.3. Tutored Self-training in interviewing – 2 practice interviews

Before you do your first ‘pilot’ interview – with your own self-designed SQUIN for your own research project and CRQ on somebody fittin g your sample criteria – it is a good idea to do two (or at least one) ‘practice’ interviews.[[39]](#footnote-40)

For self-training, find somebody who is not very well-known to you and who is not a very ‘significant other’. This way, you will both know that your ignorance of their life and story is genuine and not faked. You will also have to engage in ‘talking with them in a different way’ from a way already well-established between you. Frame it as an experiment. Reassure them that you are perfectly happy with them not-answering any question they don’t like (this latter is true of all BNIM interviews).

It is definitely best to do a first ‘generic practice’ *whole life-story* interview (see later on for details) with no more than 10 mins max for Sub-session 1 and 20 minutes max for Sub-session 2. After you have received feedback on that, I recommend a second ‘generic practice’ interview, still with 10 minutes maximm for Sub-session 1 but now with 40 or at the most 60 minutes for Sub-session 2. [[40]](#footnote-41)

In your practice interviews, after the end of Sub-session Two, still recording, you might wish to ask a question about their experience of the interview, including how comfortable they felt with your SQUIN, and any points they wish you had taken up but didn’t actually ask them about.

I recently wrote to a researcher who had just finished a training as follows:

There is a section in the current SG+DM which should clarify this – section 2.11 “How do we support”, and you can back this up by section 1.3.7.2. This also tells you what you should send to me.

For your first practice interview, allow 30-45 minutes in all + a feedback session, so count an hour. You may not use it all.

Preferably do a 5-10 minute subsession 1; a 2-5 minute interlude; and then no less than 25-35 minute sub session 2. The skills you are trying to develop are (i) note-taking of cue phrases throughout, (ii) selecting and asking and following up chosen narrative questions. There is a timetable in BNIM Brochure One that you could use.

And then have a feedback session (if possible record this too) in which your interviewee gives you feedback on her experiencing of the interview. You can treat it like a mini-BNIM interview (A) or just like an attentive conversation (B).

(A) Try to make it the equivalent of a sub-session 1 of the ‘whole life’… Only when they’ve finished ask any further question s or responses that you may have.

(B) You will have questions you want to ask her arising out of your experience of being the interviewer, but I would keep your questions back as far as possible (a sort of sub-session 3) until the interviewee has raised the points and the experience that s/he alone can raise. (end of email July 2011).

A) Do a *verbatim transcript* of both Sub-sessions.

* The interviewer’s interventions should be in *italics*.
* If you have any retrospective comments on the interview at particular points, if working in WORD use its facility for inserting numbered ‘Comments’.

B) Write up *your four sets* *of field-notes* on your experience of the interview, in itself and in the light of what you wanted it to do, as per discussion below starting on p.**543.**

**B.1.** Field-notes produced immediately after the interview

**B.2**. Field-notes produced while doing the transcribing

**B.3**. Field-notes produced while writing up the polished version of the cue-phrase notes that you took during the interviewing (see C below).

**B**.**4.** Field-notes produced while reflecting on B.1, B.2, and B.3

C) In addition, produce a clear *polished version of the cue-phrase notes* you took during Sub-session One and sub session 2, so that it is clear (i) what items you noted, and (ii) what items you chose to follow up in Sub-session 2 both from the items in Sub-session One and from further responses in Sub-session Two. See p.**135** onwards.

**An example of ‘polished cue-phrase interview notes’ is on p. 465.**

**Then send: (a) the transcript; (b) those ‘polished interview notes’ of the two Sub-sessions, and** **(c) your fieldnotes (B.1, B.2, B3)** …..to me at [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).

Please note, *without the polished version of the cue-phrase notes and the field-notes (B.1-B.4), I cannot comment on your transcripts.*

I will then give you a quick feedback on your interviewing practice. People who do this find this a great help for identifying the inevitable errors that arise when you start a new practice.

***After practicing BNIM generics, then move towards your first pilot interview: draft a SQUIN and send it to me for comments:***

After such detailed feedback on your whole-life practice interview, you will then be in a position to draft a SQUIN to do a pilot interview for your own research. Send me the draft SQUIN (filling out the form in the SQUIN drafting appendix starting on p.**562**). I will send you feedback.

**For the ‘pilot interview’ of normal length (budget for 2 hours),** you can also get feedback by sending me both the form in the SQUIN Drafting Appendix (p.1031), and the 3 items (A,B,C) above.

**Section 2.11 of the Detailed Manual is “How do we support your training in BNIM interviewing” and should also be read.**

#### 1.3.6.4.Tutored Self-training in interpretation

From the transcript of the interview of which you have selected to do a pilot interpretation, extract a BDC and a TSS (sequentialisation). These terms will become meaningful later. Don’t go beyond this yet.

**Send me the transcript and the draft of your Biographical Data Chronology**  I will give you feedback on this.

Once you have done a good Biographical Data Chronology (BDC) and Sequentialisation (TSS), **then do a BDA panel and send me your notes on the panel**. I will give you feedback.

Once you have mastered the craft of doing a BDA, then use the sequentialisation (TSS) as a basis for **doing a Teller Flow Analysis (TFA panel), and send me your notes on the panel**. I can give you feedback on that.

There are later stages, but doing these basics well are the precondition for getting top value from interpretation.

Don’t jump stages: in particular keep your generic *practice* interview quite separate from your own research’s *pilot* interview. Get feedback on the first before you run the danger of ‘wasting’ a good ‘pilot informant’ by not having learnt to do BNIM interviewing on someone else beforehand.

***Further Tutorial Feedback Facility***

***(2012 onwards)***

The feedback I give on the above basis to anybody who writes in is necessarily limited.

If you complete a 5-day BNIM intensive training, the course fee entitles you to a much more detailed level of free support, and also to request a Further Tutorial Feedback Facility which supports your movement through the stages of BNIM interpretation.

If you are interested in the details of the BNIM 5-day intensive, see below p.**1415**

If you are interested in the post-training further feedback facilities, see p.**131** above.

*1.3.6.5. Introduction to the structure of this Guide*

Below, I give a brief account of BNIM interviewing and interpretation. If this is your first encounter with BNIM, do ignore the footnotes on your first run. This is the Brief Account. There are very short summaries in section

Then, in the **separate Detailed Manual Volumes** (starting on p. **276**), I look at each in more detail. You would need to do this if you are seriously thinking of trying to ‘do’ BNIM, instead of just ‘knowing about’ BNIM.

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### 1.3.7. Relation of BNIM interpreting to BNIM interviewing material

What is the relation between BNIM interviewing procedure and BNIM interpretation procedure?

The BNIM method of narrative interviewing is one which, if followed, is likely to provide you with a relatively coherent *‘Whole Story’ or ‘Long Narration’* (a Report) *together with* a *relatively large number of recalled and deepened ‘particular incident narratives’ (PINs). [[41]](#footnote-42)*

The *Long Narration* is generated within the first Sub-session. A few recalled Particular Incident Narratives (PINs) will typically be spontaneously inserted within that long narration*.*

*The majority of Particular Incident Narratives PINs* will, however, -- as a result of your PIN-seeking questions -- be brought up afterwards and probed for more detail in the second Sub-session.

Overall in all three Sub-sessions, BNIM interviewing also evokes past and present personal Descriptions, Theorising Argumentations, as well as Evaluations. An interviewee’s Evaluations are value-lessons or ‘morals’ (often in the form of ‘mottos’) of his or her Whole Story and of particular sub-stories (PINs: particular incident narratives) in, and aspects of, that Whole Story. [[42]](#footnote-43)

Bear in mind that BNIM narrative-questioning always produces and should produce much more than just narrative material.

This provides rich material for any method of narrative or more general qualitative interpretation. There are many methods of interpreting qualitative material: the BNIM procedures are just one . For some or all of your BNIM interviewees, you may not use all or any of the BNIM interpretation procedures (see p.Error! Bookmark not defined. for a discussion of strategies).

*It is perfectly possible for you to generate material by way of the BNIM interview, but then decide to use a non-BNIM way of interpreting some or all of that material*[[43]](#footnote-44).

The opposite is not quite as true.

To work at its best, to produce the understandings of historically-dated-situated subjectivity (or historical transitions and situations as and through their processing by such subjectivity) that is its target to deliver, the BNIM method of narrative interpretation requires the material on which it works to be generated by two the Sub-session interviews that seek to generate *uninterrupted free-form improvisation of ‘Freely-Formed Whole Story + Particular Incident Narratives’.*

BNIM interpretation procedure works best on material generated in BNIM or BNIM-like interviews.

Why?

If you have generated narrative interviews in which there is a lot of guidance and a lot of structuring and micro-management by the interviewer at the beginning and/or especially during the course of the interview, then such *interviewer-structured material* is not best interpreted using BNIM procedures (which is not to say that no value can be gained by using them).

It may generate as much insight into the (professional?) subjectivity of the interviewer as into that of the interviewee: especially if you are the interviewer, disentangling the interaction of the two subjectivities can be very difficult, and sometimes close to impossible! So it can be reduced to providing ‘quotable quotes’ . The validity of any conclusions about such quotable quotes is unreliable.

In BNIM terms, the *micro-managed interview and text* subsequently produced is too much of an *equal co-production* of the interviewee and interviewer to be a clear guide to the expression of the interviewee’s dated-situated subjectivity not-interfered-with.

In particular *the sequence of topics (and even the timing of that sequence of topics) is determined by the non-BNIM interviewer* (“Thanks, I’d now like to ask you about something that you haven’t mentioned but that would be helpful for my research to know about…”) and *not by the interviewee*.

In BNIM interviewing , we have the content of any particular narrations as rich material for understanding. This we would get from any narrative interviewing methodology. But with BNIM, we also have something else.

In the *micro-managed non-BNIM* *narrative interview*, the researcher cannot obtain insight through understanding the interviewee’s particular free-form improvising, because it is the questioner that determines the movement of the form. The form is not free.

However, from BNIM, as well as the content we get also the free-form ‘unconstrained self-managing of topic-changing and time-determining’ by the interviewee.

*This freeform-structure is the ‘something else’*. This provides crucial insights into that subjectivity not available to many other forms of interviewing. The form is free, and so we can learn about dated-situated subjectivity from that improvisation of form. [For an exercise which may suggest that significance of the pattern of the interviewee’s freely improvised topic-sequencing of their Whole Story, see p. **801** onwards]. There is free expression of both content and form: ‘free-form and free-trivia’, as was said earlier in this text.

Researchers using ‘rehearsed’ or ‘polished’ biographical narratives (written out and corrected, or even learnt by heart) are not likely to benefit from the core focus of BNIM – the telling of the told story – since BNIM’s understanding of subjectivity is achieved by exploring its vocal and embodied expression in *improvised* storying.[[44]](#footnote-45)

We think that in terms of understanding *‘subjectivity-as-formed-by-and-as-formative-of-historical-situation’* – we could as well say in situational-analysis terms (Clarke 2005) – *‘a flow of historical situation [a conjuncture] as perhaps witnessed and experienced and affecting and partially affected) by a particular subjectivity’* -- the BNIM interview [interpreted by using *inter alia* the package of BNIM procedures] is a powerful and delicately sensitive tool (though by no means the only one nor the best for all purposes and conditions).

Final point. The task of improvising within the context of the open-narrative requested by the SQUIN shows itself in the revealing shifts and moves, incoherences and struggles for coherence, revealed in the transcript. A key component of the material needed is therefore *a verbatim transcript, not a polished one* .

Just as it is not appropriate for BNIM interpretation to work with a polished and prepared autobiographical essay, to a lesser but still crucially significant extent, it is inappropriate to work with an autobiographical transcript ‘polished’ either by the transcriber or by the interviewee ‘smartening up’ their autobiography. For BNIM interpretation purposes, the transcript needs to be an *UNsmartened-up* verbatim transcript of an *improvised* interview done under BNIM rules.[[45]](#footnote-46)

A caveat.

So far, and probably for the foreseeable future, BNIM interpretive procedures – like most qualitative interview interpretation procedures – are focused on the transcript, and works with the transcript or indirect data processed mostly (but not entirely) from the transcript. This in no way precludes --- and indeed should support you in – going back to audio and/or visual records of the interview to enrich and correct transcript-based understandings of the interview. I devote a whole appendix to this ‘periodic return to the audio-tape/video-tape’ (with digital recording there are no ‘tapes’ but the word contrasts nicely with the word ‘transcript’).

You cannot be running and re-running audio or video tapes of an interview to examine different bits of them separately or together as often as you can ‘inspect/immerse yourself in’ the transcript. Hence, with longish interviews (and qualitative interviews like BNIM are typically not-short), transcript-based work takes up most of the interpretive time.

Without pushing the analogy too far, we could say that the depth-interpreter of a long interview is rather like the literary critic of longish plays (or an opera).

Ideally, you would see at least one full performance of the ‘piece’ with all the sound, the context, the embodied movement of the people, and ideally you would have a ‘video’ technology that could re-reproduce this over–and-over again.

Ideally, this would be the ‘authorised performance’ approved by the playwright.

However, most commentator on a play (let alone the plays) of a particular playwright have seen it or some of them at some point in the past.

At the (perhaps lengthy) moment of sustained interpretation, such commentators are likely to have to use their notes and work primarily from the written text of the play or plays they are considering (plus their field notes taken from any play they did participate in actually watching).

For the researcher, the transcript (as the play-text for the drama critic) serves as the most economic way of thinking the parts and the whole while recalling (and being able to summon up digitally) at least the acoustics and occasionally the visuals of the interview experience in which they played their part. See p. **598** for further discussion.

However, going back to the digital recording occasionally is very important. The flat words on the page may systematically mislead about meaning: neutral words with warm voice and positive body communication; positive words said in an ironic voice with turning-away or hostile body movement. So keep digging back into the digital record of your long interview, but expect to work from transcript-derived data much of the time. Current software programmes enable you to hop between the two very very easily.

**To conclude**.

BNIM interview material can be interpreted in interesting ways using other non-BNIM interpretive procedures, but the BNIM interpretive procedures for understanding ‘historical subjectivity in situation’ and ‘situation through historical subjectivity’ works best when applied to the material generated *by improvised BNIM three-Sub-session interviews presented initially for interpretation in the form of a ‘unimproved’ verbatim transcript*, *supported by fieldnotes and by tape or digital recording of the interview*.

## 1.4. The BNIM three-Sub-sessions interview- brief account

You may prefer to read section 1.8.1 *before* you read this more discursive account.

*As a condensed version of this subsection 1.4., see below section* ***1.8.1. Key principles of BNIM Three-Sub-session interviewing, p. 210***

### 1.4.1. The Three Sub-session structure

There are two ‘core’ sub-sessions for a BNIM interview [ ideally held at the same time, but all or part of the second sub-session can be kept for a later time].

There is an optional non-core ‘third sub-session’. This – if needed at al, and it may not be] should only be run later, usually after you have done early work on the results of the first two sub-sessions. This is a separate interview.

A diagram may be helpful. At the top is the single initial question which starts the first sub-session. In the lower-half is a reminder of the three sub-session structures

**SQUIN: Single Question aimed at inducing Narrative**

**Please tell** **me** **the story of***…*

*[example: choose one]*

1. *the last/the first/ important turning point in your life*
2. *a chosen aspect of your life before X, after Y, from N to M*
3. *how you came to change your view of things*
4. *changes in your relationship with a person you’ve known for at least 10 years*

**All the experiences and the events** which were important for you, **personally,** ~~[ up to now],~~

**Start** wherever you like

**Please take** the time you need : *[we’ve got about [4] minutes for your story]*

**I’ll listen first**, I won’t interrupt

**I’ll just take some notes** in case I have any further questions for after you’ve finished telling me about it all” [*Repeat first para. “So please….]*

**The THREE SUB-SESSIONS**

**ONE**. Initial SQUIN - and initial response/account

* facilitation but no direction or interruption

“any way they tell it is fine”; let silence happen………..

- note taking; cue-words on topics for Subsession 2

**AFTER 2-10 MINUTES** --------

**TWO.** CUED-Questions on Mentioned Topics in order only

- only topics raised in subsession ONE

- only in the order of their raising

- only using the words used by the narrator

- follow up topics, note, push for IN-PINs (until/unless ‘no’)

**AFTER A ‘WEEK’**: *maybe after analysis of material from ONE / TWO*

**THREE.** All further questions relevant to the

Interests and Theories of the Researcher

- some topics may arise from ONE or TWO

- others almost certainly won’t

Figure 2 Choosing a SQUIN for the practice interviews + 3 sub-session

### 1.4.2. Preparing the first two sub-sessions

Your Central Research Question (CRQ) will dictate both the selection of interviewees to fit your sample criteria and also the particular SQUIN that you design for each interviewee or type of interviewee in that sample. It will also have a definite influence on which items of what they say that you do decide to follow-up and on which items you don’t. [[46]](#footnote-47)

I suggest that, unless there are strong reasons against this, that you should let interviewees know in advance that in their interview with you – perhaps contrary to their expectations that in most interviews the interviewer does a lot of talking and micro-managing -- *they will find themselves doing most of the talking* (at least at first) and that they may well find themselves remembering things they hadn’t thought of for a long time.

Also, remind them that you can’t know in advance what questions they might not feel comfortable with, and*, if questions come up asking them to remember things they can’t or don’t want to talk about, they should feel no problem in saying ‘no’ or ‘pass’.*

*Do not, however, in advance tell them* they will only get one question or give them the SQUIN: both technical details will make them feel anxious; the second will stop them doing a free ‘improvised’ response. *Never give the SQUIN in advance; never give it on paper.*

For any BNIM interview, you should schedule preferably three hours (but an absolute minimum of two) with the interviewee, and a further one hour with yourself for your own subsequent instant de-briefing (fieldnote writing) , following pretty straight on after the place/time of the interview. You are not likely to use all this time, but you want to ensure no sense of haste on either side.

Wengraf 2001 (ch. 5 and pp. 184-206) gives general guidance on purposive sampling and on interviewee selection and preparing for the interview.

To collect the data, the interview is recorded. Use a digital recorder.

For each BNIM interviewee, there are always two Sub-sessions [and, sometimes, some time later, a third, though this can be just a phone call Sub-session] (Wengraf 2001, ch.6).

Typically, the interviewee will experience these first two sub-sessions as one interview.

* If at all possible, Sub-session one should be completed at one go, or at least on the same day.
* Assume that Sub-session Two will take twice the time of Sub-session One. Sub-session Two can be interrupted to continue later on, e.g. on another day, not necessarily immediately. It can be broken into parts, if necessary.
* Only Subsession One is damaged if you do not do it all in one go: this is not true for subsession Two.

### 1.4.3. Throughout both sub-sesssions: Making notes of ‘narratable items’.

During both sessions, *you note down cue-phrases* with which to ask *further narrative-evoking questions*: such noting and such questioning is something that has to be learnt. It is different from the way you may have noted and questioned before. You will use the specially-designed BNIM notepad to help you learn to this well: see p.**1397** for this).

One of the differences with your previous practice may be that, for BNIM noting and questioning, you need to pay (less attention than you might expect to far-from-narrative items, such as declarations of attitude or opinion and ) particular attention to close-to-narrative items. A ‘close-to-narrative’ item might be concealed in the following way. An interviewee may be saying:

*On that journey, I saw somebody strange at the bus-stop, but that wasn’t important. What was important was, er, that I now realise that while I was on the bus my life completely changed.*

You could say (in subsession two):

1. *You said “You now realise that your life then ‘completely changed’ while you were on the bus”. Can you tell me any more detail about the moment at which you now “realised this”?* [[47]](#footnote-48)

2. *You said “while you were on the bus your life completely changed”. Do you remember any more detail about that particular moment when your life completely changed?*

What you may be in danger of not-noting (and therefore not asking) is the point (which he cues you to *not* note or ask about) of “seeing somebody strange at the bus-stop”. How insignificant compared to the super-enormous later formulations! Or so you might be forgiven for being induced to feel.

However, “seeing somebody strange” is a ‘close-to-narrative’ phrase and therefore addressing it – however relatively unimportant it may appear to be – is of particular importance for eliciting later narrative from the interviewee.[[48]](#footnote-49)

The concern of the interviewee to deny its importance is a sign that it *is* important, and a narrative question should be asked about it.

Note that the phrase “your life completely changed” is not the primary focus of further BNIM questioning in sub-session two, and certainly not the sole focus…. as it might be perfectly legitimately with a different interview philosophy. There is a clear implication that the person’s thinks of his life as being *one way* earlier on the bus and the *other way* later on the bus, and this alleged change has great narrative potential. However, precisely because it might drown out the other apparently trivial narrative items, you would ask a narrative question about the ‘complete change of life’ after you asked for narrative about the earlier apparently-trivial ‘seeing someone strange’ at the bus-stop.

You are doing *narrative* interviewing, and are looking for what one might call ‘narratable items’. Never miss out the apparently unimportant close-to-narrative cue-phrases. Note down as follows,

*Saw somebody strange at bus-stop*

Having discussed the unusual importance under BNIM rules -- in both the first and the second sub-session -- of noting ‘close-to-narrative’ narratable items, let’s go back to the sub-sessions.[[49]](#footnote-50)

### 1.4.4. Sub-session One: SQUIN + no new questions or comments

In the first Sub-session, the interviewer offers only a carefully constructed single narrative question (e.g*. “Please tell me the story of your life, all the events and experiences that have been important to you personally; begin wherever you like, I won’t interrupt, I’ll just take some notes for afterwards*”) and sticks to the promises given in the question.

For particular research purposes, the focus is typically on a particular *phase* or particular *aspect* of the life, or even a particular aspect in a particular phase:

the story of your life “*after you became aware that you might have [medical condition D]”* or *“before you met your present wife”* or *“the story of your life as a religious person after you left the Church”.*

However, more often than one would expect, rather than design a too-narrow ‘partial’ SQUIN it is often better to ask a *‘whole life/whole period’* SQUIN and then *let your research interest guide your non-taking-up in Sub-session Two* of topics they mention in Sub-session One that you feel are less relevant to your project.

[See Wengraf 2001: 121-5 for an early discussion of crucial issues that need to be considered for designing not-whole-life opening narrative questions (partial SQUINs) , and also see **SGDM Vol. II**].

You ask no new questions after delivering the SQUIN, the *Single Question aimed at Inducing Narrative. You avoid ‘clarifying’ the SQUIN, as well.*

**Why the rules of pause and non-interruption, condensed in the SQUIN and therefore known by both?**

At one level you might think of it as ‘courtesy’: you ask someone to give you their time and then ask them a question, and consequently you should not interrupt them as they respond to your request: one request in Sub-session One; several in Sub-session Two.

At another level, you might think of it as ‘extended free time’ so that neither of you feel under pressure to answer ‘quickly’ and to leave things out as a result. The interviewee does not need to worry about any form of ‘cross examination’ (in more than one sense) that might occur. You are not going to ask *about* their narratives (“Why did you say that?”) but only ask *for more (new or further detail) narrative.* You never interrupt whatever they say, whether narrative or not.

At another level, you might think of it as *‘free improvisation of form, detail, treatment’ within such ‘free time’* in a more psycho-dynamic way: this, when interpreted, shows something about individual and collective assumptions, prejudices, priorities and neglects.

At a feeling level, the length of the interview and the rule of no interruption/no commentary / no cross examination leads both interview partners to allow themselves to relax and the interviewee not to have to worry about taking the time they need and telling their story and their stories in the ways they find out that they want to tell them.

The implicit rule of **non-conversation** in the interview with the interviewer together with the important **‘pauses’ after each response** **by the interviewee** enables the interviewee to have a mindful reflection on and dialogue with what they have just said, un-steered by responses with you either supportive or disagreeing.

It also enables **you** to have a mindful reflection on what has happened up to that point in the interview, and what you should now attend to. You are then in a position to overhear an implicit and sometimes explicit dialogue they have with themselves….. and that you are having, or should be having with, with yourself….. so as to have a better non-conversation with them.

You may think of other justifications, and do feel free to select and invent your own. The main things is to follow the rules and discover – despite your inevitable initial awkwardness with these ‘unnatural’ new rules – how surprisingly well they work……

### 1.4.5. Necessary Interlude: choosing narratable cue-phrases, selecting a magic word for each

For a typical BNIM interview, after the first Sub-session , you tactfully engineer a 5-10 minute Interlude (a “breather” from the interviewee’s point of view)

In this Interlude, hopefully they go away and have a cup of tea or look out of the window or something, and you look at your notes of (imaginary example) 40 cue-phrases that you noted down in that first Sub-session, and decide which 10 to use as a basis for further questioning, further pushing towards more narration, in Sub-session Two.

For each Subsession One ‘cue-phrase’ you plan to use in Subsession Two, you then identify a ‘Sub-session Two’ question with which you will start ‘pushing towards particular narratives of particular incidents’, “pushing for PINs”.

What are your criteria for choosing ‘cue-phrases’?

There are usually several:

Where you are trying to understand their subjectivity from the inside for its own sake, then the strongest criterion is to look for cue phrases which strike you as suggesting what is important for them: phrases said with particular emphasis, or strong adjectives or adverbs, assertions of position and attitude, etc.

When you are working with a firm set of pre-existing theoretical questions (in the language of my textbook “theory-questions”) then these should also govern your choice of phrases.

Let me give an example, a half-real and half-imaginary one.

A researcher was interested in questions of gender and in questions of film. Had she just being doing an ordinary semistructured-interview, then these would be the headings of the structure, or even the key terms in her actual semi-structured interview questions. In fact, these ‘structural headings for a semistructured interview ‘were then perfect as criteria for selecting key-phrases from a BNIM interview subsession one.

For example, the interviewee might have talked at one stage about her relationship to the people of the same and opposite sexes, and at another about her feelings about film. In addition, there might have been some reference to an event at which she and her boyfriend went to a film and she liked it but he did not.

The criterion in such slightly hypothetical case would suggest that it would be most important to get to tell the story of their going to the film together because that combined the two criteria of her research. There might well also be material in her separate talking is about relationships and about feelings about film. However on the face of it, given the long number of potential cue-phrases in any subsession one of any length, the item about going to see a film with her boyfriend satisfied two of the relevant criteria, whereas the other two items only satisfied one each.

In addition, general talking about ‘relationships’ and/or general talking about ‘films’ are quite some distance away from obviously narratable items, and in narrative interviews you are trying to get a selection of narratable items.

Particularly to begin with when doing BNIM interviewing, you are more likely to get good rich narrative material about gender and films using the cue phrase about the film visit than you are were you to focus on the generalisations about relationships in general and film in general. Since what you want is good rich narrative material, a permanent criteria of selection of cue phrases are ones which point/strongly and immediately towards narratable events.

To sum up the three classes of criteria that may help you:

* ‘personal relevance to the interviewee’,
* researcher relevance to the theory questions guiding the research, and
* the ‘close-to-narratable events’ criterion

These criteria or aspects work simultaneously in your head as you search through your notes on subsession one in order to find the best potential cue-phrases for asking about in subsession two.

More guidance is given on these and other matters in the relevant section of the detailed manual on interviewing *SGDM Volume II*

### 1.4.6. Differences between the first two sub-sessions

Often the first Sub-session provides an overarching Report story with rather few Particular Incident Narratives (usually about-PINs) described in inadequate detail.

After you have concluded sub-session One, think of Sub-session One has merely having provided a Menu, a list of possible items, a long list, for Sub-session Two.

Unless SS1 was very short indeed, you will always be making a selection from its SS2 menu for careful selection. You might have 50 items on the menu, and choose say 10-15 for ss2.

As with biological food, each item that you do choose – and like a *meze* you cannot change the order of dishes, but only not eat this or that – needs full digesting to extract all the value. In the Restaurant, this means chewing every mouthful 100 times; in BNIM Sub-session Two, this means pushing and pushing on each ‘item’ until you get detail on at least one in-PIN.

The chewing might mean 100 chews; getting all the detail from a main-menu cue-phrase might mean 40 pushes into one or more in-PINs in fullest detail.

The second Sub-session allows the interviewee to fill out all the segments (very very rarely) or selected segments (virtually always) of this overall narrative Report with much more detailed particular incident narratives of which hopefully some can be turned into in-PINs.

The second Sub-session also allows the interviewee to reflect upon their own subsession one account as having been a ‘first approximation’, and thus to visualise going further.

There are typically few or no detailed Particular Incident Narratives in Sub-session One. Provided the interviewer follows the rules for narrative-seeking questioning and pushing for PINs, there are usually rather more and rather richer in-PIN-materials in Sub-session Two.

### 1.4.7. Sub-session Two: pushing pausefully for (in)PIN details

You must start with (or no later than) the first story-item and eventually end with the last story-item of Sub-session One; you have to choose, say, no more than 10 in the middle. [[50]](#footnote-51)

You need to be quite thoughtful about your inevitable selection of cue-phrase items.

Clearly you wish to select the cue-phrases relevant to your Central Research Question and also items clearly relevant to the interviewee: these are not always identical.

Bear in mind, though, that BNIM is concerned to excavate the ‘deep structure’ of dated-situated subjectivity, and so – provided you push consistently enough for PINs on the 10 cue-phrases you select – then it may not matter that much which 8 of the 38 cue-phrases (+ the always-required first and last item) you actually select.

Any of the 38 rabbit holes might well lead you to the central treasure-house in the middle of the rabbit warren. You need to be thoughfully selective about ‘promising’ as opposed to ‘unpromising’ rabbit holes, but, given such thoughfulness, then you don’t need to worry too much about your selection.

In that Sub-session Two, sticking strictly to the sequence of topics raised and to the words used, their *cue-phrases*, the interviewer pushes for more particular incident narratives (PINs) about some of them, being prepared to ask yet further narrative-seeking questions in response to some of the answers first given until the required level of narrative detail and personal engagement is provided, until Particular Incident Narratives (PINs) start to flow. The best chance of ‘flow’ is once the first in-PIN has beeen successfully elicited, thus powerfully motivating both interviewer and interviewee.[[51]](#footnote-52)

The theoretical concept of a PIN and of Pushing for PINs can be thought of as a

*microscope to look through to see new ‘openings’ in their practices [memories-raised] for their further development, refinement, and (perhaps) correction.*

(Shotter and Tsoukas 2011) materials in square brackets TW

Again, your choice of items to follow-up will be largely determined – but not entirely – by relevance to your Central Research Question for which the BNIM interview is designed to generate relevant material. It will also be determined by personal relevance to the interviewee. And by ‘narratability’.

These first two Sub-sessions typically are planned to take place in the same (first) interview slot of two or so hours.

#### 1.4.7.1. Pushing pausefully for PINs in subsession two

##### 1.4.7.1.1. Pushing towards PINs

The basic default form of the narrative questioning in sub-session two (as you push PINwards) is:

“*You said* [their cue-phrase*]; can you remember any (more) detail about that/the/a particular* [*moment, situation*, or other appropriate specification from one of three bundles of useful words]. *How it all happened?*

Learning to push hard-enough (but also carefully-enough, and being-prepared-to-stop-enough ) for PINs is difficult and you have to push several times – many times -- usually to get into ‘deep detail’. To misquote a letter from Franz Kafka, our pushing for in-PINs helps the interviewee to “*take his or her axe to the frozen sea within*”.

In Sub-session Two, you will be pushing along two axes (i) more detail of story(ies), (ii) more emotional engagement with story, more re-living.

More Detail of story

More Emotional re-living of original experience in the telling

Figure 3 Two axes of pushing for in-PINs

**Question**: What is very difficult for a beginner to appreciate?

**Answer**: Pretty nearly always you may need to push repetitively for PINs on a single item; you might need to push *ten times* on the same cue-phrase to get an in-PIN.

If this notion of possibly pushing ten or twenty times on a single item appears shocking to you, this is a measure of the amount of self-overcoming you are likely to need to practice BNIM-interviewing properly.[[52]](#footnote-53)

In the interview extract ‘Kathy and the purple sweater’ (p. **39**), count the number of times that the interviewer pushes towards PINs. You’ll be surprised.

Try it now. Look at the way the pushing is done, with slight variations of phrase, with the interviewer building for mini-sequences on what has been given……

The interview extract is your first study-example of a BNIM interviewer in action.

It repays study – and not just to count the number (**p39).**

**First look at this complete failure to push for PINs**.

1) Here is an excerpt from one interview with a Ugandan fisherman, where the pushing by the local-language translator/interviewer was not hard enough or went in the wrong direction (kindly supplied by Caroline Barratt).

*Local-language interviewer:: You have been on water for so long as a fisherman and sailor tell us about any time you felt that you were in danger and what happened?*

R: In 1986 I was driving the boat and it was heavily loaded the strong winds hit us and knew we were finished. We were two people in the boat with my employer and he told me to stop the engine but I refused. I knew that if I stop we were going to be dead the boat would sink, so slowly the wind subsided after about 5 minutes and we reached ashore. We sold fish at Bukakata and my employer gave me 1,000/- for appreciating my work of driving the boat in such wind.

*Local-language interviewer: What was the value of 1000/-?*

R: It was equivalent to 5000/- of these days.

My comment to Caroline [modified] was:

*R’s account has great potential, but ‘A’ then asks a flat non-narrative question* (“what was the value of 1000/-?”) *and, b y doing so, this brief account is not pushed towards a more detailed account of strongly felt experience, but away from it.*

*Further PIN detail could have been pushed for on at least five points:*

*(i) knowing we were finished;*

*(ii) my employer told me, I refused;*

*(iii) before the wind subsided,*

*(iv) when the wind subsided;*

*(v) reaching shore.*

*With proper pushing, ‘A’ might have got a really-strong complex epic in-PIN…. but ‘A’ didn’t push, did ask the wrong sort of question, an anti-narrative question, and the opportunity was lost….*

**Question**: What would a successful and skilled ‘pushing towards PINs’ be like?

**Answer**: it would have taken preferably all of the cue-phrases (i-v) above in Sub-session Two; inserted into the default question for Sub-session Two questions, and asked (to take one example) *‘You said that you ‘knew you were finished’: can you remember any more detail about that moment when you had that thought?’.*

**2) Here is an example of a successful repeated ‘pushing for PINs’.**

A counter-example of a slow and difficult, but eventually very successful, pushing for PINs was given right at the start of this *Guide* on p. **39**.

You will notice that it takes the form of *“You said XXX* [their cue-phrase]; *can you remember……..”.*  This formula should not be varied.[[53]](#footnote-54)

* See p. **1397** for a **blank page of a BNIM notepad**, where the “**You said XXX; can you remember**…” question is at the top of the page. Note the word “particular” and “particularly”, and the fact that you have to choose a ‘magic word’ from one of three ‘bundles of magic words’.

To get the contrast clear, you might wish to **read another example of using the “***You said XXX; can you remember…*” formula  **now**… before going on to the next paragraph.

SPACE FOR YOU TO (RE)READ

THE SALLY/PURPLE SWEATER EXAMPLE

*STARTING ON PAGE*  ***39***

Note that, in that transcript extract on Sally and the purple sweater,

(1) the interviewer pushes for PINs but, when the interviewee can’t or won’t come up with one , the interviewer easily and gracefully switches to something else. Accepting gracefully an earlier refusal creates conditions under which you may get a later good offer!

(2) You push towards PINs, but normally you make yourself not mind what the PIN is about. You push towards PINs about the item of learning to drive, but you then let yourself be re-directed (let the interviewee re-direct herself) toward the item of a trip to London in a coach; then a re-direct towards the PIN that eventually emerges, namely one about smashing up her car and going to tell her father. *You don’t need a PIN about something in particular; you just need whatever PIN it is that eventually comes up. [[54]](#footnote-55)*

That is why you ask vaguely for *“Any other time when X happened”, “Do you remember anything about the time that you are recalling at the moment?”, “Anything else/ any other memory / come to mind?”,* Etc.

*An example of further pushing – by way of the trivial*

Pushing for PINs can always go further into detail.

In a BNIM training course (May 2008) somebody was telling a story about an accident on holiday which they ignored. It then got worse during three days at home, and they finally went to hospital and had it sorted out.

The interviewer than pushed for a PIN on the whole incident, and got quite a lot of detail and in-PIN about the way the accident happened and the return home; she then pushed for quite a lot of detail about the going to hospital and the subsequent events.

The interviewer was about to move on. She had been quite successful at getting in-PIN material.

I suggested that, instead, she push for a PIN on the (twice-neglected*) “three days at home before going to hospital”* (neglected in the original account, neglected in the pushed-for detailed in-PIN). A bit surprised, she did so. She then got a fascinating and revealing glimpse of situated subjectivity in that (as it turned out) rather crucial intervening 3-days which might easily have been not-probed-into and which, on her own, she had not thought about for probing-into.

##### 1.4.7.1.2. Pushing for explicit or logically-entailed micro-moments

You can ask for *really close-up detailed focus-down ‘micro-periods’* in any story you are given.

In the example above, such pushing might be through questions such as *“Can you remember how you managed to get up the first flight of stairs when you got home late after the accident?”,* and also *“Can you remember the process of getting into your bed that night, how it all happened?”.[[55]](#footnote-56)*

Another example was also to do with trying to get the interviewee to recall two successive micro-moments entailed by a an about-PIN.

An interviewee in a BNIM training session had said in his subsession One that he had been “very cruel” to his little sister. In subsession Two,she was asked to remember “an example” of being very cruel. He replied that he had once got her to eat stones with some smarties. This was the briefest PIN. The interviewee pushed towards an in-PIN by asking for “more detail of when he had got her to eat stones with her smarties, how it all happened”. He replied that he had been with two friends from over the road, and afterwards his sister had run round the corner of the house, and he couldn’t remember anything else.

The trainee interviewer said she couldn’t think of anything else to say and asked me whether it was OK to move on to the next main item of the original sub-session One.

I replied that I thought there might still be some juice left in the PIN, which was pretty emotionally flat, and took over the questioning.

I had noted that the interviewee had said in his initial response that it had been “a pretty warm sunny day”, and I decided that he might be someone who visualises well. I asked him to describe the setting of this scene with his younger sister (scenic re-evocation). He described the house wall and corner and said that his sister had had her back up against the wall, with these bigger children surrounding her. I asked him whether he remembered her face as she ate the smarties-and-stones. I was quite hopeful of getting some detail on this, but he said that he didn’t.I then switched tack, and asked “While she was eating the smarties-and-stones in front of you, do you remember any feelings or thoughts passing through your mind?”. He said she did and said that he remembered feeling first a sort of triumph that that he had managed to get her to do it, followed by a worry that she might die as a result of eating them, followed by a worry about what their mother would say. I then asked for a further ‘micro-question’. “When hse had finished eating them, and she started to run round the corner of the house, at that moment of just starting to run, do you remember any thoughts and feelings at that moment?”. Again, when asked to run a slowed down-clip of a micro-moment, he did in fact remember a short sequence of feelings…… and so the fliing up of detail continued

The in-PIN had got enriched by asking the interviewee to try to remember the thoughts-and-feelings of a micro-moment – one explicit, the forced eating; the second implicit, the moment of ‘starting to run round the corner’ which must have happened and could therefore be referred to.

Another interviewee might not have been a ‘visualiser’ but, for an example, an ‘acoustic’. In which case the path to memories might have been via sounds and silence rather than light and heat (warm sunny day). But the looking for explicit and implicit micro-moments of a worn or bare anecdote is the way you push for in-PIN detail, and keep pushing….

*The interviewee re-accessing such minute and apparently-trivial detail has a much better chance of accessing the original experience than if he is left with his ‘normally-storied memory’ which is the first (about-)PIN you are likely to get.*

##### 1.4.7.1.3. Pausefully

Though this is less apparent in the transcript, *the interviewer always pauses after a response by the interviewee.*

This indicates to the interviewee that you are thinking about what they’ve said and allows the interviewee to do the same (such further inpause reflection may lead them to then add something to what they’ve said or addressing your next question differently.

*Quickly going on to the next question stops both of you from thinking and ensures that you never get beyond well-prepared answers and quick responses.* You have given them ‘voice’ but no time for thoughtful silent reflection and new mindfulness.

To ensure thoughtfulness, reflection, ‘going deeper’ and remembering ‘forgotten things’, after each response of the interviewee, it is very important to pause……

**‘Pushing for pauses’ in between pushing for in-PINs**

PAUSE NOW, AND THINK ABOUT IT! Can you think of interviews where this obviously doesn’t happen?

WAIT A MINUTE BEFORE GOING ON…. What habitual interview behaviours (on TV, by you) would be being ‘pushed against’ by such a practice of ‘pushing for pauses’ (virtually always, without words)? What do you normally do in conversation? Can you remember any particular interview? Any particular conversation? With somebody in particular?

#### 1.4.7.2. It doesn’t matter so much what the PIN is about…

To begin with, it is most useful for self-training purposes, for your practice interviews, to think that it doesn’t matter at all *what* the PIN is about.

You want them to get into a stream of in-PINs and to follow their own system of relevancy…. however it meanders…. against the location of in-PIN-excavation that you (and your system of relevancy) are so strongly tempted to impose….

It is *their* system of associative relevancy (*especially* when it appears to you as ‘irrelevant’) that you want them to explore and reveal. When they tell you an *unexpected PIN,* that’s when learning happens…. particularly when not only you but also they didn’t expect it, or expect it that way. *The stories they find that they want to tell; not the ones that you with your system of relevancy would want them to want to tell.*

#### 1.4.7.3. You need the non-PIN stuff that you will inevitably also get

Though you push towards PINs, the other material you get may be powerfully expressive of dated-situated subjectivity. If you push towards PINs, and are lucky enough to get some, even if somebody stripped out of your transcript all the PINs that you had eventually got, the transcript would contain a lot of very valuable non-PIN material (such as argumentations and descriptions).

*It is not that you “only want PINs”: by no means!* You want the other material as well, but *only in the form and at the moment and in the way that this particular non-PIN material is thrown up by a consistent search for PINs.*

You keep pushing for more details of the lived experience (the original Particular Incident Experience) so that the interviewee will move from an about-PIN (an anecdote a bit or completely emotionally-distant from the experience) to an in-PIN (a vivid recall in which the feelings at the time are partially-relived).

#### 1.4.7.4. Always push for more in-PIN detail, and the next PIN!

PINs are hard for the novice to distinguish. There are many ‘pseudo-PINs’ (such as GINs and TINs) which tempt you to feel you have got to a PIN. Having got an about-PIN, you may be tempted not to push for the in-PIN. Once you have the in-PIN, you may be tempted not to push for more in-PIN detail about the in-PIN. You need to squeeze the last amount of in-PIN detail from the PIN before letting it go.

And once you have wrung out the last drop of in-PIN detail about that incident that your exhausted interviewee lets you, don’t forget to say *“Does all that remind you of anything, does any other incident come to mind?”.*

The ‘other incidents that come to mind’ may be even more fruitful that the first in-PIN you found. Work on them straight waway in the same fashion.

If you look at the “Sally purple sweater” interview (p.**39**), the narrative to item 13 is an about-PIN starting to become alive; item 21 is a full in-PIN. See also the pushing for more in-PIN detail (the smarties-and-stones little sister).

**Further discussion of this key interviewing focus – getting to in-PINs, extracting full juice from them, finding other PIN-material that comes to the interviewee’s mind -- is in the *Interviewing Detailed Manual vol.II***

### 1.4.8. Immediate de –briefing of both of you

#### **1.4.8.1. Informal debriefing of interviewee after subsession two**

After the second Sub-session of the interview, the pushing-for-PINs Sub-session, it is important that you then ‘informally debrief the interviewee’, partly in order to ensure as far as you can that any difficult emotions and questions stirred up do not leave them alone in a bad state. This is unlikely to happen, but you do need to look out for this.

If you do not record this ‘post-interview debriefing’, immediaytely afterwards make very full notes about it.

‘Informal space for post-interview debriefing of the interviewee’ is ethically imperative.

You may also find crucial feedback on their experience of the interview, casting what you have got it a quite unexpected light.

You tell them that they can contact you by phone or email whenever they feel they want to.

You then say ‘Goodbye’ to them, and, after they’ve shut the door or turned the corner, instantly go and de-brief yourself.

#### **1.4.8.2. Determined self-debriefing of interviewer**

After that, you then need to spend an hour or so immediately afterwards on your own ‘debriefing yourself’.

Here you write up (or record on tape) your field notes and in particular about how you were stirred up and what memories, fantasies and questions about them, about yourself, and your interaction were evoked for you. By doing this free-associative self debriefing, you will gain considerably both personally and professionally, but it must be done straight away (see p**. 543** onwards for details).

*Be as specific as you can*. Push yourself for in-PINs of what happened (especially in you) at particular key-moments of the interview, *especially* momentary moments. Don’t censor this noting for yourself: the more subjective they are, the more useful they will be for catching ‘peculiarities’ you would otherwise forget.[[56]](#footnote-57)

### 1.4.9. The Optional Third Subsession – a ?week? later

Usually after these first two Sub-sessions have been thought about (ideally after having been listened to and even transcribed), a separate interview -- a third Sub-session-- can follow – say a week or more later -- in which further narrative questions can be posed but also in which non-narrative questions and activities can be designed. Much BNIM research does not use the third-Sub-session option, but the option is always there, and can be quite important. Sometimes, the ‘third Sub-session’ can just be a phone-call.

**The third Sub-session. This can be very different!**

If you have a strong motivation towards an active role in interviewing, then the minimalism of the first two sessions can be quite a strain. You may wish to consider Sub-sessions 1 and 2 as having allowed a very extended self-introduction by the interviewee which, completed by the end of Sub-session Two, can now allow a quite different type of interaction to take place.

What kind of Sub-session 3 complementarity?

We have already mentioned the possibility of a ‘semi-structured interview rump’, where the questions that did not answered earlier can now arise. That can be one component of the Sub-session 3.

Another might be a much more co-produced conversation between your interviewee and yourself. You have had the opportunity to grasp much of his or her ‘reality’ during the self-presentation of Sub-sessions 1 and 2. This can produce much material for posing the questions that seem to arise for you after listening to him or her.

It can produce much material in terms of which you can *present something of yourself* to your interviewee (or ex-interviewee!), thus enabling him/her to understand how you situate yourself in relation to the ‘already said’. This is your opportunity to enable him/her to grasp your similarities and differences in whatever respect seems to you to be important. This might be a stopping point for the two of you, or it may then give rise to further dialogue in which you inter-view each other further.

You can also engage in a provocative or *active interview ‘bonanza’* of the sort suggested by Holstein and Gubrium (see very briefly Wengraf 2001: 201-2) and others.

Given your own subjectivity and the issues and questions that arise after thinking about the experience and material from Sub-sessions 1 and 2, you can then determine a (perhaps complexly structured) Sub-session 3 that takes you further.

Another possibility is a “Bring-an-object” session. A recent workship (by Susan Bell) announced itself as follows:

During the workshop we will use objects as alternatives to the standard format of in-depth biographical or narrative interviews. We will see how objects can be used to guide interviews and bring to the surface and make explicit ideas that are not easily articulated. Participants are asked to bring one or two objects to the workshop that are meaningful to them in relation to their family (however they define “family”).

These can be anything - snapshots or formal photographs, jewelry, letters, clothing, books, tchotchkes, trinkets, etc. It may be “stuff” you currently use or stuff that is saved or stored but not currently in use.

But, whatever you eventually decide to do with the later and separate Sub-session 3, don’t let that interfere *at all* with Sub-sessions 1 and 2.

**Note: having non-narrative questions last: sequencing in the third subsession**

The point of having three distinct Sub-sessions is to ensure that the initial narrative in Sub-session One is as uninfluenced as possible by the question-putting activity of Sub-session two, and that as much narrative material as possible is collected in Sub-sessions One and Two …. before other types of question get put in the always-sometime-later and often-not-necessary Sub-session Three.

Another way of making the same point is that the more usual semi-structured depth interview takes the form of what from a BNIM point-of-view would be a Sub-session three: *some of the disadvantages of a semi-structured depth interview can be overcome by having used BNIM Sub-sessions 1 and 2 beforehand*. [[57]](#footnote-58)

Your *sequencing* is of great importance: two-Sub-session BNIM interview first if at all; semi-structured depth (SSDI) (or semi-structured surface) interview targeted and (why not?) micro-managed interview next (if at all).

Interviews must be recorded, and those interviews selected for detailed interpretation are transcribed into a verbatim transcript (see Wengraf 2001 chapter 10 on ‘copying, indexing, transcribing’, especially pp.212-22).

A two-page summary of BNIM interviewing is provided on p.**136**.

After that, you could look at chapter 6 of the textbook *Wengraf QRI* *(2001)*. Eventually, perhaps, see also some of the ‘Methodological’ references in Bibliography ‘A’ at the end of this text.

The importance of grasping the ethnographic aspect of the interview interaction itself *as participant-observation*  is suggested below in the section starting on p.**218**.[[58]](#footnote-59)

**For more detail about BNIM interviewing**, see *the Detailed Manual*  Volume II p. **275** below onwards. and also the Appendix A on ‘Technicalities of the BNIM interview’ (p.**562** onwards)and the Appendix on being ethical around and in a BNIM interview (p.**1184** onwards).

## 1.5. The BNIM two-track chunk-by-chunk future-blind interpretation procedures – brief account

You may prefer to read section 1.8.2 *before* you read this more discursive account.

As a condensed version of this, or later summary, see p. **213** for **1.8.2. Key principles of BNIM Twin-track future-blind initial interpretation procedure**

In BNIM interpretation procedure, there are two tracks – history of the living of the lived life; history of the telling of the told story and of the phases of mutations of subjectivity over the same period – and we follow them up separately. In each track, we look first at the sequence of ‘historical chunks’ that happened in the 20 years of the life and in the 120 minutes of the telling of it.

As far as I know, the following has not been done, but it would be perfectly possible to do it.

Have a BNIM interview – let us say, three subsessions totalling g 3 hours, for example – on a particular Tuesday. Video the interview (or record the sound).

Then, a week later, say, on a Friday, do a BNIM interview about the ‘lived experience’ of having done the previous BNIM interview. The focal period would be the three hours. *Please tell me the story of last Tuesday’s BNIM interview, from when you first were asked to do such an interview until now (?), all the events and experiences that were important for you personally. I’ll listen first, etc.etc.*

You would then do a twin-track interpretation of that second interview as a ‘lived life period’ :

(doing a BDC and BDA – note that you would have the transcript of the Tuesday interview to amplify the BDC events of Tuesday of which, in his/her Friday interview, he/she would only mention a few) .

You would then look at his/her ‘told story’ about that Tuesday interview, which might be very different from your own, as co-experiencer of that co-interview experience on the Tuesday.

The ‘lived life’ in BNIM terminology has no problem in being a period of three hours…….

### 1.5.1. Introduction

#### 1.5.1.1. Why two tracks, and not just one?

Single-track (Track Two) option for narratologists only. BNIM’s default interpretation method is a two-track method of studying cases (discussed below).

A. The BNIM two-subsession interview provides normally very rich material also for single-track narratologists. I call ‘narratology’ any approach to the study of narratives that does not concern itself with the adequacy of the narrative to the reality of the narrator’s internal or external world. Those interested in such formal analysis of narratives will focus only on Track Two of BNIM and not concern themselves with Track One.

B. Those who wish to believe that they can fully trust the adequacy of the narrator as ‘authentic witness’, that the interviewee “always tells it like it is” (and all of how it is) will also need only Track Two. Those who hold to a ‘transparent narrator’ epistemology will also not need Track One.

I personally think that such an epistemology is profoundly mistaken: hence the importance of doing both tracks, at least sketchily. I argue for this in the rest of this section: examples of of the procedure at work can be found in the *BNIM Detailed Manual.*

#### 1.5.1.2. The ‘single datum’ or ‘jerky historical data’ approach?

Interpreting the material obtained from a BNIM open-question two-Sub-session narrative interview can be done in many different ways. Most work with an implicit assumption that ‘the whole interview is a single datum’; others work with the interview as made up of a series of flowing micro-actions with a own history of (normally jerky) flow that has to be investigated as an ‘improvised emergent’.

1. **Single-datum approaches:**

**1.** One way is that described by me in (Wengraf 2001 ch.11) as a **generic method** for interpreting *all* qualitative research interviews: namely, to break your Central Research Question down into derived Subsidiary Research Questions (known in that book as ‘Theory Questions), then go through your material thinking about each Theory-Question separately and – in that sweep through the material-- collecting only data coded as relevant to the Theory-Question under consideration; then finally putting your separate answers to the separate Theory-Questions together in order to construct an answer to your Central Research Question (see Wengraf 2001: 223-30).

This systematic ‘oriented to theory/research questions’ atomistic cut-and-paste approach has a lot going for it.

**2.** Another way is that of reading through all of each series of processed data (the transcript and the chronology, for example) – or even just the raw datum of the transcript as a whole -- and then deriving hypotheses or ‘themes’ about the ‘whole data set’. This could be called a from-scanned-whole-to-part approach, or ‘**holistic impressionism’**. This inductive approach has definite strengths, especially for the experienced researcher…. but, for the less experienced worker, serious deficiencies! [[59]](#footnote-60)

*Both of the above ways* regard the data-source as being “the two sub-sessions as one whole”, a **‘single datum’** provided in a single (albeit 2-3 hour) moment. By implication, the ‘sequence and context within the interview’ from which particular items are drawn is of no interpretive significance. It was all said at one ‘time’.

This can of course provide the basis for ‘cut-and-paste coding’ (CAQDAS) which treats all the data as simultaneous. Alternatively, to justify such coding which ignores the unrolling-interview-context, you have to have at least implicitly such an ‘anti-historical’ epistemology of the interview as a single datum.

As distinct from the above…….

1. **Jerky historical flow approaches:**

There are, however, **epistemologies that take a historical perspective** on both *the object of study* (a ‘case’ evolving over time in an evolving situation or set of situations) and *the*  *generation of data* used to understand that object of study, that ‘evolving case’: namely, a multi-session interview (a succession of most recent micro-moments in the history of the case) and then a multi-procedure interpretation, *both evolving over time. [[60]](#footnote-61)*

For historically-minded research interpretation, the interview itself – not only the life-period that the interview is *about* – is taken seriously as having occurred and unfolded over time, having its own periodization.

#### 1.5.1.3. Periodising the interview, not just the life..

First some things were said and done; after which some other things were said and done.

The sequence matters. The time of the interview is not treated as a mini-Big Bang, but as a small period of lived experience running from its beginning to its end. The 20-year life has its 20-year-history; the 2-hour-interview has its own history of 120 minutes.

Sequence is important. **The interview unrolls in historical (history-of-interview) phases.**

**This is a third way: the peculiar BNIM way.**

We look at the events and decisions and shift in the period of the lived life; we look at the events and decisions and shifts in the period of the telling of the told story. We eventually ‘periodise’ both. Both are considered as ‘wholes’, but as wholes evolving over time, to be treated as history.

We also look at that history as *non-inevitable*. At any given moment, there are a number of equally-possible and unequally probable ‘next steps’ that an actor might take. We are trying to block the illusion of ‘retrospective inevitability’ by ensuring that the researcher and their panel are placed at least for a while in ‘imagining different next histories’ and not knowing which ones happened. There are always some alternatives (unequally probable, equally possible) at any given moment: BNIM interpretive procedure forces us to simulate this ‘not-knowing’ in the mind of the research subject living their life and telling their story *forwards*….and future-blind, as all subjects are forced to live their lives.

I stress that the above ‘BNIM third way’ focus on a historical living of the lived life and a micro-focus on a historical approach to that moment of that living, namely the immediate telling of the told story in the interview, is not necessarily all you do. You may also wish to treat ‘the told story’ as one thing, and do an analysis of that ‘one thing’….. the story as told, not (in this sub-procedure for understanding) as a telling of the story by the teller..

In *traditional thematic analysis*, the themes of ‘the story as told’ are paramount, the telling is background, and the chronology of the lived life may even be thought to be irrelevant. This can end up with an interesting numbered list of ‘themes’.

*In the BNIM ‘third way’*, it is understanding the historically-dated-situated subjectivity as it lived its life up to and into the short period of the interview that is central, understanding the detail of the ‘telling’ is crucial to that objective, and the thematic analysis of the ‘story as told’ may make a necessary or even vital contribution to that central question….. or maybe of rather less interest.

#### 1.5.1.4. Part-to-whole BNIM approach – two stages

Whenever we engage in the two-track chunk-by-chunk ‘action’ approach characteristic of BNIM , we start by engaging in a ‘*part-by-part-to-whole*’ procedure. To begin with, at least, we do, rather systematically, something else which appears --to begin with at least -- rather non-holistic. Going through bit-by-bit, and waiting for structural hypotheses to form. But it is not the transcript itself that is gone through, by bit……. The transcript gives birth to two different “it’s”, each of which is gone though bit-by-bit….. and the results of that work on two types of transcript-derived processed data is then brought together.

What is that something else, the BNIM interpretive procedure?

A full verbatim non-polished transcript of the interview is made. The transcript datum is then processed in two different ways (the resulting interpretations of each track are then *later* brought together).

**There are two stages in BNIM interpretive procedure**:

**Stage A**: involves processing the raw interview material into a verbatim transcript and then processing the raw transcript in two different ways. Each set of ‘derived processed data’ is then interpreted separately along its own track. A 3-hour panel is used to start each track, and the researcher then continues on their own. The results of the single-track interpretations are then brought together by the researcher to produce an account of the case, often an account of the Mutations of the case, a case-narrative

The procedure of stage A is re-produced for each interview under study to produce a separate ‘case-account’ for each interview.

**Stage B**: The ‘cases’ are then available for comparative study and further theorisation and ‘case-presentations’ for different practice, policy, general and disciplinary audiences.

This *Short Guide and Detailed Manual* deals with both stages of interpretation, but in different places.

The *Short Guide* is quite short; the *Detailed Manual* is very detailed. Scanning the 'examples' of what sort of different 'writings-up' emerge from the different moments of the interpretation procedure (BDA, TFA, Mutations of the case') might be a quick route to getting at the significance of those procedures. For detailed examples, see Vol.III.

You are now reading the brief account in the *Short Guide* where we focus almost exclusively on Stage A. This is concerned with the two-track interpretation based on material derived primarily from the verbatim transcript.

### 1.5.2. What are the two preparatory tracks?

The two tracks? The living of the lived life, the telling of the told story. You reconstruct the experiencing of the “interpreting and acting” subject first

(a) as he or she lived his or her life events; *and then*

(b) as he or she at the moment in their life when the interview happened, in the interview, chooses to recall and interpret events, telling his or her current story from their present perspective, in their current state of subjectivity.

*Why two tracks?*

Typically in qualitative research, the interpretative process works directly on the verbatim transcript -- either by reading it altogether (as in holistic impressionism) or by reading it line-by-line (as in some forms of classic grounded theory) or a combination of both. The most intuitive and the most frequent way of interpreting biographic narratives is to pay attention to both context / situation and subjectivity *simultaneously*.

BNIM’s two track method involves first thinking in a *more than usually focused way about socio-historic context, situatedness in time and geographical and social space* (think of a genealogy defining vertical and contemporary social relations) (because in track 1 there is no subjective data to think about) and, then, for track 2, switching into thinking *in a more than more than more than usually focused way about subjective experiencing* (because When doing track 2, the socio-historical reality and chronology (the ‘objective facts’) is rear-grounded and bracketed-off.).

In both cases, you are try to infer (‘construct’, ‘construe’, etc.) something important that cannot be observed directly – the lived experience and practice of a complex (historically-situated and acting) subjectivity – from two evidence-sources to which you have more direct access. One evidence-source at a time.

The following diagram on the next page may be helpful:

Looking at it. You can start either at the top (the History of the Case Evolution) and follow the arrows back to the ‘Interview Data’ at the bottom right; or at the ‘Interview Data’ at the bottom right and see how they are processed and then interpreted separately along the two tracks until they are brought together in the ‘History of the Case Evolution’ at the top… or at least near it!

CRQ 1: What is the **structure of the case-(history)**?

CRQ 2: What is **the History of the Case Evolution (HCE)?**

lived life *analysis* telling of told story *analysis*

‘objectivity phases’ pattern ‘subjectivity phases’ pattern

What we do learn from

micro-analysis

of selected segments

of verbatim transcrpt

***column 1***

***column 2***

***Successive States of***

What are the results

of the Biographic

Data Analysis? ***column 3***

(BDA) ***Subjectivity (SSS)*** What are the

- results of the Teller Flow

Analysis (TFA) What is the Biographic Data

Chronology? (BDC) What is (BDC) the (TSS)

Text Structure)

Sequentalisation

**Outside Data** The BNIM

*Field-notes +* **Narrative Interview**

*other interviews* **Experiences**

*documents* ***tape + transcript +***

*social + historical ( interviewer’s*

*research etc field-notes)*

Figure 4 BNIM Twin-Track Interpretation Model

Let us now look ( in the diagram on the next page) at how each track makes inferences from different data-sets (data-aspects of the transcript mostly, in the first stage) about the ‘dated situated subjectivity’ that is ‘behind’ both sets of (processed) data.

One data-set is about the living of the lived life, the accessible ‘objective data’. The other data-set is about the telling of the told story, the accessible ‘subjective data’.

Eventually, in the construction of a model of the (HCE) History of the Case Evolution, the stereoscopic vision given by the separate processing of each data set gets reconciled and handled. Until then, inferences from each track of the ‘inferred situated subjectivity’ are kept carefully separate.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Track One –**  **Living of Lived Life** | |  | **Track Two –**  **Telling of the Told Story** | |
| **I** | **II** | **IV** | **V** |
| Accessible data  *Dated chronological chunks -* | Inferred states of dated situated subjectivity (dss) suggested by column **I** data and then checked against them all  (e.g. inferred perspectives at a given date) | Inferred states of dated- situated subjectivity (dss) suggested by column **V** data and then checked against them all  (e.g. inferred perspectives at a given date) | Accessible data  *Transcript chunks of subjectively reported experiencing and evaluating during and around the interview* |
| **BDAss 1981** | **TFAss1981** |
| **BDAss 1991** | **TFAss1991** |
| **BDAss 2001** | **TFAss 2001** |
| **BDAss 2011** | **TFAss 2011** |
| Track 1 inferred ‘dated situated subjectivities’, as inferred from the record of key record of ‘objective events’ in the life-record | Track 2 inferred ‘dated situated subjectivities’, as inferred from the record of the telling the story in the present interview |

Figure 5 Non-identical concepts of HiSS derived from two tracks

This is for a notional person born in 1981, interviewed in 2011, with only two other dated facts (in column (1) known about him. In the above example, **BDAss 1991**  stands for a concept of the person’s dated situated subjectivity when 10 years old in 1991 inferred from the analysis of the biographical data alone. Similarly **TFAss1991** stands for a concept of the person’s dated situated subjectivity when 10 years old in 1991 inferred from the analysis of the teller flow alone…. Coming independently from different data-sources (BDC, TSS) the two account of (1991-subjectivity) should have some relation but it would be disappointing if they were identical. A single concept based on *all the data sources* will be developed later, based on this initial stereoscopic vision of overlapping non-identical constructs.

**Strong data** exists (unless you have other sorts of data, typically documents or triangulating interviews with people who knew the notional person at the times in question, like parents, siblimgs, schoolfriends, etc.) **only for one of the red items**: the recorded interview **TFAss 2011.** Data is inevitably weaker for earlier states of subjectivity and all life events of the BDA. Figure 6 Partial models from partial data, then knitted together

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Track One –**  **Living of Lived Life** | |  | **Track Two –**  **Telling of a Told Story** | |
| **I** | **II** | **IV** | **V** |
| **Accessible Data – flow of public events in the life** | Inferred states of subjectivity suggested by column **I** data | Inferred states of subjectivity suggested by column **V** data – flow of the **Teller** | **Accessible**  **Data – flow of the Telling** |
| Objective events of the ‘lived life’ in chronological order – publically verifiable ‘objective biographical data’  (births, marriages, deaths, etc, etc.  (from transcript, etc.etc. - relatively incomplete  BDC) | *BDC lived life*  *– based* ‘construction’ of the phased evolution of the (dated) situated subjectivity *at particular times* of the lived life  +  *Overall shape*  *of subjectivity across times*  *derived from lived life objective data only* | *TSS-plus*  *told-story*  *based*  ‘construction’ of the phased evolution of the (dated) situated subjectivity *at particular times*  +  *Overall shape of subjectivity across times*  *derived from telling of subjective told story data only* | Subjective telling of a told story as recorded in a BNIM interview  (pretty full data about the telling)  (from audio or video recording of interview, etc.etc.)  relatively complete TSS -  sequentialisation of segments  of the transcript |
|  | | | | |
|  | **III** | | |  |
| **History of the Case Evolution (HCE)**  ‘construction’ of the **case-phase** **evolution** of the (dated) situated subjectivity across particular times ***plus***  **overall shape** of dated situated subjectivity across time……….  on the basis of reworking together the results ofColumn **II** and **IV**  and then checking your derived provisional HCE  against all the original and contextual data | | | | |

The images of the person’s subjectivity derived in columns **II** and **IV** from the partial data columns **I** and **V,** then have to be reconciled by you in the further derived **III.**

After the *thinking more intensively* on each of the two tracks  *separately* is complete, and in columns 2 and 4 you have generated two distinct models for stereoscopic vision ,then you have a much richer store to bring together when you then turn to creating an integrated History of the Case Evolution and Case Account *based on all the data.*

Thinking about and doing one thing at a time is a way of doing each of those things better than when you try to do them all at once: Adam Smith supports the two track method through his argument for the greater productivity of the division of labour in society**:** to do complex processes properly, do one thing at a time. Admittedly the manufacture of pins that he was concerned with is not the same as the PINs we are struggling to elicit! And interpret!

**Why did the person who lived their life like this…come eventually at least on that day to that person (me) …. to tell their story like that?**

There are therefore in BNIM two distinct lines of processing and interpretation, two separate tracks: the *objective event lived-life-living* track, and the *subjective account told-story-telling* track .

In each track you focus on one thing at a time.

Track one: You start by developing your sense of the ‘objective history’ – separate from any current perspective on the present and past, the data in the interview are ‘stripped of subjectivity’. This generates a provisional sense of ‘phases of objective living and maybe patterns’.

Track two: You then develop your sense of the ‘subjective perspective behind the story-telling’ – separate from any question of what the objective history was. The telling, the perspectives, are ‘stripped of objectivity’. This generates a deeper sense of ‘phases of subjective experiencing with present and past perspectives, and maybe patterns’.

After your work on these two tracks are completed, and you have completed very short analytic narratives for each track (discussed later) and summarised this partial analytic work in a 3-column diagram on a single page, you have completed your preparatory work.

You are then ready to move to the case-accounts, consisting of a History of the Case Evolution (a case-history, consisting of case-phases) and probably a description of any ‘structural pattern of the case’ that you think you can detect (dynamic of the case).

You (initially) follow both these tracks of the lived-life living and the told-story-telling separately and interpreting each according to a particular procedure, which we call an *initial* *chunk-by-chunk future-blind procedure* *using a panel.*  BNIM uses initially two 3-hour interpretive panels engaged in a chunk-by-chunk, future-blind approach. What is meant by ‘future-blind’ ? What is meant by ‘chunk-by-chunk’?

### 1.5.3. Kick-start panels, chunk by chunk, future-blind chunks

#### **1.5.3.1. Overview**

BNIM requires the researcher – at least to start with -- to go forward through the events (of the interaction in the interview, and of the previous living in the previously-lived life) as did the subject: future-blind, moment by moment, having intentions and predictions but – like all of us -- never knowing what will actually come next or later. *We want to know what that moment felt like to him or her*. We are reconstructing the moments of jerky evolution of a *dated* *situated subjectivity that, at every and any given moment, does not know its future*.

**Why does BNIM do this initial mode of interpretation ?**

The *chunk-by-chunk future-blind and track-by-track approach* avoids a number of epistemological dangers inherent in other ways of interpreting biographical interview texts.

In particular, it avoids the ‘biographic inevitability illusion’ whereby the researcher’s god-like immediate impressionistic grasp of the ‘whole text of the whole life-story’ generates a numbing sense that the life and the story (the situation and the subjectivity) could only be lived that way and told that way, and above all understood (theorised by ‘Science’, i.e. you) that way. [[61]](#footnote-62)

Unlike some other methods, BNIM’s chunk-by-chunk provisionality-stressing approach helps to subvert *a dull ‘naturalism’ (or retrospective impressionistic pre-determinism)* and to restore a sense of *virtual lives not lived and virtual stories not told*. This brings the actual ‘decisions’ – and the actual and possible conditions of these and other decisions -- in the successive ‘present moments’ of the subjective interpreting and acting and experiencing subject whose ‘account’ we are studying into stereoscopic clarity.

[Comparative study and especially cross-national and cross-temporal comparison powerfully enhances the sense of ‘historical and sub-cultural specificity’ of each particular case.]

The ‘future-blindness’ of the interview subject (like that of all of us) both in every moment of their life (and that moment of their life called a 2-3 hours BNIM interview, no more and no less) is *replicated in the panel*. The members of the panel (other than the researcher) only know about previous ‘presented chunks’ and have no idea what’s coming next.

**In addition, an initial 3-hour interpretive panel is used for each track.**

In these initial ‘kick-start’ panels, you are reconstructing the ‘states of mind of the actor’ in different contexts of action.

The chunk-by-chunk and track-by-track ‘sense of provisionality’ is further enhanced by the procedure where the researcher starts their work on each of the two tracks by working within *initial 3-hour BNIM interpretive panels* in which three or four peers kick-start the researcher’s interpretive process in a procedure that challenges any assumptions the researcher may have had about the “obviously best” interpretation “of each chunk and even of “it all”.

This very early liberation from what might be called ‘unchallenged researcher autism’ is an important part of the procedure. Ad hoc groups of (mostly or entirely) non-specialists drawn from a variety of backgrounds to ensure difference of experiences and perspectives, the BNIM kick-start interpretive panels are discussed later. Contrary to expectations, they are not too difficult to set up, and their short, three-hour, experiences are – for all concerned -- as a personal and professional learning experience normally both insightful and often funny.

But not always funny: sometimes, the panel may be at risk of becoming unexpectedly distressing in a way that is not easy (especially for the BNIM novice) to anticipate . The need to think hard about how to prepare for and deal with unexpected emotion in the panel process – particularly when the material itself is emotionally difficult – is dealt with elsewhere.

Setting the kick-start (or more than that) panel business aside for the moment (though see later sections 3.2.4. and Appendices B and F.2), where were we?

BNIM’s initial and specific interpretation methodology involves procedures that are (a) *future-blind chunk-by-chunk*, where (b) *each chunk is seen as a moment in a part-by-part-to-whole act of thinking, feeling and doing*.

#### 1.5.3.2. Constant revising hypotheses of ‘historical subjectivity in action’ hypotheses

The focus is always on the inferring and re-inferring ‘historical-subjectivity-in-situation’ supposed to be ‘behind’ (or ‘in’) the manifest data (as mentioned earlier, p. **).**

We are interested in the lived experience of the *dated situated subjectivity’s telling of the told story* not the story in itself). The data is the flow of events in the life until the moment of the interview, and in the telling of the told story during that prolonged 2-3 hour last recorded moment of that life. That (surface) flow of which do have a record is ‘interpreted’: ‘revealing something about the flow of subjectivity’ behind the behavioural data.

That flow of ‘behaviours’ in the life as far as the interview, and that flow of ‘behaviours’ during the interview: this is the flow of data to be interpreted as expressing and indicating a flow of dated situated subjectivity which it is our job to interpret. The data-record are the behaviours as they flowed over time (time of the life, time of the interview). This record is to be interpreted by constructing the best adequate model of the ‘flow over time of the dated situated subjectivity’ that gave rise to the flow of behaviours in question.

And this along two tracks, giving rise to a 3-column condensed account on one page. See p.**1409** for an example (Janette)..

How does all this two-track business happen?

### 1.5.4. Track One: Using hard BD Chronology to Interpret the living of the lived life (BDC to BDA)

#### **1.5.4.1 Why bother with ‘objective data’? Why not go straight to story?**

**Exploring the hard Biographical Data (BDA), Biographical Data Analysis**

Why bother? Why not just go straight to the analysis of the telling of the told story?

We don’t wish to be seduced by the interviewee’s current (and us-directed) story! The object of constructing a chronology of the ‘hard biographical data’ is to reduce (never abolish) the danger and level of such a seduction.

As interviewer, you heard the story of the life as told. As listener to the tape and as transcriber and reader of the transcript, you have heard it again.

Treat this as having been subjected to two attempts at (unconscious or conscious) hypnotism. The teller desperately wants you to accept their story, to see things as she or he currently sees them, for you to adopt their current perspective on what happened. More importantly, they want themselves to accept the basic assumptions of that current perspective.

How can you create a space in your mind so that you can think *independently* about the strengths and weaknesses and the propagandist function of the account and present perspective embodied in that telling by the anxious-to-convince teller?

A partial contribution to such ‘autonomous thinking’ is, before looking again at the hypnotic telling of the told story, is to do something else. You construct your own account of the ‘objective events’ that have marked the person’s life, of the event-structures that provide the bigger and smaller contexts of the telling of the story.

You want to avoid the ‘seductions’ of their story (as indicated above). In addition, you may want to avoid the ‘seductions’ of your own personal reactions to the interviewee which make you misrecognise the significance of the events they mention.

One researcher took a strong dislike to a given interviewee, who in her story glossed over a particular difficult event in her early life when she narrowly avoided rape. When reading the transcript, the researcher failed to think *independently* about that set of events. It was only when she engaged in the BDC-disciplined extraction of the ‘actual events’ from the ‘dismissive telling’ and from her ‘dismissive dislike’ of the woman that she was able to stop glossing over them and to *think about them* independently of the woman’s displeasing account and her own dislike of the woman.

The BDC helps you develop objectivity about the subjectivity your studying and about her current interpretation of things

#### 1.5.4.2. BDA Procedures in/after the kickstart panel

For the first interpretive track, a Chronology of Objective Life Events (**BDC**) is first constructed from a reading of the transcript. “Objective life events” are characteristically those that could be independently checked (e.g. using official documents) such as records of school and employment and other organizations.[[62]](#footnote-63)

Each item of this Biographical Data Chronology (BDC) (e.g. *“Took but did not pass exams at age 16”*) is stripped of the subject’s current or previous interpretation (e.g. *“disappointed at failing exams at age 16*”, or “*failed exams because of X-factor*” or “*failed exams and this changed my life for the good by setting me on path P*”).

What remains for the panel to look at is a de-subjectivised datum or construct (e.g. *“Took but did not pass exams at age 16”*).

Each of these ‘stripped objective chunks’ (there might be 10 or 20 of them) is then presented in chronological order as a separate chunk to a research panel, which is asked to consider how this event might have been experienced /interpreted *at the time* – called an ‘experiential hypothesis’ -- , and, if that experiential hypothesis were true, what might be expected to occur next or later (‘following hypothesis’). in this series of life-event chunks

How they actually experienced it at the time in their then-perspective may be *misreported* from their current perspective: that is why the ‘stripping of current subjectivity’ is necessary for the BDC. (The notion of ‘perspectives’ is discussed in an appendix starting on p.**1099**, which you might want to read at some time)

Alternative counter-hypotheses and alternative tangential hypotheses are always sought for whatever experiential hypotheses are initially put forward.[[63]](#footnote-64)

After many hypotheses about what it might have been like to live the experience of the moment recorded in the BDC ( and counter-hypotheses and tangential hypotheses) have been collected and recorded, the next life-event chunk is presented. Its implications for the previously-generated experiential and following hypotheses are considered: some may be supported by the new datum, others seem less plausible, yet others unaffected. Such implications are noted. Then a new round of hypothesizing commences.

An oscillating process of both imaginative identification with those involved in living the lived life and then critical distance from them is sought: previous hypotheses are constantly to be corrected and refined by reflection on the emergence of future event-chunks as they are presented one -by-one .

The process of ’imagining’ what it must/might have been like for that individual to experience that moment at that time can be described as ‘imaginative identification’. It is very much like the process of ‘empathy with a person in the here and now’. It is very much like a historian attempting to ‘reconstruct’ the dated situated subjectivity of somebody in the past (see earlier citations from R.G. Collingwood). It is very much like the work of a historical novelist doing the same (Kate Grenville’s description of her moving from would-be historical case-reconstruction research of her ancestors in early Australia to what we might call avowedly fictional case-construction is fascinating: see her novel *The Secret River* and above all her autobiographical *Search for the Secret River*).

At the heart of both fictional case-construction and factual case-reconstruction (the latter being what BNIM does) is this attempt at *proliferating ‘imaginative (temporary) identifications’ in the form of working hypotheses to be enriched and corrected by later work.*

After three hours of panel work, the researcher then proceeds on their own to complete work on any remaining chunks (separately or bundled together): or in some other way of ‘getting to think the whole’ (see p.**747** onwards).

A brief account of the evolution of the lived life (a history of the lived-life evolution) is then constructed by the researcher, considering alternative structural hypotheses that make ‘best sense’ of the data considered in this way. An example is given on p.**752** onwards.

This preliminary brief account of the evolution of the lived life (in terms of what we might call attributed pattern LL) will be profoundly modified later, after the examination of the telling of the told story. However, it sets up a context and a set of sensitising hypotheses for refutation and enrichment after the researcher starts on the second interpretive track.

It can also (and nearly always does) incite the researcher to realise what further independent socio-historical research they might need to undertake to get to grips with the ‘individual history’ in question, after or even before the second interpretive track is undertaken.

**Biographical Data work is elaborated in much more detail in Wengraf (2001: 236-70) and also will be dealt with below (section 3.3.3. “The living of the lived life track” p. 710 onwards)**

### 1.5.5. Imagining alternative ways of telling

***Then. What are the different ways that somebody might tell the story of such a lived life?***

The researcher then generates a variety of hypotheses as to how somebody who had lived their life according to the attributed pattern A *might tell their story of that life*. There are always many ways.

This imagination of **possible tellings of the told story** is then a preparation for working on the second interpretive track. The task is not to guess correctly (though it is very confirming if and when this starts to partly happen) but to sensitise oneself to possibilities. The construction of a variety of possible chronology-compatible told stories helps the researcher to avoid being seduced or ‘overwhelmed’ by the emotional pressure of the persuasive story as actually told. Examples of such ‘alternative told stories’ can be found in Wengraf (2001: 270-1). See also p.**765** onwards for an example.[[64]](#footnote-65)

***Then. The Second Interpretive Track is now attended to: the actual Telling of the Told Story (and, after that, the Mutations of Subjectivity over the Whole Life)***

#### It’s often very helpful to work from an example. On the next page, we have an example of a 3-column summary of work on three columns.

#### The first column is the ‘Biographical Data Analysis’ of the sort to which you have just been introduced

*The second and third column are the summing up of the ‘subjective side’ currently called the ‘Perspectives Data Analysis’ (composed of column 3, the Teller Flow Analysis plus column 2, the SSS, successive states of subjectivity).*

They refer to a case known as ‘Lola’.

For mysterious technical reasons to be fathomed out and corrected, what was a singlepage 3-column sheet has been cut up by WORD into three pages. Please pretend that this hasn’t happened.

The next sections show you how you move to fill in for your own case the 2nd and 3rd column of the 3-column reporting format – not necessarily in quite the same way as this early example.

Figure 7 Lola: 3-column diagram example

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Biographical Data Analysis (BDA)  over life | Perspectives Data Analysis (PDA) | |
| Phases of Mutating Subjectivity/Perspective – but some BDC as well (sorry) | TFA |
| Belfast->London Born Belfast 1960 into family network. When she was 2, her nuclear family left Belfast for Liverpool Pregnancy interrupts studies (1976) Age 16 – A-level preparation for a nursing career interrupted by pregnancy. Short period in Ireland.  *Young family, odd jobs*  (1976-1981) 16-21 Married and had another child. Supported by herself by a variety of jobs. Nursing assistant -> manager mid-1980s (25?) –90s Started career as nursing auxiliary, left hospital to join nursing agency, agency work included home for the elderly and home for autistic adolescents (she stayed there 5 years, becoming manager). Father died in that period. Social work -> SW manager career (1990s -> now). Starts access to SW course. Starts SW degree course. Placed with homelessness agency and hospice for the dying. Refuses post-graduation job offer with latter. After university, joins housing association for 9 months, then gets her time-of-interview job as Client Services coordinator at Centerbridge, housing referral agency for homeless Irish people in Liverpool.  *2 years after interview*  Social worker in a hospital | *Subjective Data from both sub-sessions*  1. Came from a large nursing family and ‘*wanted to be a nurse like my Nan’*. Parents ‘*obsessed with each other’*’, but it isn’t clear whether this was a problem/perspective for her earlier on before her father died. Clear vocation.  2. Vocation smashed. On-course for nurse training, got pregnant and “*my world caved in*”. Not consulted about pregnancy. Sent to Ireland and felt abandoned, but told not to feel this. Very embarrassed*. “I’d let myself down and given in”.* Married[ somebody somehow] and had another child. Hated to have to ‘indulge’ people in the hotel when she worked in hotels. Her account feels like ‘depressed grit your teeth and raise your kids’ .  *Auxiliary Nursing was too clinical*”. No sense of personal alivenrss  3. 5 years work in the residential home. “*Best job I’ve ever had or am likely to have really*”. The children bit and scratched but were “*as human as me, more so perhaps*”. Need for love and for loving firmness to ensure their progress.  4. Father dies and mother after this “*becomes increasingly awful*”, trying to divide up Lola and her sisters and sabotage her relation with her husband, Peter. She represents her struggle “*not to b e reduced to tears in 3 minutes*” and to guard both her sisters and her children from her mother’s nastiness.  5. She then starts on an SW course and is ‘placed’ in a hospice for the dying. She has supervision in dealing with terribly difficult situations (“*What if it was my mother in there… they/we only want to know she loves them/us… they must realise that maybe she won’t”)* and under supervision can (just) cope with people and their families dying”.  6. Refuses permanent ‘holistic’ job in the hospice*, “too much”,* and goes to work in short-term contact with clients  “*You can’t help but build up a relationship… needing to be needed… to be honest”,* and then in terms of ‘professionalising her four-person team into adult-adult exchange across firm boundaries.  *“No buddy-buddy indulgence: it’s the chaotic child within*”. Importance of firmness behind boundaries with her mother, of her staff with their clients, of herself and the autistic children*. “You could psychologise it if you want”* but we just provide firm short-term support, with occasional exceptions. | ***1. Main narrative – my working life till now***  “I always wanted to be a nurse, I had my children very young but not though choice, it happened anyway”  *Challenging job, then moving on.* Reports on each job + argumentation about how challenging it was, self-evaluation, seeking new challenges and moving on. *Wanted something else, to exceed.*  *Mention only of families.* Positive mention of her Nan, mentions her 2 children and her father dying. [Otherwise no mention of family of origin, none about father of her children]  ***2. Non-standard Sub –Session Two - SSDI***   1. *SSDI. argumentation with narratives – background, family, pregnancy and worsening relationship with her mother vs sister-solidarity*    * Pregnancy ‘victim’; story of family ‘supportiveness’ but also ‘controllingness’ (month in Ireland was for whom?).    * Parents ‘obsessed’ with each other. Mother’s deterioration after father’s death, vicious, no respect for boundaries. Conditional love, wanting to know to manipulate. Setting strict boundaries. Sibling struggle for autonomy by keeping mother at distance. ‘’She won’t break us’ 2. *SSDI Professional boundary-watching: args+narr*    * Not being ‘nosy’, professional life & 3 sisters incident. ‘I challenged their relationship with mother’. From buddy-buddy ‘need to be needed’ to prof. relations at Centerbridge. ‘Chaotic child that knows no boundaries’. View of many clients. |
| Career interrupted by pregnancy and family Caring profession within bio-medical profession of ‘nursing’ and then shifts to psychosocial (autistic kids), and then father dies. She starts again as social worker (homelessness agency, then referral manager), Frontline worker -> manager. | Obsessive less-than-focused-caring parents and resolute vocational calling towards both caring and “a need to be needed” and disappointments when she (1) lets herself down by letting her boyfriend have sex with her, (2) getting pregnant and her world caves in, (3) slow recuperation despite 3 children and avoiding nursing as too clinical, (4) Discovering ‘firm love and expressive emotion’ with the autistic children, (4) Death of parents and families in hospice is “too much”, and then creates a “firm short-term adult-adult loving regime” in her referral agency. (5) Firmness towards chaotic children and her mother | * + Prof: Don’t judge them, they’re adults, treat them as such. Adult->adult challenging, not indulging. Keep your own boundary that will be attacked.   + Personal: We all need to be needed. But. Don’t give in, to sex-wanting boyfriend, invasive mother or ‘needy clients’. |

### 1.5.6. Track Two: Perspectives Data Analysis (TFA +MicroA)

The second interpretative track -- always subsequent to the first -- is focused on the evolution of the subjective account in the interview as the interviewee improvises their ‘performance’ in the interview interaction, in their “the telling of the told story” as embodied in the transcript. This gives us strong data about the ‘current state of subjectivity’. It then proceeds to a crucial further stage: a more tentative reconstruction of the mutations of ‘states of subjectivity’ (roughly equal to ‘perspective’, but see later) over the whole life.

How does this happen?

If we look at example of the output of Track Two, we see there are two columns (2,3).

#### 1.5.6.1. Sequentialising the transcript into segments

First, the transcript needs to be processed into a sequence of “segments.”: this is called ‘sequentialising’. This is a technically-demanding procedure that needs to be learnt carefully. Doing it, sequentialising, generating the sequentialisation, has a powerful effect of making the researcher see things quite differently. Each ‘segment’ is marked by a continuity of one particular theme with one particular textsort (a textsort is the manner in which a theme or topic is being talked about).

This starts to happen even before the actual sequentialisation eventually produced is put to work in the interpretive panel and otherwise.

##### 1.5.6.1.1. Triple criteria for starting a new segment

A new segment or ‘chunk’ is said to start when there is a change of speaker, of topic, or of the tone or manner in which a topic is addressed (see below and also Wengraf 2001; chapter 12).

The ‘chunks’ are not chunks of the verbatim transcript. A working document is created in which the content of the chunk of verbatim transcript is summarised, a ‘gist’ is constructed by the researcher, the gist of what is said, together with a characterisation of the manner (the type of text, the text-sort) in which the topic-content was addressed. This researcher-constructed document (of gist+textsort segments) is called a TSS (Text Structure Sequentialisation) and the panel works with those chunks of the TSS. A 60-page transcript might be summarised into, say, a 10-page sequentialisation/TSS with 30 chunks identified making up the 10 pages. This 10-page summary is much easier to handle than the original 60-page transcript (see Wengraf 2001: 242, 250-1 for examples). It is like a contents page. It *is* a special sort of contents page, but more…..

However, when and where you think this useful, you refer back to the original verbatim transcript or even original recording. [A similar but usually much shorter working document summarises, as we have seen, the Chronology of lived life events, the ‘Biographical Data Chronology’; see Wengraf 2001: 238].

The transcript is ‘sequentialised’ into chunks. A new ‘chunk’ starts when the person speaking changes, the topic changes, or the manner in which the topic is talked about (the textsort) changes.

*Change of speaker* in a transcript is obvious; *change of topic or theme* , not too difficult.

*What is a textsort change, a change of the manner in which a topic is talked about?*

##### 1.5.6.1.2. The textsort criterion for starting a new chunk

BNIM initially distinguished three textsorts, A-N-D. There was either an ‘argumentation’ a ‘narrative’, or a ‘description’ going on (or a mix).

Currently, we find it useful to distinguish five textsorts. ‘Narrative’ is divided into ‘Report’ and ‘Particular Incident Narrative’ (PIN). ‘Evaluation’ is added as an appendix to some sort of ‘narrative’.

That gives us

D-R-A-P-E for five main textsorts. If you include condensed *Situation,*  you get

D-R-A-P-E-S.

It requires a lot of work and some (self-) training learn to think in terms of DRAPES textsorts. Why is it important to distinguish the textsorts?

A ‘textsort’ is a preliminary crude attempt at categorisation of “the manner in which” a topic is talked about.

In a particular interview, if we know that two topics were dealt with, Work and Family, and each were described for the equivalent of two transcript pages, our knowledge is real and limited. If we know that the two transcript pages devoted to one topic (in our example, Work) took the shape of an outpouring of the detail of two particular incidents that happened at work (PINs) ; and the two pages devoted to the other topic (in our example, Family) took the the form of an impassioned disquisition or argumentation about families in the 20th century with no reference to the person’s own family (Argumentation), then we can start to interpret why one topic was dealt with in one ‘manner’ (textsort) and the other was dealt in an other ‘manner’.

You can’t start to interpret ‘ways’ and ‘way-change’ unless you categorise ways, apply textsort labels.

For more detail on textsorts, see p.**1400** for a diagram; see p. **1198** for a not too serious account of the history of textsort-labels. See also p. **804** for a further discussion in detail.

In any case, the electronic record is transcribed into a verbatim transcript. The verbatim transcript is ‘sequentialised’ into chunks. A new chunk starts when there is a change of any of the following: (i) change of speaker; (ii) change of topic; (iii) change of textsort.[[65]](#footnote-66)

It is important to bear in mind that a technical description of sequential chunks (the TSS) is not just defined by flow of ‘themes and sub-themes’. It is simultaneously defined by the way any given topic or theme or subtheme (‘thematics’ covers all three at this point without going into detail) has suddenly started to be talked about differently. A change of ‘textsort’ (a manner of speaking) is as important and defining as change of chunk as is a change of theme.

The flow is broken up, a new BNIM-chunk has started, when either a new thematic is introduced (even if the manner in which thematics are talked about remain the same) or when a new textsort starts to operate (even if the topic or thematic doesn’t change at all).

You can think of the descriptive work of a TSS (Text Structure Sequentialisation) as being the description of a sequence of Thematic and Textsort ‘chunks’, the ‘chunk’ consisting of a so-far unchanged theme in unity with a sof-far unchanged textsort.

##### 1.5.3.6.1.3. How is the sequentialisation used?

The description of the sequence of thematic/textsort ‘chunks’ is used for subjectivity-interpretation.

The initial use of the sequentialisation-chunks is for a new *initial future-blind chunk-by-chunk panel*. (For several other uses, see p.**815** and onwards). This kick-start panel has the pleasure (and it is fun!) of dealing with the telling-of-the-told-story (the personnel of this new panel may overlap with those of the previous BDA panel, but preferably would be at least a bit different, ideally as different as possible, but this can be rarely achieved and is certainly not essential). This is called a ‘TFA’ panel.

#### 1.5.6.2. Teller Flow Analysis (new) (TFA)

**‘TFA’** used to stand (as in my 2001 textbook) for ‘Thematic Fields Analysis’. As of 2010, I think it would be better to think primarily in terms of the eventual output of the TFA ‘procedure’ to be a ‘**Teller Flow Analysis.** Used carefully **’and in conjunction with text-sort understanding, ‘thematic field analysis’ is a useful (if potentially flawed) way of thinking about one aspect of this whole Track Two subjectivity-interpretation process**.[[66]](#footnote-67)

This focus on the ‘data flow of the telling’ enables a very stark contrast with other quite legitimate concerns which explore the ‘themes of the told story’ rather than the subjectivity of a particular teller. The procedure is unchanged. [[67]](#footnote-68)

The procedure of dealing with the ‘interview-event chunks’ is the same as that just described for dealing with the ‘life-event chunks’. Each interview-event segment (sequentialisation-chunk) is presented in turn to another three-hour BNIM panel that attempts to imagine how each such interview event and action might have been experienced by the subject at that moment of the interview.

For the Teller Flow Analysis, there is always at least a ‘double experiencing’ interfering and making more complex the meanings of that flow. There is ‘the original experiencing’ at the event or time being spoken about (“my first kiss”) and there is the ‘current interview experiencing’ of recalling and talking about some of it in the interview at this point to the interview in question. This ‘double experiencing’ (and it may be treble if, while talking in the interview now about my first kiss 30 years ago, I not only recall my experience of t then but also how I talked about that first kiss to some other person that I kissed later) is complex -- and crucial-- to distinguish.

Experiential and following hypotheses are sought, as are counter-hypotheses and also hypotheses that are tangential to those initially put forward.[[68]](#footnote-69) The hypotheses generated are then subject to subsequent correction and refinement as further segments are presented later. As in the case of biographic data, after three hours of panel work, the researcher continues on their own – not necessarily chunk-by-chunk, certainly not only chunk-by-chunk -- enriched by the panel’s recorded deliberations.

Enriched by the experiencing of the initial panel and its structural hypothesising, you as interpreter have choices as to how to proceed after the second of the two panels.

An example of a TFA panel working to interpret the ‘chunks’ of a sequentialisation can be found in my 2001 textbook (Wengraf 2001: 278-80) and in SGDM Volume III below (p. **837**).

#### **1.5.6.3. After the TFA panel, carry on but how?**

**After the ‘telling-of-the-told-story’ TFA Teller-Flow-Analysis panel**

* You may continue with the same procedure, but this is unlikely.
* You may (at least for stretches of the transcript) proceed with a much broader-brush version of the sequentialisation.
* You may use the sequentialisation to identify key sections to focus upon.
* At some point you will simply check through the rest of the material (transcript and/or sequentialisation) to verify, rectify, or develop better structural hypotheses than those developed by the initial panel.
* You may well use other procedures of ‘interview text interpretation’ which appear to you to be appropriate or necessary.

Conditions of work and the complexity and shape of each interview and your strategy for answering your Central Research Question will determine different choices for moments of post-panel interpreting.

#### 1.5.6.4. Additional micro-analyses of puzzling verbatim transcript segments

In addition, a similar future-blind procedure of panel interpretation is also carried out – usually towards the end of the interpretive process -- for puzzling and potentially illuminating segments of the verbatim-text (**Microanalysis** see p. **890** onwards for details).[[69]](#footnote-70)

#### 

#### 1.5.6.5. Track Two Perspectives Data Analysis: (SSS)

You then develop a third phase-account within the ‘subjectivity track’. This was implicit in our earlier work: since about 2011, I have now made it explicit.

After the TFA of the initial free-form subsession one (and maybe of subsession two), suggesting the phases of the telling in the interview, you then proceed to construct another subjectivity model.

***Successive phases/states of subjectivity over the life-period****.*

This attempts to construct a model of the mutations of subjectivity over the whole life (or other period covered in the BDC). This uses subjective-data material from all subsessions and other sources.

Earlier modes of subjectivity, earlier perspectives, are more difficult to detect. However, they are of great interest if you want to understand how the current subjectivity perspective (as embodied in the interview treated as a subjective expression of currently dated situated subjectivity) came about and, therefore, how it might develop under different future conditions.

First, quotations are selected from any point in the interview that seemed to suggest different phases over time of ‘states of subjectivity’ (states of mind). These are arranged for inspection on a single page in a presumed order of ‘emergence’ over the oife-period in question, from beginning to end.

Second, on the basis of these ‘arranged quotations’, a phase model of the presumed ‘emergence’ and ‘departure’ of presumed ‘successive states of subjectivity’ is constructed, using bits of the ‘arranged quotations’ as evidence. This is the ’second column’ of the ‘three-column condensation’.

The TFA of the interview is the basis primarily of reconstructing the current phase of subjectivity/perspective out of which the interview was given. It amounts to a ‘structuralist’ more general understanding of the TFA.

It gives glimpses of past subjectivity/perspectives but as seen from the present subjectivity/perspective.

To understand a case history requires you to understand previous subjectivity/perspectives in their own right. This means providing a quotation-using evocation of such previous subjectivity/perspectives, each with their own view at the time of past and future (retrospecting and at least implicitly prospecting) as the subject *then* conceived them.

The first approximation is finding quotations (from anywhere) showing these earlier ‘states of mind’. The second, more polished stage – not usually in the 3 columns though – involves trying to convey the subtle specificity of each distinct ‘state of subjectivity’ by using general terms to ‘explain’ the quotations that embody (but do not convey conceptually) each of those distinguished successive states.

An example can be found of such a second column in respect of ‘Harold’ on p.929.

#### 1.5.6.6. Keeping all panel work and all writing columns ‘pure’

A warning note. It is comparatively easy to keep ‘subjectivity facts’ out of your track one analysis of the living-of-the-lived-life. *It is much more difficult to keep ‘knowledge of the objective facts and evaluations of ‘adequacy’ out of your track two analysis of the telling of the told story.* Why?

1) The chunks of the sequentialisation (track two) contain constant implicit and explicit references to ‘the real world’ in a way that the ‘de-subjectivised chunks of the Chronology (BDC) do not.

2) We are programmed to constantly be ‘evaluating’ (in terms of the known and plausible ‘real world’) the subjective assertions of others. It is very easy to write *“He came to see that….”* (implying that you know that he was right to think that he saw that) instead of *“He now thinks that he came to see that….”* (not implying that his later view was more adequate to reality than his earlier one, which is his current perspective on which -- during track two -- you shouldn’t have your own opinion). The only discipline which professionally guards you against such premature ‘identifying and evaluating’ work may be that of old-fashioned anthropology, or a rigorous post-modernism.

3) Our work in the TFA panel on the telling of the told story can only work if we do (temporarily) identify with the teller and come to inhabit the universe of his ‘current perspective’ from which he tells the story of his past experiences and perspectives *(“I suddenly realised that I’d got it wrong. I came to see that X was the case…..”).* It is then difficult in your writing-up of the ‘pattern of the telling of the told story’ to break out of that necessary (but necessarily temporary) identification, out of the deliberate succumbing to seduction, and describe it (non-evaluatively, *yet*) from the ‘outside’ in a carefully-constructed new-objective account.

4) Our overall CRQ and BNIM approach requires us to do such evaluation (later), and it is very difficult *not to do it while doing track two,* ***but only to do*** *such inevitable and very necessary ‘evaluation of the adequacy of subjectivity’* ***later on in the next major task,*** *bringing the two strands/tracks together, generating the Case-account.*

If you don’t keep subjectivity-facts out of track one discussions and your ‘knowledge and opinion about the real-world facts’ out of track two, you will get a confusing unexamined very repetitive and unjustified mess. 10% of people do this.

A brief summary of the evolution of the telling-of-the-told story is written up, to summarise the findings of the second interpretive track. Examples are given on p.**859** onwards.

#### **1.5.6.7**.Structural hypotheses: separate structural hypotheses between and within tracks

*Throughout the separate examination of each series – the living of the chronologically-lived life; the unfolding telling of the interview-told story -- separate structural hypotheses are sought.*

What do we mean by a ‘separate structural hypothesis’? It is a hypothesis about the structure of the whole series (either the living of the lived life; or the telling of the told story); or, based on the first two, the evolution and essence of the ‘case’, that is suggested as a pattern or gestalt by the process of interpretation so far. The hypothesis is: *“if the pattern we have seen so far were to be characteristic of the whole of the series of data/ case-data that we are studying, then this is what might be true:….”* For the principles of part-whole interpretation, see Scheff (1997).

*Once you have completed these separate investigations of the pattern shown in the living of the lived-life series (biographic data analysis BDA) and the pattern shown in the telling of the told story series (teller flow analysis TFA), what next?*

## 1.6. The Case-Account for your CRQ: after the preparatory work

**You now have**

* **a phase model of the objective data of the lived life;**
* **a phase model of the micro-phases of the movements of subjectivity in the telling of the told story in the interview;**
* **a phase-model of the mutations of subjectivity over the period of the lived life.**

To help you keep the essence of the two tracks in mind, you attempt to construct a one -page ( three-columns) forced condensation (see an example on p. **1402** below).

**Then. Putting the Two Tracks Together: developing ideas for the Case-Account**

Only after the tracks have been hypothesised about separately do you then – in a process of knitting together – seek *connecting inter-track structural hypotheses*. [[70]](#footnote-71) These *connecting* structural hypotheses relate the lived-life findings (LL) to the telling-of-the-told-story findings (TS) in a question about the dynamics of the case which can then be addressed:

“*Why did the person who lived their life like this (LL), tell their story like that (TS)?”.*

Alternatively:

*“Given he or she now tells their story like TS, what does that suggest about how they came to live their life like LL ?”.*

And

*What is the pattern* HiSS/TUF2 *(Historical Subjectivities-in-Situations in Transitions between Unknown Futures) of historically-situated and evolving and acting subjectivity that explains both pattern LL and pattern TS?[[71]](#footnote-72)*

Having then thought about the ‘connecting structural hypotheses’ that could explain both pattern **LL** and pattern **TS**, you then proceed to use these hypotheses to write *your* *own historical narrative of the mutations of the case.* Such a case-presentation must be one that enables you to take properly into account and into your account both the inner-world and outer-world dynamics and the contingencies involved. [[72]](#footnote-73)

You need to construct and convey a sense – your best sense - of a historically-evolving situation (or several) being subjectively processed and of a historical subjectivity experiencing and acting in their evolving situation*[[73]](#footnote-74)*.

*And for your particular research interest (Central Research Question):*

*“What does all this tell us about my object of study?”* (see p.**1** for more detail about BNIM interpretation processes.[[74]](#footnote-75)

The separate results of the lived-life analysis and the telling-of-the-told-story analysis are brought together in a way that modifies and enriches and questions the separate accounts previously constructed. This involves going back to transcript and field-notes and digital record, and going wider to any other contextual and case material that can help the next stage. This is key to the quality of your further understanding of the case in context.

The researcher works to produce a ‘case-account’ that describes the dynamics and significance of the way the case evolved over time (the researcher’s constructed narrative of the history or evolution of the ‘case’).

This involves considering the differences between the historical subjectivity-in-situation at the start, and that at the end of the period covered and at the time of the BNIM interview. Examples are suggested on p.**964** onwards.

## 1.7. Comparing several cases – Generalising and Particularising Theory (GPT)

Once a number of cases have been analysed in this way (say between three and five), then a systematic panel-based procedure for comparing the dynamics of these ‘whole cases’ can be used to lay the basis for case-based theorisation).

The method of comparative interpretation typically used is certainly grounded and emergent from within the case. However, it points simultaneously both to the generalities and typologies characteristic of Grounded Theory Research (GR) , but also to the accounts of particular dynamics and contingencies of particular cases (of people, organisations, whatever*)* characteristic of Case-Study Research.

Not just Grounded Generalising Theory (**GT, GGT**). It is a waste of the knowledge of ‘difference’ between cases if you just hunt for similarities. It is a waste of the knowledge of ‘similarities’ if you just describe (an infinite number) of differences.

You need to hold both similarities and differences in mind for yourself; you need to write-up and present to others in such a way that they too can hold similarities and differences in their minds. To achieve this, you need to design and evolve a complex strategy of presentation.[[75]](#footnote-76)

*It is both Generalising and Particularising theorising* (each to do the other better), **(GPT)** even if explicit generalising is – for good reasons – deliberately delayed.

Jane Helen Graham (2010) decided to do an interesting experiment in’triangulating’ her interpretive work, using both Grounded Theory and BNIM interpretive panels. She writes:

I found the combination of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method of analysis (panel interviews) and implementation of a Grounded Theory approach

to be complementary and at times, useful.

However, on reflection, the Grounded Theory processes of coding were incredibly intensive, time consuming and laborious. Though it was clear that my findings which emerged from having implemented the coding processes were supportive of and on the whole consistent with the findings of the panel interviews, I felt that the benefit of employing a Grounded Theory approach did not justify the enormous efforts involved, in a research study which was time limited, and given its interdisciplinary nature, already an intense piece of work.

With hindsight, I can now understand my need to ‘back up’ my BNIM analysis with a secondary method in the context of a defence against the anxiety of inexperience

However, the Grounded Theory approach did offer me a systematic analytical pathway for data which was not presented for panel analysis due to such time constraints. Findings from both methods were in the main, congruent.

(Graham 2010: 95-6, re-ordered).

Personally, I was surprised when I read this finding of Graham. I had read about GT – and very much appreciated the tremendous work of Strauss (1987) – but had always thought that GT would have been ‘speedier’ than BNIM. It may be that other researchers have also experience of GT and BNIM and it would be useful (as always) to have more information about such experiences. So, do write in!

What if you’re “against” the Grounded Theory movement?

You may be somebody who dislikes the rhetoric of ‘grounded theory’ and self-consciously intends to use the case material within a particular pre-existing conceptual-theoretical framework. In which case, unless you have a pretty omniscient theory, you will find that the GPT procedures below will help *not displace your current framework* but *enrich and where appropriate correct* *and refine* the current version of the one you are using. [Otherwise, you don’t need to do any new research because you know in advance that you and your theoretical model have nothing to learn!].

A diagram which suggests how you move from work on a single case to work on multiple cases (Condense and expand) can be found on p. **1381.**

**For a short summary of the ‘Key principles and stages’ described above, please go to p.210.**

For further exposition of BNIM interpretation procedure , please go to p. **1** below.

For technical detail, Wengraf 2001 ch.12; …..

**and then you could look at one or more of the Discussion Appendices on ‘interpretation and ethics’ starting on p. 1031 below; and relevant BNIM articles and chapters, see list starting on p. 1297.**

## 

## 1.8. Key principles in a couple of pages

We deal first with the key principles of BNIM interviewing, then with those of BNIM interpretation.

### 1.8.1. Key principles of BNIM Three-Sub-session interviewing

*To get a ‘feel’ for a BNIM interview, if you haven’t already done so look at* 1.1.3. Kathy, Sally, the purple sweater, and the driving test, *Now read on:*

**1. Two Sub-sessions separated by a normally short interlude.** You need a minimum 2 hour slot: if possible, 3 hours, though you are unlikely to use all of it. Total time normally 90-120 minutes, first sub-session one -third of total time, second sub session two-thirds of total time. You make cue-phrase notes throughout. You write private field-notes immediately after the second sub-session, as the necessary experience-rich complement to the digital recording and transcript by you as participant observer.

You may choose to do an optional third sub-session but do this considerably later, only after Sub-sessions and Two have been systematically inspected and thought about.

**2. Sub-session 1: the SQUIN**. You ask only one carefully designed question to start the interviewee off in telling their story. This question known as the SQUIN (the Single Question aimed at **i**nducing Narrative) is designed with several components all of which are necessary for the interview to work well. In the interview you must deliver the question as designed, not adding to it or missing bits out, or varying the wording. (A car only works with all its components in place, properly sequenced. The same is true of the BNIM initial Sub-session programmed by the initial and initiating SQUIN).

**3. Sub-session 1: facilitation of the ‘Whole Story’, but no interrupting or intervening** until the unprompted interviewee insists that they have finished. Part of the SQUIN is a promise by you not to interrupt or intervene. Keep this promise. Even if the interviewee asks you to guide them, don’t do it: you must support them deciding whatever they wish to do with the task. Even if you cannot see the point of what they are saying, *especially* if you cannot see it, you must support them in saying whatever they do say and in not saying whatever they don’t say. Restate the SQUIN if necessary; facilitate but no direction. And no intervention. You destroy a joke if you interrupt before the punchline; you destroy the BNIM interview at the moment that you attempt -- or consent -- to co-steer the interviewee. Instead you support them: wherever they take their story at whatever length is right.

**4. Sub-session 1: You make notes** (of around 3 to 5 words) for each of what you see as the key *cue-phrases* that they use as they tell their story. These cue- phrases will be used by you rather like a theatre prompter in Sub-session Two to *cue them back* to bits of their Sub-session one overall story, when you ask them to amplify those points. *Make notes on the special BNIM notepad*. Don’t change their words: miss out their words rather than change them.

**5. Interlude**. When they insist, unprompted, that they have finished their story, you normally have an interlude in which you privately choose items on the notepad to be probed in Sub-session Two. This Interlude might last on average from 5-10 minutes. The selected items must include the 1st story-item that they brought up, the last story-item; and your selection in-between. *For each cue-phrase chosen*, you write down *one ‘magic word’ from one of the three lists* at the top of the BNIM notepad. You will insert this ‘magic word’ into the ‘magic formula’ you will later use to structure the main parts of Sub-session Two.

**6. Sub-session Two: Pauseful Pushing for PINs, and…. Pausing** .

You use the notepad to “push for in-PINs” on each cue-phrase item selected. A ‘PIN’ is a Particular Incident Narrative, as exemplified in the footnote at the bottom of each page of the BNIM notepad.

You push for them by using the magic formula at the top of each notepad page – *“You said [cue-phrase]. Can you remember a particular [magic word]… how it all happened*”. During their response, you *continue making notes of the new cue-phrases* in their response. After the response, after checking the PIN formula at the bottom of the notepad page, if you see that you did not get an in-PIN, you use the magic formula again, revising it as necessary. *You may need 7 or 8, or 17 or 18, pushings to get to a in-PIN.* You will get lots of valuable non-PIN material as well when you push for PINs. Do your best to stay with an item (especially the first) till you have obtained at least one rich in-PIN or a clear refusal. [Otherwise you are unconsciously training them to not-give you PINs!].

After each response of the interviewee, *you pause to let both of you think, and to let your interviewee sink deeper towards* ***forgotten*** *images, feelings, thoughts and memories of particular incidents. . Otherwise, you only get the pre-prepared stuff…. So pause…. you need this as much as they do…. to let these processes happen…. always pause…go for slow….*

**7. Sub-session Two: you can leave items out but you must not go back to earlier items**. *“If you go back, the gestalt goes crack”.* Use only their cue-words; use only the magic formula provided; use only your selection from the list of magic words to fit into that formula. In addition, *do not try to combine items, interpret, or communicate your thoughts about anything.* Sub-session Two ends with their last PIN (or refusal) raised in relation to the last item they originally mentioned at the end of their initial Sub-session 1.

**8. After the interview (Sub-sessions 1+2), write your free-associative debriefing field notes**. Easily skimped and not taken seriously, rich field-notes are crucial for supplementing your tape and for starting the post-session process of your informal tacit-sense-making. [And if your tape-recording fails……!]. For a full length interview, for unhurried and thoughtful debriefing field-notes you should *allow yourself a full-length one -hour or more debriefing.* You were the observant co-participator; you become the participating observer and you record your ethnographic notes on the interview-interaction. Immediately afterwards. Preferably in the same location.

**9. Sub-session 3 (optional and at least 3 or 4 weeks later).** If, after interpreting the material from sub sessions 1 and 2, you find you have further questions or questions arising, you can arrange a Sub-session 3. When found necessary, this is most frequently takes the form of a more conventional semi-structured depth interview, perhaps preceded (*but never followed*) by a few narrative questions . Sometimes trhis can be done on the phone. Sometimes, you do not need a sub-session three.

### 1.8.2. Key principles of BNIM Twin-track future-blind initial interpretation procedure

(with an initial 3-hour panel for each track)

1. **Basis of interpretation: raw data**. These are: your field notes written immediately after the interview; the original recording; and the verbatim transcription. Also, after the interview, dated memos to self written later as you proceed in the interpretive work.

2. **Twin-track interpretation**. The transcript is interpreted at least twice: first to understand the pattern suggested by how the person lived their life; second, to understand the pattern of evolving situated subjectivity suggested by how, in the interview, they told their story of that life.

2. **Living of the lived life: extracting the biographical data**. For this track, you need to extract from the transcript (and, if necessary, from elsewhere) relatively uncontroversial data (that can or could in principle be externally validated) about the ‘objective events’ of the life. Stripped of all adjectives, causal explanations etc., you then arrange these data (birth, family, schooling, working life, other events in life, medical history etc) in chunks into a ‘Biographical Data Chronology’.

3. **Chunk-by-chunk future-blind interpretation: in principle**. Some interpretation procedures look at all the data all at once. To start with, at least, we deliberately don’t. Under BNIM, we are trying to get a sense of how the subject experiences their experiences and improvises their doing. We all live our lives future-planning but always future-blind. As researchers, BNIM procedures simulate this succession of chunk-by-chunk experiencing of current experiences and our future-blind current acting towards desired (and away from feared) futures.

4. **Use of a 3-hour kick-start panel for each of the two tracks**. To reduce the inevitable effects of your own blind-spots and hot-spots, the limits of your own ignorance and subjectivity, you get three or four different sorts of people to join you in an interpretive panel for future-blind interpreting. They only know each chunk as you present it to them. See (5) and (6) below. After the 3-hour panel that initiates work on each track, you then -- not necessarily in the same way -- normally work on your own (not avoiding discussion with others, of course). The panels are there to kick-start you into complexity and uncertainty.

5. **Track One** . **Interpreting the succession of BDC chunks of biographical data – future-blind**. You present the panel with the earliest chronological datum of the life. They call out hypotheses about (i) what the significance might be for the experiencing subject; (ii) what might follow next or later in the series if the hypothesis were true.

These hypotheses are all written up on flipchart paper and put up on the wall of the room as a permanent record. *No criticising, just the multitude of alternative alternatives.* Then the next chunk is put up: past hypothesising is reviewed; then new hypotheses are generated. Then the next chunk…. Towards the end of the panel time, the panel is urged to develop ‘structural hypotheses’ about what the pattern of the living of the lived life might best be said to be. Alternative versions are recorded. Then, finally, the BDA panel develops contrasting hypotheses: in what different ways might this story be told? These are also written-up. After the panel you continue on your own, not necessarily future-blind, not necessarily in chunks. Many questions will have arisen about the collective and the personal socio-historical context and glocal period. These will need further research….

6. **Track Two**. **Telling of the told story: segmenting the transcript into a sequence of chunks**. Just as you as researcher construct a Chronology of objective events in the history (BDC), you also construct a Sequentialisation, a sequence of chunks which constitute the jerky telling of the told story (TSS). [This not called a ‘chronology of the telling of the told story’ only to avoid confusion]. A new Sequentialisation chunk starts when at least one of the following occurs: (i) the speaker changes; (ii) the topic changes; or (iii) there is a change in the way in which a topic is being spoken about. You as researcher construct this sequentialisation (‘Text Structure Sequentialisation’) for more future-blind interpretation by another panel as in (4) – but also for other uses.

7. **Interpreting the succession of chunks of the sequentialised telling of the told story**. This is the TFA-flow [Teller Flow Analysis]. It starts with a new kick-start panel on a different day from that of the BDA with preferably at least some different members.. Procedure of hypothesising etc as per (4) above. The typical question is: *“At this point in their life, why, in this interview, did the subject improvise their telling of the story in the way they did, the chunk that they did?”* You describe their dated situated subjectivity , you do not (yet) evaluate it. At the end of the panel, you ask them to come up with contrasting TFA-Structure hypotheses. After the 3-hour panel – which is not likely to deal with more than 6-12 chunks of the telling of the told story -- you as researcher continue on your own, not necessarily future-blind, not necessarily in chunks

.

8. **Constructing the middle, third, column of the one-page condensation: phases of mutating subjectivity/perspectives over the life-period.** From all the subjective data in the interview and elsewhere, you construct a phase model of successive ‘subjectivity-change’ over the period of the lived life. [This will require careful detective work and a firm grasp of evidence and argument. See *Detailed Manual* 3.5.9. for details].

9. **Bringing the two tracks together**. The question is: *“Why did the person who lived their life in the pattern suggested by procedure 5 come to tell their story now in the pattern suggested by procedure 7?”*.

You attempt to develop a strong ‘connecting structural hypothesis’ that makes best sense of the connection/disjunction between the pattern suggested in the analysis of the living of the lived life (**5** above) and that suggested by the telling of the told story in the interview that is the current moment of that life (**7** and eventually **9).**

To think and to present your understanding of the historically-(re)situated subjectivity under examination and interpretation**,** a typical device is to *construct a narrative of your own: your account of the evolution, a case-history.* This involves bringing together your best understanding of the objective facts of your and their world, and your best understanding of the strengths and limitations of your and their current and previous ‘subjective perspectives’ on such a ‘world’.

10. **Handling puzzles by micro-analysis**. To clarify competing interpretations, bits of strange and uncertain expression in the verbatim transcript (or the digital recording) can be given up-close treatment in a chunk-by-chunk future-blind micro-analysis. You use a new panel for this work on a puzzling bit: normally no more than 60-90 minutes.

11. **What do we learn about that historically-dated situated subjectivity**? **What about their situation?** Both aspects are illuminated by the same twin-track (initially always future-blind, eventually always not) BNIM interpretive procedures. The default concern served by BNIM is in historically-situated subjectivities, or in historical-situations as subjectively processed.

**12. Comparing and theorising from cases**. This requires further steps to make your work relevant for other researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, etc. You need first of all to work out your own theory-language (discursive concepts) to make full sense of your cases to yourself. In principle this can be a unique private-language of your own.

It then means publication, public-action. This means showing how your cases (or at least one of them) and case-discussion (translated into their languages) produce significant awkward results – given their current theoretical and policy and practice assumptions – which require them to modify their existing ‘positions’. You have to (temporarily) give up your personal theory-language and learn their’s to do this effectively.[[76]](#footnote-77)

**Bar some extra notes, the Short Guide to BNIM ends at this point.**

Having at this point completed your reading of the brief accounts of BNIM interviewing and BNIM interpretation procedures,

* Some extra notes follow – which might be useful
* you might wish to stop here and look at some case-study material (see **bibliography A** on p. **1268** for examples) , BNIM published-products. This may be a less-dry approach.
* you might wish to go back and look at any footnotes that interested you
* perhaps after looking at one or two published BNIM presentations (Bibliography A in SGDM vol.5) you might wish to go on to more detailed discussions of BNIM interview procedures (SGDM vol.2) or of BNIM interpretive procedures (SGDM vol. 3)……

Mental Digestion Warning.

Remember that a video-manual (or any technical guide to any detailed process) such as the **BNIM Detailed Manual** is not best read through if you are not *at the same time* struggling with the practice of the technology it is there to support.

The **Detailed Manual** starting on p. **276,** will work better if you **read it as you work on selected bits of BNIM practice**. For most people it is better not to read it on its own in a way divorced from actually trying out and doing particular specified relevant practices of doing BNIM interviewing and doing the separate stages of BNIM interpreting.

The **BNIM Detailed Manual** is best thought of as something like an *Encyclopedia,* for example a medical encyclopedia. You only read what you need when you need it.

## 1.9. Some extra notes

*Are the detected themes of a told story the truth of the dated situated subjectivity?*

No.

*Is the detected pattern of the development of the interview-telling of the told story the truth of the dated situated subjectivity?*

Not yet.

*Is the detected pattern of the analysis of the biographical data the truth of the dated situated subjectivity?*

Not yet.

*The considering of the pattern of the telling now, and the pattern of the living up to now, do they bring us closer to the truth of the dated situated subjectivity?*

Getting closer……

### 1.9.1. Interviewing as ethnographic participant- observation: a note

Interested in the historically-dated situated subjectivity that expresses itself in the telling of the told story, the interviewer has a *further serious investigative tool* from within BNIM to understand the dated subjectivity of their interviewee. It is one that tends to be neglected or under-estimated. What is it?

*Built into BNIM interviewing procedure is a measure of the classic anthropological-sociological practice of fieldwork: namely, participant-observation. Or, more truthfully, observant or unobservant participation.*

In the interview, you, the interviewer, are a participant.

You are a potentially observant (or, if you aren’t careful, a rather blind) participant in the process: you are not just collecting words said and pushing for more words. You are also collecting (or neglecting) crucial impressions of the dated situated subjectivity saying those words, becoming silent, becoming excited, embodied, terse or abstracted, responding to questions this way or that. You are collecting (or neglecting) also your own complex responses *as well.*

*They tell you a story over let us say 2 hours; for at least 2 hours, you have the story of you facilitating and hearing that story. The telling of a story in interview is a two-person interaction; you need to record, to be able to later on think about, your story of that interview period. For a two-person interview to be fully researched, you need the best possible data from both sides.*

As distinct from a researcher who just picks up the recorded tape and transcript from an interviewer (who writes no field notes and just disappears) , the BNIM interviewer-researcher observes the embodied interpersonal practice of the interviewee, engages in an intersubjective ‘action research project’ of co-performing a successful interview, is constantly ‘sensing’ the interviewee and being affected by him or her, and writes up field notes which should be able to re-evoke that original intersubjective experiencing interaction and events.

Along with the specificity of communication that is possible with verbal symbols, less well defined and often contradictory thoughts and feelings are communicated through the look in one’s eye, the tension in one’s forehead, the timbre of one’s voice, and so on. Without the nuances and ambiguities provided by these… modes of communication, [interview recalling] would be stark and machine-like (Ogden 1992: 70).

The interviewee may engage in complete fabulation about extra-interview and pre-interview realities; he or she cannot lie consciously or unconsciously to you as the interviewer-observer having your own experiencing, your experience of pre-interview arranging and intra-interview realities, as well as post-interview interacting as well. Hence the importance of field notes by you, the observer-interviewer, on all interaction, real or imagined!

Your post-interview interpretive process of considering the living of the lived life and the telling of the told story can be powerfully supplemented by your thinking very carefully about the enacting of the intersubjective experiencing between you and interviewee (and any relevant others) before during and after the interview.

There are different models for thinking about and recording your experiences in a way that helps you to do something like re-experience that situated interview.

* For a discussion of field noting, see the discussion on p. **495**.
* For one model of the dimensions of the ‘situated activity’ of all research interviewing, see Wengraf: 2001: 38-50.
* For observation of the communicative activity and inter-subjective interaction in which pre-verbal infants are involved, and which words can hide, see Rustin XXX and Hollway YYY.
* For the psycho-dynamically informed Tavistock Observation Method as used together with BNIM by (for example) Nicholson (2009), see for example Hinshelwood and Hogstad (2000), Frank and Griffiths (2002), and McKensie-Smith (1992).
* For an excellent example of detailed field-notes about BNIM in practice, as the researcher notes their struggling with its rigidities, see Hughes (2010: 113-120; 218-20).

If you are interviewing the interviewee in an environment habitual (or even otherwise) to that interviewee (their home, office, neighbourhood, etc), then you might wish to consider the ‘senses-cape’ in which that occurs, and think about modalities that include but go beyond the visual. One way of thinking about sensorily-situated nature of the interviewee and the interview situation is to click on [www.sensescapes.co.uk](http://www.sensescapes.co.uk). See also Willemse (2012) who has a brilliant account (in many ways) of the importance of ‘spatial locations’ in evoking and inhibiting different areas of memory and self-expression.

This involves an attention *to outer-world societal realities* *and dynamics* (Briggs 1986, and the appendix on foreign-ness p.**592** below). For the school of Institutional Ethnography (IE) founded by Dorothy Smith, see Campbell and Gregor 2002, and Devault and McCoy 2003, and its use by O’Neill 2011 who combines BNIM and IE).

It also requires an equal attention *to inner-world psycho-dynamics* as well.

Heather Elliott (2011) ‘Interviewing mothers: reflections on closeness and reflexivity in research encounters’ has a very useful account of the lived experience of being a mother / researcher and doing interviews with another mother

Jean Eels (email 19 October 2011) notes the importance of resourceful observation:

My dissertation methodology of Institutional Ethnography allowed me to do direct interviews but also (with all appropriate permissions) observe workers providing service to clients. That really blew me away *because for the first time I could "hear" what the clients were saying that the workers were missing* - I knew what the workers were thinking in their service role and by listening I eventually figured out several very important pieces for the research. In several instances,

what the clients were saying and the workers (which could have been me "offering solutions") were hearing and saying only became obvious because I was diligently in my role of listener (Jean Eels)

Some of that functioning can be done by yourself in your role as BNIM interviewer; some can be done as ‘sitting-in’ on other people’s BNIM interviews. In the BNIM 5-day intensive training, trainees work in triads rotating the roles of interviewer, interviewee, and observer, with the observer debarred from joining in and talking. Many say that they learn as much about the practice of BNIM interviewing when they are quietly observing as when when they are engaged in the prior and subsequent practice of interviewing and being interviewed. Some even say the observation role is the most important component of the three-role rotation.

**So. Don’t neglect the ethnographic opportunity of observant participation in all your interactions (of any sort) with the interviewee and those around him or her before, during and after the interview! Develop your ethnographic competence.**

**Make full notes of *your* experience of the two-person interview, including data and speculation about the movements in the apparent experiencing of *both* sides.**

### 1.9.2. A full Psycho-Societal and ‘Glocal Contradictions’ approach?

I’ve just argued that ethnographic observant-participation in the interaction with the interviewee (within, before and after the interview itself) is an important source of understanding. One can go further. BNIM can be very productively combined with a whole variety of other methods to understand the historically-dated-situated subjectivity or the historical-situation subjectively experienced.

Even if fieldwork is confined at some point to dealing with a single informant, there is great benefit in being able at least to observe that informant interacting with other members of the group. Though there is no way of proving it, I suspect that a good deal of the confidence an anthropologist may feel in a particular informant arises from his or her judgements of how others regard that informant, as manifested in their interactive behaviour. *Even in confining my interest in interviewing for the life history, I would certainly not argue that communication between biographer and informant can or should be the sole source of relevant information* (Mintz: 1979: 20, cited Wikan 2000:222)

There is a welcome trend to expand the number of methods used for what might be called a something starting to approach a full-spectrum psychosocietal methodology.

What might a full-spectrum psycho-societal methodology be like?

If the ‘psycho’ is primarily concerned with data about inner worlds, then such ‘inner worlds’ show themselves most directly in symbolically-expressive behaviour like people’s spoken words (overheard conversations, interviews) and written words and other symbolisations.

If the ‘social-societal’ is mostly about data about outer worlds, then such ‘outer worlds’ show themselves through observation of behaviours and settings, as well as statistics of actions and events.

Hence I would say that *a psychosocietal methodology needs* at least two sorts of independent data: *direct inner-world data* (as in talk, as in interview, other forms of self-expressive activity, deliberate or inadvertent), and *direct outer-world data* (as in observation, as in institutional description and/or descriptive macro-statistics and other tools of comparative and historical sociology and ethnography).

However, somebody trained in a single-discipline may acquire data (often termed ‘secondary sources’ or ‘secondary data’) from another discipline, but will handle such data in a far less critical, far less sophisticated, manner than a specialist in that other discipline. This weakened form of thinking about other-discipline data may be apparent, or it may be subtle.

Let us take for example, the would be trans-disciplinary study of the ‘psychosocial’ (one to which, I must add, I subscribe).

The notion of the ‘psycho-social’ (and even more so, the ‘psychosocial’ with no hyphen) tends to start from direct ‘inner-world data’ and have some reluctance in engaging with equally-direct ‘outer-world data’ and especially with ‘outer-world data’ of a macro-societal sort.

*Three examples of psycho-societal differently-sourced data:*

(i) A course advertised for May and July 2008 at the University of the West of England’s Centre for Psycho-Social Studies listed the following “methodologies of deep inquiry”:

1. *Life history/ biographical interviewing*
2. *Psycho-social action research*
3. *Methods of group inquiry: innovations from the Group Relations and Group Analytic traditions*
4. *Visualisation techniques: imagery, artwork, photography as methods of exploration*
5. *The use of dreams: individual and social dreaming from Mass Observation to the present day*
6. *Dramaturgical techniques of group inquiry*
7. *Psychoanalytic ethnography*

(ii) Julia Brannen and her collaborators (2007a) summarised a study into *Coming to Care* as follows:

Aims

The study focuses on four groups of childcare workers: residential social workers, foster carers, family support workers and community childminders who care for children placed with them by social services. …The study’s main research questions were:

• What shaped an ethic of care among these four different groups of childcare workers?

• What specific contextual factors prompted childcare workers to enter a childcare occupation?

• How did childcare workers shape their childcare ‘careers’ and their identities over time?

• How do different groups of childcare workers currently understand their work?

• How do they currently experience their working conditions?

• Over a year, how much job change took place among these four groups? Why did they leave these childcare occupations and why did they stay?

• How do childcare workers manage their work and family responsibilities?

• How can care workers’ conditions be improved to ensure good quality care for vulnerable children, and what would help recruitment and retention of staff?

Methods

The study employed biographic-interpretive methods to explore how care workers ‘come to care’. Its research design was iterative, providing samples and sampling criteria from one phase to the next, as well as data to feed into the overall analysis.

The study was comparative and the groups theoretically chosen on the basis of: workplace (home-based or institutionallybased); different life course characteristics (for example, childminding being often undertaken by women when their children are young); and an expectation of different work orientations and financial remuneration for some groups such as foster carers.

The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods: a postal survey of 305 workers across the four groups (achieving a response rate of 56%) in several English local authorities; twenty four biographical case study interviews with selected workers drawn from the postal survey; semi-structured interviews with managers in local authorities, children’s services and children’s homes; and a follow-up telephone survey one year later with the postal survey respondents addressing loss from and movement within the childcare workforce and the reasons for this. The postal and telephone surveys provided a backdrop to the detailed understandings of care workers’ past and present lives provided by the biographical interviews, while the manager interviews provided contextual data on workplace policies and practices (Brannen 2007a)

(iii) Jacqui Gabb (2007) reports on an another more qualitative-only multi-method ESRC research project.

*Behind Closed Doors* used seven different qualitative methods of data collection – participatory diaries and emotion maps, biographical narrative interviews, vignettes and photo interviews, observations and focus groups. …

I will illustrate how different methods accessed different aspects of family relationships. For example participant diaries illustrated patterns and routines of interaction, household 'emotion maps' charted the spatial dimension of family relationships, biographical narrative interviews accessed stories across life course framed through participants' own emotional framework, vignettes and images generated discussion around normative values. The richness of data from these methods, especially innovative methods such as 'emotion maps', illustrates the benefits of creativity and responsiveness in research design. Mixing data from these methods together provided a depth of understanding of how parents and children experience and understand intimacy and sexuality and how these are managed in their everyday lives. (Gabb 2007; italics added).

When using such rich multi-method approaches, there are good reasons for thinking that the BNIM sub-sessions one and two should come first, the others later. Very often BNIM sub-session three can be made to include selected other methods. For example, the *Living Apart Together* methodology includes both a ‘relationship map’ exercise and also a ‘hard biographical data’ fully-structured questionnaire face-sheet as part of their sub-session three.

However, to avoid ‘contamination’ of BNIM’s free-associative free-improvisation practice of sub-sessions one and two, it is always the case that, prior to other methods that can be put into a sub-session three or a quite different later place (e.g. group discussions, use of photographs and vignettes, etc), *BNIM sub-sessions one and two should come first.*

For a very interesting discussion of *participatory theatre* as a research tool and a representation tool with refugees, deploying techniques of Playback and Forum Theatre, see an exciting and excellent article by Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008).

Provided each methodology used is properly mastered – rather than just fashionably snatched at -- then such multi-method experiments are very exciting in their promise of generating fuller psycho-societal understanding.

(iv) Froggett, Chamberlayne, Buckner and Wengraf 2005 in a study of the Bromley-by-Bow Health Centre) used four families of psycho-societal research methods –

* + 1. Interviewing (including BNIM interviews)
    2. Documentation,
    3. Observation, and
    4. Participatory action research –

in order to triangulate lived experience and the individual and collective projects pursued reflexively at the Centre. The Report on that project (Froggett et al 2005) attempts to evoke this multi-methodology. A suggestion of that triangulated psycho-societal methodology can be found below on p.**1414.**

In my view, a full psycho-*societal* approach that encompassed the societal would have to brave several taboos, including the following:

1. the *taboo on ‘macro-history’* as a discipline (world systems theory, for example) which uses documentation as a basis for whole-society descriptions
2. the *taboo on ‘political economy’* as a conceptual framework, both making up what you might call societal-dynamics,

and

1. the *taboo on statistics* (for example income and life-chance statistics, surveys)
2. the *taboo* *on depth psychology* (for example, psycho-dynamics)

If these taboos were overcome in practice, then the statement of the ‘aims and purposes’ of the recently-founded Psychosocial Studies Network would start to become realised, and the formulation below considerably improved:

The ‘psychosocial’ (also the ‘psycho-social’ or ‘psychosocietal’) has, in recent years, emerged as a significant new field of enquiry in the UK.  As an emerging field, its precise definition is necessarily subject to ongoing development and debate. However, some major strands in current thinking suggest that psychosocial studies are characterised by:   
  
a) their explicit inter or transdisciplinarity; and   
  
b) their interest in the tensions between, and mutual constitution of, the social and the psychic.   
  
As this implies, psychosocial studies have a broad theoretical commitment to the notion that psychological issues cannot be validly abstracted from social, cultural and historical contexts and to the task of accounting for the social shaping of subjective experience without deterministically reducing the psychic to the social.  Equally, they have a parallel commitment to the notion that social and cultural worlds have psychological dimensions and to the task of accounting for the ways in which the latter shape these worlds without deterministically reducing the social to the psychic. Psychosocial studies draw inspiration from a range of sources including critical theory, post-structuralism, process philosophy, feminism and psychoanalysis, and various ‘dialects’ are in the process of emergence |(Psychosocial Studies Network: <http://www.psychosocial-network.org/aims.htm>>.

However the taboos are well-entrenched, particularly in the one-sided training we receive. impacting differently in different social-science tribes. They will no doubt continue to hamper our understanding.

Given that, what can we say in general about the restricted-to-qualitative study of the mostly ‘psychosocial’ aspects of the larger sphere of the psycho-societal?

***Observation methods*** (e.g. ethnographic or institutional observation) can observe actual behaving in context (but only rather brief and selective samples) but requires some sort of interviewing to get at the motivations and the strategy of the actors doing the selection of current behaving that is being observed. Traditional present-day interviews (“why did you do that bit of behaviour I observed last week?”) may just get defensive rationalisations in terms of locally-accepted ‘legitimate self-explanations’ and ‘press-release official positions’.

***Biographical-narrative interviews*** get at experiencing earlier than the point at which the ‘observation period’ started; they also get at times and locations within the observation period from which the selective observer was absent. Above all, by asking for ‘narrative(s) of experienced experiencing’, they get closer to actual experiences than do non-narrative interviews (as well as providing a plethora of explicit ‘position-taking’, explicit description of ‘situations’, explicit self-representations, etc., which can be productively compared to those versions of positionality, situation, subjectivity which appear to the researcher to be implied by the narrated particular incident experiences).

The power of BNIM’s ‘biographical’ methodology is that it allows for both psycho- and societal- deepening of understanding beyond the point where our undergraduate or postgraduate ‘single-discipline’ training typically leaves us.

And, by way of the interpretive panels, it also allows for an immediately-productive mutual sophistication of all those involved in multi-disciplinary work, (e.g. Froggett et al 2005).

Access to ‘experiencing prior to the observation period’ of the historically-situated subjectivity-in-action can also be very powerfully supplemented by the characteristic resource of the professional historian;

***Documents****.* To complement the memories evoked and reported in the biographical-narrative interview, the well-funded researcher can usefully explore *what historical documents can be found* to shed light on the period, the milieu and the circumstances involved. These may be more personal (diaries, letters, emails, etc.) or they may be less personal (official documents, minutes of meetings, etc.). To be interested in the pasts of particular people but to ignore documents from that past and stick only to oral reports might be thought of as slightly perverse. Institutional ethnography makes a very powerful use of ‘ordinary institutional documents’, especially but not only “the forms that have to be filled in”.

They may just be documents produced for other purposes *capta* or they may also include documents generated especially for the research *generate.*

Secondary research literature into the milieux and the epoch(and the organisations and institutions) in question are usually crucial documents in ‘situating’ what the dated situated subjectivity has been and currently is situated *in.* In addition, since people and situations are always subject to mutation, grasping the ‘datedness’ of transitional things is important, and other people’s research and historical primary documents make this possible for times and places at which you weren’t present.

**Reflexivity meta-method.** Whatever methods you use (for example, those above) devoted to understanding *their inner and outer worlds* will be subtly and largely frustrated if you do not practice a systematic method of *inspecting your inner world* as well. You don’t just need to be inspecting your inner world; you need to be recording it and having your records discussed and illuminated.

A crude indicator of this is the amount and type of *Field-Notes* and *Memos to Self about Self* that you write (in an attempt at an externalised ‘inner conversation, in terms of Margaret Archer, see p. **1244** on Critical Realism) . You need to generate as much dated and located material as possible on your subjective reactions in your lived life as a researcher about them. If you can, you should bring this to a subjective-reaction supervisor or a group of peers. The ‘Tavistock Observation Method’ (first infants, then institutions/organisation) is one model of this. Your field-notes must include you-in-the-field and the you-writing-the-notes-on-the-field…..

So: if you want to remedy the one -sidedness almost certainly deposited in you by your single-discipline undergraduate course, do BNIM in conjunction with others and consciously work to deepen whatever is the side of the innerworld/outerworld complexity that you know to be the ‘neglected function’ in your own professional psycho-societal research project.

Froggett et al (2011) have a useful discussion of methodology in which they write:

Experience near data collection methods in this study have included narrative accounts, biographical interviews, participant observation, the use of film, video and photography. Widely used experience distant methods include structured interviews, surveys and randomised control trials. Some of these methods have great value within mixed method research designs. Within this study experience distant methods have included the use of documentary and web-based sources, some purely informational interviews, discussions and network analysis. However, a judicious tacking back and forth between experience nearness and experience distance also becomes vital within the research analytic process. Geertz was clear that both perspectives are needed: experience-distance consigns us to jargonistic abstraction whilst experience-nearness leaves us ‘awash in immediacies’ (Froggett, Little, Roy and Whittaker 2011: 89)

Since December 2007, a new UK study group, the ‘Psycho-Social Network’ is functioning at [PSYCHOSOCIALNETWORK@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:PSYCHOSOCIALNETWORK@jiscmail.ac.uk). A dedicated website started at the beginning of 2009.

Ideally, in my fantasy world, *full-spectrum psycho-societal researchers investigating historically-situated subjectivities or historical situations subjectively processed* would either

(a) have full training in *an inner-world discipline* such as psycho-dynamic psychology, plus *an outer-world discipline* such as societal-dynamics sociology, plus a *historically-informed discipline* such as history…. and use panels as well… or, better,

(b) *work in small teams of no less than two or three* other single-discipline specialists in which the others bring to a collective research the knowledge and functions that any one single-discipline person cannot provide….. and use panels as well,…. or better….. The ‘psycho-societal’ is unlikely to be investigated well by a single single-discipline researcher, to put it bluntly. [[77]](#footnote-78)

I have discussed some of the weaknesses of the psycho-*social* in the light of a projected psycho-*societal* in a paper for the October 20-22 Conference in 2010 Wrozlav, Poland, on “Social Agency: theoretical and methodological challenges of 21st century humanistic sociology”, entitled *The*  *Biographic-narrative-interpretive method (BNIM) within psycho-societal approaches to a realistic study of agency and inner-world/outer-world regimes* (Wengraf 2010b), a version to be published in Polish in 2011 (I had to shorten the title!!)

See also Wengraf (2013 forthcoming) on ‘BNIM, Sostris and Critical Realism’.

The argument for a full psycho-societal methodology is taken further in sections 3.2.1-2 (starting on p**.672**) and is taken even further in an *optional strongest polemical form* in a very excessive appendix E.3. Examples of one-sidedness are given and discussed below -- starting on p.**1225……**

**A very optional’Glocal Contradictions’ approach**

On the next couple of pages, I suggest an image/model (or an image which you might use for developing the sense of a model) of ‘dated situated subjectivity’ as thinkable in terms of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ contradictions. How you personally prefer to conceive the ‘drivers, contradictions and dynamics’ in general or in relation to a particular case is obviously up to you.

This ‘Glocal Contradictions Imagel’ has the advantage of weakening thinking in terms of ‘static essences’ and fostering a sense of the ‘historicity’ (datedness) of mutating situations and subjectivities, of the psycho-societal as an evolving field or set of relatively open ‘systems’. It is a pragmatic tool for helping to think the ‘psycho-‘ and the ‘societal-‘ at the same time.

It adopts the useful notion that, whenever we think we are researching a ‘system’ in a sketched-out background or context, we are in fact studying a ‘dated sub-system’ whose insertion into ‘dated larger systems and systemic mutations’ we are largely ignorant of.

Figure 8 A Glocal Subsystems Contradictions image

GLOCAL SUBSYSTEMS CONTRADICTIONS MODEL

Contradictory [dated, porous] situated

subjectivity – situated in societal subsystems

INTERNAL

*hour/day/month/1990 or 2011; you where you were then / now are?*

EXTERNAL

Societal Sub-system dynamics

Psycho-dynamics

A GLOCAL CONTRADICTIONS MODEL (modified February 2011)

This model (see previous page for image) is one that you might possibly wish to use or, equally possibly, ignore. It suggests that as far as the ‘(dated) situated subjectivity’ is concerned, it can be helpful to think of it in terms of both internal (inner-world) and outer (outer-world) contradictions, and to think that the boundaries of both ‘situation’ (the dotted outer square) and of the ‘dated located subjectivity-in-situation’ (green oval in the centre of the image) are more or less ‘porous’.

The BLUE ARROWS represent mostly dynamics and contradictions in the ‘inner world’ of the dated situated subjectivity.

Note that there is at least one dynamic reaching out and affecting the ‘outer world’ of the societal sub-system under inspection, and also another going further and affecting realities external to that societal sub-system.

*‘Dated situated subjectivity’ should not be assumed to be passive* in relation to people and the material societal world around it. Some of the internal drivers and contradictions will be completely or partly within subjective awareness; others may not ( if you have a concept of subjectivities defended against anxiety-making inner-world knowledge, of outer-world knowledge, or both).

The RED ARROWS represent mostly dynamics and contradictions in the (immediate and global) outerworld ‘situation’ of the dated situated subjectivity. Some of the external drivers and contradictions will be completely or partly within subjective awareness; others may not (sub-model of subjectivity defended against anxiety-making outer-world knowledge).[[78]](#footnote-79)

Note that RED ARROWS put pressures and strange attractions on the ‘drivers’ of the ‘inner world’: for example, the RED ARROW in the top left of the diagram “fits” an internal driver or impulse within the ‘dated situated subjectivity’, while at the bottom left, the Red Arrow meets a strong counter-impulse from a BLUE ARROW.

Finally, there are PURPLE ARROWS which enter the somewhat bounded ‘situation’ of the ‘dated situated subjectivity’ from some unspecified “outside”.

They at least represent the limits of our (sub-)‘systems thinking’ as researchers about the known dated life-world or situation of the situated subjectivities that we study and the dated systems/situations that we consciously represent them to be in. The PURPLE ARROWS come from outside, surprising perhaps both the dated subjectivities we study and our own dated subjectivities that represent their situatedness to ourselves. An economic reces sion, an enemy bombardment, an asteroid, or a new source of pleasure or self-knowledge can always ‘arrive’ from the unknown.

The term ‘glocal’ suggests both the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ nature of the inner- and outer- world ‘situatedness’ with all the mediations between the two.

A final note: there are serious philosophical issues around the metaphor of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, and serious conceptual alternatives around the models of drivers, contradictions and dynamics that you may wish to deploy for your psycho-societal interpretations of glocally-situated dated and defended subjectivities (including your own).

Some of these issues are discussed very broadly in this *BNIM Guide and Manual*, especially in Appendix E.3. Nonetheless, you may find this ‘glocal contradictions model/metaphor’ pragmatically useful in thinking about the patterns of the living of the lived life, the telling of the told story, and the evolution of the case.

A hopefully-fruitful question for yourself, or any case you are studying, might be:

*What intermeshing of internal and external dynamics (and contingencies) at previous moments* (e.g. 1990, 2008) *led to the ‘present constellation of contradictions’ (at moment of interview* e.g. 2012*) which drives – or lays conditions of probability or possibility or their opposite – for alternative futures for the dated situated subjectivities being studied?*

Valerie Herardot’s diagram on external dynamics and individual response may be helpful here in putting flesh on these rather abstract formulations: see p**.1137**.

Rachel Cohen’s (2012) study of ‘managing the self while watching films about a serial killer’ has a very sophisticated study of the subjectivity’s handling of their internal contradictions while watching a ‘serial killer film’, a handling which she interprets in the light of their biographical history. Those with a psychoanalytical bent or interested in ‘subjective response’ or both should find this very interesting.

A difficult but rewarding study of one approach to such an understanding can be found in Bertell Ollman’s account of dialectical understanding (1971). He cites Karl Marx’s collaborator Friedrich Engels as asserting that the key components of dialectical understanding are:

Transformation of quantity into quality – mutual penetration of polar opposites and the transformation into each other when carried into extremes – development through contradiction or negation – spiral form of development

(Engels *‘Dialectics of Nature*;, cited Ollman 1971: 55).

More interestingly for us, perhaps, Ollman’s whole work (2003) is devoted to exploring Marx’s thought as based on a philosophy of internal relations such that the study of a given ‘dated situated subjectivity’ means that such a historically-evolving relationship (a given situated subjectivity in 2010) will be understood *less well* if we try to think the situation outside the subjectivity, the subjectivity outside the situation, or either…. unhistorically.

The apparently two different ‘things’ inside the dotted square box of *Figure 8 A Glocal Subsystems Contradictions image* on p. **230** need to be understood in relation to each other, as co-constituting each other, if they are to be properly understood.

Even more understanding will be gained if the ‘world in motion’ outside the dotted square box – the world from which the purple arrow arrives – is also grasped as being not as an ‘external variable’ but as part of the relational universe. Any actual study can only be partial and incomplete, but the more extended in relational time and space, the less partial and the less incomplete.

Given this stress on widening and lengthening, if the diagram above [Glocal Contradictions] is treated as one of the immediate situation of a given individual, this can be treated methodologically as a dated moment on a broader glocal-temporal canvas. For such a a Glocal TimeLine Matrix, see next page….. for which you will gradually uncover the material *after doing the cases.* [To avoid thinking the diagram specifies what you need to discover *before doing case-interpretation,* see page **948].**

For any moment on the individual’s timeline (BDC) between the red arrows on the next page, you could insert the ‘Glocal SubSystem Contradictions’ image (on p.230) and see whether the material to the right and the left of that focal column for the interviewee might illuminate the understanding of that ‘moment’….. and (to a lesser extent usually) vice-versa.

Glocal historical Collective Time Line and Long Run Psycho-Societal - Tendencies

**To include dynamics over 3 generations, go back 100 years to 1910**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GLOCAL COLLECTIVE DATA** | | | **MULTI-FAMILIES DATA** | | | ***Glocal Notes & Tendencies*** | |
| **Changing**  **Dates - from**  **1 day to**  **2 decades** | **World-historical**  **Timeline for period**  **1910-2010** | **Glocal-regional-societal**  **Timeline for period**  **1910-2010** | **‘Community (ies)-**  **Category’**  **Timeline for**  **Period**  **1910-2010** | **Unique Family**  **Timeline for Period**  **1910-2010**  **BDC** | **Unique Parents/Sibs**  **Timeline for period 1960-2010**  **BDC** | **Unique Individual Timeline for period 1960-2010**  **BDC**  **INTER-VIEWEE** | **Known/imagined**  **Long-run Glocal Tendencies for**  glocal levels | **Other Notes** |
|  |  |
| Up to  1910-19 | Inter-imperial struggle in Europe ->WW1 | 1917 revolution; end of Austro and Ottoman Empires |  | **Grandparents born** |  |  | **1800**  **1870**    **?**  **1990**  **Ecological crisis unsorted – grows**  **US super-power expansionism** |  |
| 1920-39 | 1929+ slump, then WW2 | Dictatorships; German Reich |  |  | **Parents born;**  **emigrate** |  |
| 1940-49 | WW2 + defeat of Germany, Japan |  | **Jewish Holocaust**  **State of Israel founded;**  **Palestinian Naqba imposed** |  |  |  |
| 1950-59 |  | **Hungary, Suez** |  |  | **Brother born** |  |
| **1960-64** |  | **Anti-colonial**  **liberations** |  |  |  | **BNIM**  **Interviewee**  **b. 1960** |
| **1965-69** |  | **‘1968’** | **Israel occupies ‘Occupied Territories’** |  |  |
| **1970-79** | **Western welfarism ends**  **Neo-liberal regimes intensify** |  |  | **Grandparents die** | **Brother killed in car-crash** | **Marries (19)** |
| **1980-89** |  |  |  |  | **Twins born (25)** |
| **1990-99** | **WTO + IMF rule** | **End of USSR** |  |  |  | **Separates (35)** |
| **2000-05** | **Rise of China** | **Rise of BRIC economies** |  |  | **Father, then mother, dies** | **Emigrates (40)** |
| **2006-10** |  | **2008 Crash** |  |  |  | **Loses job (50)** |

Figure 9 Glocal Time Line Matrix

This matrix (filled in to indicate its potential) shows how (starting from the interviewee) the researcher may fill in a widening spatial context (from family to societal, regional and planetary location (the “Glocal”) and a lengthening historical span for the indidual, families and more general contexts involved. It suggests looking for long-run tendencies as well on the left-columns. The data will come from different sources.

*The immediate situation at any date- point* can be thought of in terms of ‘contradictions’ (p**. 230)**

## 1.10. Tom Wengraf - Lenka Formankova’s practice semi-BNIM interview –

After an autumn 2011 BNIM training in London, a Czech trainee – Lenka Formankova – said she wanted to do a first post-training practice interview with someone, and could it be me? She also said that, if it came out reasonably well, she would try to publish a version in a Czech magazine. I said ‘OK’, and the following is the (non-verbatim English version) result, slightly modified. It may be of interest to some.

*Her questioning of me in this first practice interview 2011 that she did shifts from BNIM to non-BNIM and back again – Can you see where? Can you see the effects?*

Lenka Formánková: *Tom, this issue of* ***Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum*** *magazine focuses on the life course approaches in the social research. Therefore I would like you to talk about the particular qualitative method you developed called Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM). Please tell me how you came across the method and how you developed it. You can tell me anything you find important.*

Tom Wengraf: Well, I was originally trained as a historian. I didn’t get my history degree, I wrote an attack on Oxford History instead. Then I did sociology at the London School of Economics and I enjoyed that. Then I started an LSE PhD thesis on the agrarian reform in Algeria, which I never completed either. And then I got a job as a sociologist at what became Middlesex University. And my entire career has been teaching sociology. And doing research. Towards the end of my university career I focused on methodology particularly specializing in the use of interviews.

In 1995 I went to a British Sociological Association conference in Essex. Prue Chamberlayne, who had been trained by Gabriele Rosenthal (who designed the biographic-narrative method) in Germany was giving a paper about caring and carers. Her research used the biographic method. I was really excited about the richness and the depth of the material she was using and the way she was talking about it. Two years later Prue and I developed a partnership, (and we are now married!) And I joined her European project called SOSTRIS. Across seven European countries we were investigating social strategies in risk societies using the biographic narrative method now known as BNIM It was an international team with people from Italy, Germany, Greece, Sweden, France, Spain and the UK. It took us three years and I learned an enormous amount from it. As a result of our comparative approach, we got to know how very different welfare arrangements and informal cultural responses impacted on the experience that people had, which was really very interesting.

Well before I met Prue I’d been writing a text on qualitative interviewing: I had written probably three quarters of it before I met her. After I have learned how to use this particular method which we now call BNIM, I then put two chapters about BNIM into my book on *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. And then I taught the method at my university in Middlesex and even after I retired from Middlesex I went on teaching BNIM to all sorts of people in all sorts of contexts and writing more material about it.

I’ve been training people for about twelve years in this method and I’ve been writing a long textbook, just on BNIM. It is now more than 1,000 pages. [The current text you are reading, TW]. And that’s been sort of my main professional focus before, certainly before I retired, certainly after I’ve retired as I’ve said before.

Lenka Formánková*: As you said, during your doctoral studies at the London School of Economics you wrote a thesis on the agrarian reform in Algeria. Can you tell me how it all happened?*

Tom Wengraf: This was in 1964 when I went to Algeria. Algeria received its independence in 1962. I was on a board of a Marxist sort of progressive journal called *New Left Review*. The Algerian government called a conference for non-governmental aid to Algeria. I was very interested in Algeria and I agreed with a friend of mine that the only aid we could give would be to write an article about the history of the colony and the decolonisation. Nobody knew about Algeria in Great Britain as it was a French colony, not an English one, “so who cared what was happening over there”. I was in Algeria for a year and I left shortly after a military coup took over. It led to a military dictatorship that has continued ever since. In the moment of the coup, all my key contacts in Algeria were either arrested or went underground or fled to France. So I went back to England and I started to write my first paper on agrarian reform in Algeria.

My paper, which was about the impact of the Algerian liberation struggle, which lasted from 1954 to 1962, included some data on the agricultural statistics.

The National Office for Agrarian Reform in Algeria gave me a very nice little brochure printed on glossy paper. It showed that actually there have been a fall of agricultural production and everything during the war, but in 1963, one year after the end of the war, it was back to where it had been in 1954. So they gave it to me and I said WOW, that’s amazing! One tenth of the population killed, how did you do it? Or how is it done? I can’t quite remember how the conversation went, but I do remember what they said was actually,” Don’t tell anybody, but we haven’t a clue what the production of Algeria is like. Our entire infrastructure is destroyed, how could we know anything at all?”

They just took the 1954 figures, modified them slightly and put them down as 1963, because it looked better than to admit they have no idea. So in my paper I talked a little bit about the difficulty of relying on statistics when studying liberation struggles and even the period after the liberation struggles. And I was basically told by my very eminent sociology supervisors in London “well if you haven’t got the statistics, then you shouldn’t be saying anything at all about the liberation struggle and agrarian reform.” Well, they didn’t quite say it like this, but it was like “that’s journalism, not research”. And I did not want to use only the statistics count. It was to be multi-method. I invented my own method. I did a lot of interviewing of people in self-managed farms and self-managed businesses and I was of course dealing with a large farms and the industry being integrated by the French, so I had a lot of interview material. But all that was just hearsay for statistical sociologists, it didn’t count as sociological facts. So I didn’t complete the PhD.

Lenka Formánková: *Would you tell me a bit more about this skepticism towards statistics and the paper you wrote about it?*

Tom Wengraf: I’m very interested in statistics, because it seems to me that a good statistics can show a lot about the society. If you look at the income statistics of let’s say the US or the UK, inequality has been growing like crazy in those two countries. And statistics are so much more interesting than let’s say just anecdotes about the rich or anecdotes about the poor. For me, political economy and statistics, if you can trust the statistics, are absolutely crucial for understanding a society. If you can’t trust the statistics – and all governments are very careful about their official statistics that they put out for public consumption by those who elect them – that’s different.

On the other hand, I don’t believe in attitude surveys very much. It is all dependent on what questions you ask and it doesn’t get into depth about people’s grasp on their local reality.

If you’re part of an elite which is in power and you want to get something through and you want to ensure popular support, you just have a six-month propaganda campaign and the statistics will show more and more people agreeing with you and they’ll vote for it in the ‘target month’ and then six months later they’ll all be furious they all voted for something that turns out to be bad.

So some statistics I think are very important and others I’m not very interested in. I have a very good friend who is a part of a group called Radical Statistics in Britain and what they do is develop critiques of official statistics as statisticians would do. There is a whole movement of radical statisticians who try to show the basis of what’s good and the significance of what’s been left out.

Lenka Formánková: *Do I understand correctly that you find the qualitative interviews better tools to understand people’s opinions and attitudes?*

Tom Wengraf: When you just ask somebody to tick boxes, they will tick boxes for any reason, it doesn’t have to have anything to do with themselves. You’re not inside the mind of the person at all. In a long interview, particularly if you don’t interrupt too much, they are much more likely to show their mind’s workings. Most people, if they’re not telling the truth, it shows up in their voice, it shows up in stumbling or it shows up in all sorts of ways. You can start to take a grip on the reality behind the interview through the person telling the story about the reality or disguising the reality through their story. Let people talk and follow up what they want to follow up, I think that’s quite a powerful way of understanding situations.

*I think that fully structured interviews where you repeat standard questions are basically a waste of time*. Because you can’t ask further questions corresponding to certain sensitive hypotheses about what’s not being said. There is a theory that people are always defending themselves against anxiety. According to Erving Goffman in his book “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”, people are presenting themselves so as not to look bad or to seem like something is amiss. Not necessarily all of them. Anyway, if you are concerned about self-presentation either consciously or unconsciously you are defending yourself or your organization or whatever. Therefore, *to understand reality, you have to be able to read the defenses,* you need to be able to know what is not being said.

So if you believe that all persons of interest, all governments, all societies, all individuals, all groups, all social groups always necessarily operate with unconscious defensiveness and usually with some conscious defensiveness and manipulation on top of that, then a methodology that doesn’t enable you to explore that merely recycles as true what people want you to believe is true. It only adds the stamp of “and so science says” on top of the plausible defenses. So you have to have mixed methodologies that enable you to get behind, or to come to interesting insights into both what people reveal and what people conceal. And a methodology that doesn’t do that is a methodology that carries little or no interest but a lot of ideological plausibility.

Lenka Formánková: *You said that you were not very keen on statistics and you did not like the way sociology was approaching reality. So what was the path you took to become an expert in methodology?*

Tom Wengraf: I started teaching at Middlesex in 1966. But I wasn’t teaching methods, I was teaching theory. At that time, I thought theory was the most important thing in the world. At that time, we became very hostile to something we called *empiricism*. The empiricists thought facts were important and just inferred theory from the facts so you didn’t even need to bother to infer theory, there were only facts and facts spoke for themselves, they said. That was our major philosophical enemy early on in my teaching career at Middlesex, and actually much more generally as well. And so I taught theory and I didn’t want to do research. Somehow the Algerian experience and not being able to do anything with it, I thought I can’t be bothered, that I had enough. So I taught sociological theory: that was my key function that I did at Middlesex.

During the time I was teaching the theory there were so many theoretical revolutions, in which a new theorist would come in, denounce all the others as “antiquated, dangerous, absolutely awful and here’s my new theory”. Every half a year or half-decade there would be a new, dominant theorist, who would then later fade completely from momory. Obviously they were self-publicising intellectuals with a way of inventing long words for old ideas. I stated to get the sense I’d seen this before and I remember reading a book by Pitirim Sorokin, a Russian sociologist who fled from the U.S.S.R round about the time of the Russian Revolution. He went to America and wrote some dusty books, which nobody except me had ever read of my generation, called something like “New Modern Sociological Theory”. And it was absolutely funny because he took the modern sociological theories and he said “this is just a repeat of this Greek philosopher of the 3rd century B.C”. Not that the person had taken it from there, but there was nothing new there. Sorokin was just very good at debunking it. I agreed with his perception that under a constant supply of new bottles every 6 months actually some very old wine is being constantly recycled.

So I said to myself *“empiricism is bad and theoreticism is just as bad, fetishism of facts is bad and fetishism of concepts is just as bad”.*

However theorist can only see the problems of empiricism, they can’t see the problems of theoreticism because they’re in it and they make their careers on the basis of it. So I had lots of struggles with various English theoreticists (my friends and myself) on the basis of this. I found myself going back to a philosopher of science called Gaston Bachelard. His most interesting book was called “Formation of the Scientific Mind”. In the book he explains that “facts without theory are blind, concepts without facts are empty”, something like that. Bachelard was also a chemist, he was an actual natural scientist. The other thing he said was “truth advances by the rectification of error” and there’s no other way to truth except by making mistakes, getting them rectified. So if you want to learn a science you have to follow that path. There’s no good trying to learn the current absolute truth by the most recent theorist. You have to retrace historically the movements of the science in order to see yourself and the current science as something historical, about to be rendered obsolete. Bachelard was great. He was like Thomas Kuhn but I think better.

Lenka Formánková: *Do you remember a particular moment when you especially felt that an interview is a very powerful method, as you said at the beginning of the interview?*

Tom Wengraf: I gradually found my way towards interviews and this was also because I had been involved in psychotherapy, psychodynamics, encounter groups and all sorts of humanist psychotherapy themes that flourished in the 1970s.

In my personal life I was very interested in depth psychologies and humanistic psychologies. I didn’t think they were terribly good but useful to some extent. I suppose I discovered in my personal life that I was very intellectually defended. I dealt with reality by multiplying theories and staying in a theoretical realm, talking to other people, theorizing and actually not noticing three quarters of what was true about myself. And at the same time, the women’s movement had started, about 1970 or so, and they were all into consciousness-raising groups. Actually I was involved in setting up the men’s consciousness-raising groups. I also married somebody who turned out to be a lesbian feminist a while after our marriage. That first marriage disintegrated, but for a time we formed a mixed group. It was quite funny because we went to a heterosexual couple group the first and third week of the month and in separate men’s groups and women’s groups on the even weeks of the month. And that was quite powerful except at one stage the women declared they didn’t want to meet with men ever again, and so the couples group collapsed. It sort of rather coincided with my marriage collapsing at the same time. But anyway, there’s a whole arising… “the personal is the political".

So, on the one hand, there was humanist psychology which was saying, the facts --even if you can’t talk about them -- about interpersonal experiencing, are important and real, and then on the other hand there was the women’s movement talking, raising assumptions about everyday practices.

So I got much more into the everyday empirical (lived experience) reality. That forced a new concern with facts, particularly a new concern with interviews as opposed to introspection, reading a book or having a theory as a way to understand a reality. That led me back to methodology.

Methodology was the third point in which you could talk about theory because of theory: given your theory what methods do you use?, or given the facts that you’re interested in what methods do you use to generate a theory?…

For me, methodology was the active place where you didn’t fetishize either a given theory or a given set of facts, but could think critically about the relationship between the two.

So I became a methodologist. And my interest is very much about appropriate concepts and methods for grasping both the inner worlds of people which are normally like the preserve of psychology or depth-psychology and the societal realities of people which are notmally the preserve of historians, geographers, sociologists or others. So I am trying to develop concepts and methods which keep the two in a complex relationship rather than having or being narrow inner-world specialists in psychology and outer world specialists in let’s say sociology who are never talking to each other, or being able to understand each other or having nothing but total (private) contempt for each other.

Also, it is important to focus on the cross-societal and cross-temporal perspective. People who only study one society at one time always think they’re discovering ‘universals´, when actually they’re accounts about a particular historical situation, that society, that time, that class. It would be very valuable, but they turn it into general universal theory and so they produce massive trouble and ignorance. So I’m pushing for a thing, an approach, called the ‘psycho-societal’ and I’m definitely a minority voice, in which you aren’t doing psycho-societal research unless you’re studying more than one society and unless you are covering a rather longer period of backwards and forwards history than just one generation in the present.

Lenka Formánková: *You said that you are a minority voice in the group of British scientists interested in the psycho-social research. Can you tell me more about it?*

Tom Wengraf: I could expand this but it’s difficult. So I’m talking about a little intellectual movement in Britain called “a movement for psycho-social studies” which tries to span the inner world and the outer world and to explore the connections between the two. The members of the group are social workers and all sorts of psychologists of some sort or other, usually social psychologists. That’s good, because social psychology covers the small group behavior and how the group influences the individual and how the individual influences the group, a very good start, and in fact it is THE START.

So that’s very good. But the danger is that the psycho-social is just social psychology turned around with a strong psychoanalytic input. And I have nothing against a strong psychoanalytic input. I think you can get the insight from other places but fine, if people get these insights from psychoanalysis, why not, it’s a very economical way of getting them and there’s also lots of stuff which is good about it.

On the other hand, what *they aren’t getting* is what you might call the macrosocietal and the long-term historical. The sociologists’ perspective is needed in terms of how I was trained as a sociologist, when our key focus was macrosocial.

Psycho-social when it just deals with social is reduced to the people who know each other or might know each other: the family, the neighbourhood, people in the same firm, people in the same church, and so on. I would call it the immediately social, because everybody lives in a life where it’s all immediately social. The studies about it are of great importance.

However, they’re not societal sociologists, let alone comparative societal, let alone people who understand world market economies and long-runs in comparative history and so on. Most sociology theories are not part of the psychosocial research as it currently predominantly operates.

My minority position is unpopular in two aspects as I insist on the macrosocietal and the cross-comparative. As the predominant group is depth-psychology preoccupied in the immediately-social, interest in the immediately psychosocial, then they resist the macrosocietal because they never learnt the concepts and certainly not the methods for studying those very important dimensions. It’s a whole new universe requiring another three years or undergraduate study or six years to PhD level. Where would they have the time to do that? So there’s a resistance against that. And of course, the macrosocietal sociologists who only speak one language don’t know much about the macro-societies of any other linguistic region.

Moreover the sociologists of the contemporary and social psychologists, analysts of the contemporary, all of them are not very interested in the past.

And that corresponds to a fear of the past and a whole cultural thing about all politicians saying: “we are now in a new epoch, it’s the post-industrial, post-this, post-that, let’s all forget about what was before the post, we’re now post-it-all”. So there’s a very strong cultural hostility against the past, partly because it gives a critical grip on the present. And ideologists don’t want researchers to have a critical grip on anything. And therefore my concern for *the history* of the contemporary.

Most sociologists don’t want to add to their own task by actually going far into the past, or for that matter far into the future. Now, economists, geographers, natural resource scientists do a lot of work on the long path and the far future. People are thinking very hard at a planetary level, how did we come to have such a large population, how did certain areas in the Mediterranean get totally stripped of trees, what do we do and what’s going to happen in a hundred years’ time, the military are totally obsessed with balances of power and long-term planning and building something that will only start coming to production in thirty years’ time. But sociologists are very interested but only in what happens next year or maybe after five years hence: they are afraid of researching what is likely to happen in the lifetime of their grandchildren, and don’t care about researching the world of their grandparents.

Therefore my approach is going to be a minority thing. Individuals on their own have the time for one PhD, not three; one undergraduate degree, not three. So clearly, people are not going to welcome that, because there’s no way under normal conditions of a rather short lives, rather low amounts of money and rather pressing demands for research products in a given discipline. So, frankly the sorts of knowledge that I think you need to understand the individual BNIM case requires a multidisciplinary team.

An inner-world specialist, an outer-world specialist and a historian --because most inner-, outer-world specialists aren’t historically-minded -- actually could do some well-informed psycho-societal research of the sort that I think is good. However it requires the specialists trained to understand how to work together with the other types of specialists.

At the moment, sociologists are taught that psychological facts are uninteresting and only contemptible people like psychologists would be interested in that sort of stuff. And on the other hand psychologists know that sociologists are total crap when it comes to describing the inner lives of individual people. So why should they bother to read any sociology? And historians know that psychologists just like sociologists are all theoretical and don’t know anything about the facts; the real facts of history. Actually the trainings have to involve training to cooperate and think with the people from the other two disciplines. Because if you leave it to the fetishism of the discipline, all they will learn is how to have contempt for other disciplines…. out of terrible fear because they know nothing about them.

Lenka Formánková: *Let’s get back to the evolution of your Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method. If I understand correctly, it all happened after you met your wife Prue Chamberlayne. Would you describe in greater detail how you met her at the conference in 1995…*

Tom Wengraf: Something like that. I hate sandwiches at conferences. They’re usually rather dry and brittle and wrapped in unpleasant plastic, um and so on and so forth. So, I went off to my session and I had with me a string bag. In my string bag I had lots of oranges, okay, because you get very thirsty. I remember there were underground rooms and they had air-conditioning. So I went to hear Prue (Chamberlayne) and Annette King and the two of them produced this book on cultures of care in East Germany, West Germany and Britain. She had just described the method a little and I thought, “Wow!” You know, really good. She fit it in with humanistic psychology very well. Anyway, I listened to it and I talked to her afterward a little and she was going off to like one session or I was going off to another session. Either immediately afterwards or perhaps one session more than afterwards, we actually found ourselves going to the same session; which since we both are interested in the same stuff, wasn’t so surprising. And I offered her some oranges. So we never looked back. She was very happy to talk to me about her methodology and I was very, very keen to learn all about it. And I was attracted to her anyway!

Quite soon I joined the SOSTRIS project, a two year long European Union project of which Prue was the co-originator. That was great; I did a lot of participant observation of the biographic method in action. Eventually, I decided that it shouldn’t be just Prue and me in the Anglo-Saxon world, who knew about this method. I wanted to understand it, so whenever I want to understand anything I start writing about it. At some point, I started to teach the method, but it was not my original motivation. I just wanted to understand it. And there was this very systematic method of both doing the interviews and interpreting them.. We were seven national teams trained by [Roswitha Breckner](http://www.123people.at/s/roswitha+breckner) from Vienna University who was trained by Gabriele Rosenthalin Germany.

Lenka Formánková: *Now would you explain a bit more the difference between the biographic method by Rosenthal and BNIM by you and Prue Chamberlayne?*

Tom Wengraf: Ok, well, Gabriele Rosenthal’s method is now, you can say, a tradition, but it’s only been a tradition for twenty years or so. I think her PhD thesis which describes it at a quite high level of philosophical abstraction was published in 1995. It’s a Gabrielle and Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal product and BNIM is a particular variant. I know that Gabriele and Wolfram were opposed to my formalization, in a sense that I represented Anglo-Saxon positivist technicism, as opposed to German philosophical profundity. So what I’ve done, is to reduce and produce a technical skeleton, which is quite easy to learn, particularly given the textbook and the BNIM guide as it now is. Lots of people have used it without ever meeting me and without even ever having read the *BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual*.

I’ve written up the procedures in such a way that they are as untied as possible to any particular philosophical or theoretical school. That was my aim. Because I wanted the ideas to spread. I’ve tried to systematize more – and give more concrete examples -- than they did at that time in 1997. In addition, what we offer in the BNIM training is a different way of comparing cases from the way they did.

One of the concepts taken over (we thought) from Gabriele which we religiously followed is: what is the structure of the case? So there was a deep structure of the case and we had to find out what it was. And I can’t tell you the amount of pain and anguish as we tried to find an unambiguous and ‘fully final’ structure of the case. And that was within, if you like, a positivist model of reality.

Well, since then, particularly with post-modernism and various philosophical changes and social sciences, people are no longer totally sure that in reality, that we can actually know a final knowledge. There may be a ‘structure of the case’, but there’s no way that we can prove our version of it is the only possible one. So now we don’t talk about the structure of the case, we talk about the model of the psychosocial reality. It’s *just a model*, there could be another one, we can argue.

So I think, that’s quite different from the implicit philosophy in the early 1990s. And the other thing - the guide and manual that I talked about and the method as of 2012 is open about my current way of thinking which is psychoanalytically informed in a way that I wasn’t when I wrote my 2001 textbook . I’ve also extended the discussion of systematic techniques all the way up to ‘the evolution of the case’ and then the comparison of cases.

Lenka Formánková: *Thank you very much!*

## #1.11. Technical Notes: Differences of this 2013 update from earlier versions#

### 1.11.1 Introduction to Technical Notes on Differences

These notes make most sense for those who have read earlier versions of the *BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual.*

**If you have read and studied and used earlier versions of the *BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual:***

It identifies main new emphases to be found in the rest of this version, and brings them together *for those who studied and practised with old versions well enough not to want to read the whole text again to find them.*

If you read this, and then go on to read the rest of this new version, you will find the ‘main new emphases’ scattered all over the rest of the version – inevitably you will have some slight sense of nauseating (or possibly enlightening) repetition!

BUT

**If you haven’t read previous versions of this *Short Guide and Detailed Manual,* ,**

**leave this section till later (or don’t read it at all!, or only after reading the Detailed Manual):**

**YOU WILL FIND THIS SECTION VERY MIND-CONFUSING**

**Instead, Go to p. 47**

In general, I’ve tried to keep technical notes and footnotes out of this new version of the short guide. I’ve realised however that is not possible to keep all of them away from the main text and consequently the two sets of technical notes may be a bit confusing.

Most of the issues however are more extensively dealt with at different points of SGDM Vol. II, III, and IV.

### 1.11.2. TFA Terminology. *October 2010 +.* I am currently changing terminology.

* In brief. We look at *the ‘flow of the telling’* (the interview data, in sequence) in order to infer things about the *‘flow of the subjectivity of the teller’*, and then give if necessary a *‘shape of the evolution of that situated subjectivity’.*
* In addition, instead of ‘evolution’ of the case (History of the Case Evolution HCE) , one could talk of ‘mutations’ of the case and ‘History of Case Mutations’ (HCM). This avoids any implication of unilinear or necessary ‘progression’ in the history of the case. An evolution can as easily be importantly ‘negative’ – as, say, in the onset of psychoses, or senility, or Alzheimer’s or moral corruption. In the West’s dominant phantasy of eternal progress, ‘evolution’ implies change that is positive..
* Irrespective of the term chosen, *the BNIM procedure is broadly unchanged* from that of the 2001 QRI textbook (Wengraf 2001)

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### 1.11*.3. Preparing for BNIM (Teams of 1 or more, say , say 4)*

*This section and the appendix to which it refers are in course of construction.*

BNIM is increasingly used for team research projects in which a number of team members are funded to be simultaneously trained in the BNIM methodology which they will then use in the project itself. These teams are typically small (say 3 or 4 members).

The earliest anglophone BNIM large-team research project was that of Sostris (1997-1999) (with 14 or so members across seven countries) and since then further small-team trainings have been undertaken.

Certain questions of any preparation for BNIM work emerge more strongly with the training of BNIM teams. The careful reading of the 2001 textbook (Wengraf 2001) can no longer be taken for granted, and collective team preparation poses additional questions (and great opportunities) which one-by-one training (for PhD or individual post-doctoral work) does not generate and provide. There is always one BNIM enthusiast in such teams (otherwise the successful application for team research and for funds for preliminary team training in BNIM would not have succeeded), however one or more other members of the team might be less enthusiastic, especially researchers hired specifically for the team project. This poses questions of joint preparation.

As of September 2012, arising from a number of such trainings over the last few years, I’ve therefore started to plan an appendix relating to such issues of team preparation. I’ve realised that many of the points I wish to make also apply (in slightly altered form) to individual researchers who are going to work on their own (team of 1).

This new appendix will be A.2. Team of 1 or more (pretend 4), starting on p. **553** . So far, unfortunately, it’s a blank page!

Though of special interest to leaders of such teams (Principal Investigators), it has some material relevant to all preparation for BNIM work.

In particular, it deals with questions about ‘preparing to investigate a particular social category’, since most applied social research takes the form of investigating one or more social categories. There is a separate and earlier discussion of multi-category interviewing for triangulation (section starting p. **95**).

*Private notes to self:*

See (a)my notes for Sasha on international teams, (b) notes on CR and Sostris and the strict ‘case-description/collation rules and timetables’ involved in Sostris. (c) Get from Sasha or Cristina or Mariya, indications of ‘required output’ from all case researchers on their cases.

### 1.11*.4. Appendices on ‘Variants and Adaptions’ of and around BNIM*

The bulk of the present text has been and remains strongly normative, presenting what might be regarded as ‘classic BNIM’. I make no apology for this. It is important to have a clear well-tried set of procedures as a basis for one’s research and self-training..

However, it is important to see how people have adapted and adopted different components of BNIM procedure. Hence Appendix E.

Some of these may certainly strengthen the method for certain purposes; others may certainly weaken it. One way or the other, given that every researcher who uses the method will eventually develop their own minor or major ‘subtractions’ and ‘additions’ (and different ones in different contexts), it is important to be fully aware of one’s own choices and be able to know and think about those of others.

I would like just to signal two other appendices:

(i) one is about the use of BNIM within the context of a fully psycho-societal approach (p. **1225** onwards) ;

(ii) the other (April 2010) is about Critical Realism and the mutual congruence/support of this developing philosophy of social-science research practice on the one hand and BNIM approaches on the other (p. **1244** onwards).

You will be unsurprised that I commend both!

### 1.11*.5. The BNIM interview – push for ‘Pauses’ as you push for ‘(in)-PINs’ and foster Free-Associative Leaps*

#### 1.11.5.1. Push pausefully …. Think mini-moments within broader sweeps

As regards BNIM interview practice, I have stressed *the importance of ‘pausing before responding’* much more than I did before.

During the June 2009 BNIM London training, I become more aware of the **dangers** of **mind-stopping rapid-response-unit-style questioning** (UK - Jeremy Paxman style) and the many important benefits for both parties in Sub-session Two if the interviewer always ‘Pauses Before Responding’ …… and models this for, and gives permission to, the interviewee to do the same.

**Both interview-partners need to pause to listen** about what has just been said (whoever said it, themselves in particular but also their interview-partner), and **have time to sense what they feel about it all,** before starting talking again**.**

**Without pauses**, we are only *going through the motions* of listening to what and how ourself or the other person has only just completing saying*; and we are likely to fail to listen to what’s going on between us.*

Only pauses give proper spaces to think, free from the pressure of ongoing nonstop speaking or ongoing nonstop listening.

There needs space to think: *What has just been said? What’s the significance of it being said? Why was it said that way? At this point? What do I feel about it all? What might my interview partner be feeling about it all? What am I feeling about it all, right now?* No need to use words, yet. Get a sense of it all -- and all about it -- quietly. Listen. If listening can be seen as a form of ‘pushing’ then a new slogan might be…

*“Push for thoughtful Pauses ;****then*** *Push for then-felt, heart-felt, In-PINs”.*

This will make more sense, later..

The silences between words and the sayings allow *the unsaids* (that make up what one might call the *‘crucial interword’*) to come through*. Pause here.* What are the implications of accepting the idea in the first sentence of this paragraph, and those of rejecting it? Why not? *What stops you?*

What interviewing practice and behaviour – or indeed, reading practice in relation to the text you are now reading -- needs to be ‘pushed against’ to *allow the coming through of ‘thoughtful pauses’?*

The Western tendency to be ‘afraid of silences’, the compulsion to block thoughts with words. These ‘instant wording’ have to be ‘pushed against’ to get thoughtful pauses and proper listening to self.

*Pauses are ‘pregnant’; for good natural delivery, let the pauses have a full gestation, taking the time they need. You are not a hurried and harried extractive surgeon, you are a facilitating midwife, particularly of yourself. Also for your interviewee.*

Pushing for PINS and for more and more details of those PINS, for other PINs provoked by the retailing of the first PIN: what does it do?

Pushing pausefully for in-PINs

*invites practitioners to focus on crucial moments in their actions, moments*

*when more possibilities of next steps might be [have been] available than at first thought [remembered]*

(Shotter and Tsoukas 2007, materials in square brackets added)

We are all ‘practitioners’ of our own lives, let alone any other practices we practice.

**The four Ps: Pauseful Pushing for in-PINs, and then Pause again!**

A final point: *not hastily* towards in-PIN *but gradually*: Grand Tour to Mini-Moment

If somebody aged 70 replies to your SQUIN by saying “*Well, I’ve had a most amazing life?”* and then stops, what do you not do?

You don’t ask a question which would be a really a good question *later on*; you don’t say

*“You said you had a most amazing life; do you remember the most amazing moment in it, how it all happened?”.*

You want a much richer overview (or Report) of more of the whole 70 years, so that you can then move gradually down towards PINs on various cue-phrases embodied in the overview Report. You might say, breaking the default rules:

*You said you had a most amazing life; can you give me some idea of how it developed, how it all happened?”*

*.*

And hopefully they will eventually give you some sort of overview with, say, five components. You can then push towards PINs within each of the 5 component areas. You will get to “the most amazing moment”, but not at the cost of all the “not quite as amazing” (but still crucial) ones on the way there.

The detail of PINs can be very much differentiated into separate Mini-Moment PIN.

For example, “*You said you quickly decided to phone your boy-friend. Do you remember any thoughts or feelings you had while you were deciding to phone your boy-friend, how all that happened?”.* If you are successful, you are pushing towards a PIN of internal subjective experiencing, a very valuable thing if you can get it.

Elsewhere, I refer to the notion of going for a “Grand Tour” before focusing on each “Mini-Moment” element mentioned within the grand tour (see p.**468** ). Moving gradually towards any particular in-PIN.

#### 1.11.5.2. and…foster unprompted free-associative leaps:Anything else come to mind?

The SQUIN, the open-narrative question allows for un-prompted free leaps in sub-session 1.

How can we foster the same free-associative leaps in sub-session 2, where the interviewer is taking the freely-offered cue-phrase but persistently driving towards in-PINs relating to that initial cue-phrase?

The danger is that we do foster ‘free-associative’ leaps in any direction in subsession one, but, in subsession two. only rather heavily guided unfree associative drives in one (interviewer-selected) direction. *Does this make you think of anything else?*

The key phrase in subsession two is that, at a point where for one reason or another, you as interviewer are no longer pushing towards an in-PIN generated by a cue-phrase some ‘rounds’ before (hopefully because you got your in-PIN in enough mini-moment detail)., you can then ‘prompt for a free-associative leap in any direction’ by asking quietly *Does this make you think of anything else?*

The use of that phrase *first – before you go on to older cue-phrases already written ­–* is a quiet mini-prompt for any other memory (potential PIN) that comes to mind.

The phrase *Anything else come to mind?* is as free as the SQUIN that staets sub-session one; in fact, it is more free. It gives back the interviewee’s mind its autonomy, and its power to start a new interesting ‘meander’.

In a recent interview, a very experienced doctor was recalling a powerful and wonderful progressive training for professionals he had recently experienced, about which he was unambiguously enthusiastic. He provided several powerful-in-PINs about that experience.

An unskilled interviewer might happily have left it that and gone on to his next cue-phrase note several rounds back. Luckily this did not happen.

Luckily, the interviewer remembered the ‘pause for a possible coda’ principle.

She paused long enough, and then asked him an “*anything else that brings to mind?”* pause-and-coda-question.

Immediately, he gave a powerful image of the cane that stood in the corner of his primary school when he was a boy, a cane called “Betsey”, and, after letting that sink in and scenically ‘re-experiencing’ the classroom and the teacher. found himself producing in-PINs about that experience of 30 or so years before, in-PINs which vividly related his primary school experience to his later-life professional concerns and chosen specialisation.

This ‘prompted free-associative jump’ at the level where he was already remembering at the in-PIN level was a complete surprise to him, and an amazingly powerful contribution to understanding the ‘situated subjectivity’ that characterised him.

Without the *Anything else come to mind?* as a last-word free-association prompt, this crucial key to understanding his present subjectivity would almost certainly not have come to mind, to his mind.

Push pausefully for PINS; pause and push for codas with the coda-question; foster free associative leaps and glides….*Anything else come to mind?*.

### 1.11*.6. The BNIM interpretation process – new emphases and additions*

1) **The Unsaid**. I have tried to insist more on the fact that only *people interested in the ‘unsaid of the said’* will generate good narrative interviews or interpret them well.

If you ignore what is *not* said, you will not help them to say that unsaid to you, let alone understand the person doing that saying by unsaying.

If you are only interested in *what* *is* said, then the significance of *the way* in which the said is said and *the way* in which the unsaid is also said…. will both escape you.

2) **Checking back.** Partly as a result of the emergence of new audio-visual recording and computer-aided qualitative data interpretation programmes, I stress more than I used to do the value of *checking back to the original recording* both during the interpretive process (micro-analysis) and also at late-points in that process after provisional interpretations have started to crystallise.

New technologies enable you to switch between a place in the transcript and a place in the audio/visual recording at the press of a button. See Appendix ***B.4. From tape to transcript*** and back again: videotapes?starting on p. **598**.

3) **Foreign-language interviewing.** In addition, there is a discussion of *foreign-language interviews* and also – a separate question -- of  *BNIM–panel interpreting* of the lived experience of interviewees who have had a lot of significant experience in ‘*dated foreign locations’* (times and places) foreign to most or all people on your BNIM panel. See Appendices A.4 and B.4.

4) **Temporally-linked cases: transmission**. I have inserted a page of notes to myself for a new sub-section 3.7.6.3. on *‘linked cases’*, getting ready to think more carefully about ‘transmission and conditions of mutation’.

5) **TFA Double-Experiencing Hypotheses**. In the discussion of the BNIM interpretation process of the sequence of the **Teller Flow Analysis** (Track 2) -- and the putting forward of hypotheses about the lived experience of the person telling the story in the interview (now) about experiences that he or she had earlier in their life (then) -- I now refer more explicitly than I did before to the need to think of hypothesising in the TFA as being ‘Double Experiencing’ Hypothesisings (DEH), *both*  the past experiencing being remembered *and* the present experiencing in the interview that leads to decisions about what to say, and what not to say, and how to say it.

Hypothesising about the lived experience in the interview of this **double experiencing** by the interviewee has always been part of good practice in BNIM, but I have only now made it sufficiently explicit.

**6) Commonalities between interviewing and interpreting mind-sets**

In thinking about the role of the researcher in the BNIM interview and as the **BNIM panel facilitator**, I have been struck by an analogy.

* *A good BNIM interviewer pushes carefully but determinedly for more PIN-detail and in-PIN engagement by the BNIM interviewee, who can be quite reluctant to go so deeply into their subjectivity.*
* *A good BNIM panel-facilitator pushes carefully and determinedly for more imaginative detail and precision and in-panel engagement by the the BNIM panel-members, who can be quite reluctant to go so deeply into their subjectivity and into the complexity of the subjectivity of the interviewee.*

If we talk about ‘pushing for deep and detailed interesting hypothesising’ as the key strategic direction of the BNIM panel facilitator, then we could call this latter activity ‘pushing for in-HYPs’ (sounds like “in-HIPs”). This would be different from ‘about-HYPs’ because they would address the depth and complexity of the imagined subject of the panel and they would do from the depth and complex subjectivity of an engaged panel member.

There is no point in having deep and detailed pushing for in-PINs if the interviewer turned facilitator (and her or his panel members) contents themselves with rather and shallow descriptions of the subjective data generated.

* *Because you want in-depth material in your interviews, you push pausefully for in-PINs in the interview.*
* *Because you want in-depth interpretations of your material, push pausefully for many complex and deep in-HYPS from your panel members.*

And, to set up a habitus and a habit, *do both early*!

One researcher with a full-time teaching position, intending to cover quite a large number of cases, gave herself a rigorous schedule of doing BDA and TFA panels on a new case every week, on Mondays and Fridays. I thought that this would mean that she would neglect her need to train herself in depth-interpretation on her first case. I wrote:

*I've just thought of the analogy in BNIM interviewing where you learn to push on the first couple of items for an in-PIN in order that the interviewee gets used to the habit of operating at the level of detailed early experience. Such early determined pushing (however long it takes) is crucial in order to teach the interviewee what sort of answers and what sort of access to earlier experience is needed in the BNIM interview.*

*By analogy, you need to push yourself on the first (good) case to be interpreted to make sure that you teach yourself what level of depth complexity and coherence in a case-account you need to get to, so that when you work on the later cases you know when you have or haven't got there. The examples in the SGDM are there to help you get a sense of levels of depth-adequacy, but the main thing that will raise your depth-sophistication is actually pushing yourself harder and harder in the interpretation of the first case.*

You don’t want to end up *after six months being very skilled in running BDA/TFA panels, but* with no experience of going beyond them *in the stages of doing a BNIM interpretation of any one case. (email January 2013).*

I suggested that the researcher consider starting by doing BDA/TFA panels in the first week of each month, and then spending the remaining 6 days in that month working on the interpretation-stages; and then doing the next BDA/TFA panels at the beginning of each month. The panels are there to kick-start the interpretation process of a particular case; if you don’t do that straight away but shift to kick-start panels for another case, they won’t perform the kick-start function.

I wrote:

*It’s like kick-starting a car and then, once the motor’s turning-over, instead of driving the kick-started car, getting out and , going to the next car and kick-starting that, and also not driving that one away, and repeating this for six months!*

**7) The new third column.**

Perhaps the most useful innovation in the BNIM interpretation procedure is a further modification/addition to the process of developing a case-interpretation.

**The shift from a 2-column summary to a 3-column summary**.

The original (2001) model of the 3 one-page diagram that holds the result of the twin-track separations was a two-column one:

(i) living of the lived life (BDA);

(ii) telling of the told story / teller flow analysis (TFA):

That is, the ‘objective facts about the life (say, 40 years)’; the detailed facts of the ‘telling of the told story in the interview’ (say 2 hours in the 40th year), both ‘interpreted and a pattern inferred from each’. This is the one that can be found in the textbook, Wengraf 2001: 287.

The ‘detailed facts of the pattern of the telling of the told story in the 40th year’ (column two) clearly reflect inevitably the ‘subjectivity of the teller’ in the current phase of the evolution of their subjectivity, and it is used to infer that current ‘historically-situated subjectivity’ (the individual’s “current perspective”) operational in that 40th year.

*But the material in that interview (and in any other subjectivity-expressing data) can also be used to explore earlier phases of development of that 40-year-old subjectivity.* Up to and including (and sometimes going further back beyond) the study period of the whole of the ‘lived life’.

The **Earlier Stages of Subjectivity** will be marked probably by ‘subjectivity turning points’.

Here is an imaginary example of SSSs – all but the last are ESS

Up to 13, unreflective playing around

13-18 furious work

18-23 disappointed pleasure seeking

23-31 steady career building

32-35 economic crisis and unemployment

35 spiritual conversion experience

36- searching for a marriage partner and wanting children

Figure 10 Successive States of Subjectivity - rough example

We therefore now typically work towards **three columns**:

Two as before

1. (phases in the) living of the lived life (or part thereof*)*

*Biographical Data Analysis (BDA);*

1. (phases in the ) telling in the interview of the told story of that life (or part thereof)

*Teller Flow Analysis* *(TFA);*

and *now also*

1. (phases in the) evolution of situated subjectivity/perspectives over the period of the living of the lived life (or part thereof). Could be called:

*Successive Stages of Subjectivity/Perspectives*

Enabling the clear comparison over a single life or life-period of the phases of the living of the lived life (i) and the phases of the evolution of subjectivity over that life-period (iii), the relation between the two can then be explored as a base for constructing the case-history.

This third (central) column can be seen in the one page 3-column diagram to be found on **Figure 61 Three-columnn case-condensation – blank**. This explicit introduction of a third (central) column with phases of mutating subjectivity over the same ‘lived life’ period as that dealt with in the ‘biographical data period’ in the first column is discussed in sections 3.6.1 onwards.

This then leads to the construction of a Case-History in which the analytically and procedurally abstracted ‘objectivity phases’ and ‘subjectivity phases’ are brought together in a Case-phase Account

**A note on TFA: Teller Flow Analysis**

Since with those with a good foundation in English and normal social sciences education and training continue to have such a powerful ‘habitus’ in favour of detecting and abstracting themes from the told story in a narratological sort of way, I have gone even further to counter the tendency to believe that this what BNIM interpretation does as well.

I now translate ‘TFA’ as primarily **‘Teller Flow Analysis’** (interpretation of the situated subjectivity telling the told story *in situ*) of the data given by a **‘Telling Flow’ data-set**, and to relegate the term of ‘Thematic Field’ to a large, *but not complete,*  extent to earlier BNIM pre-history.

*The data-set is the ‘telling’; the interpretation is of a ‘Teller’***.**

So. The telling-flow data (the digital record, the transcript, the sequentialisation) ‘TSS’ (*Telling*-Flow *Data)*  is worked on in different ways by the researcher to produce a *Teller Flow Analysis* (TFA), an analysis of the flow of subjectivity that expressed itself in the telling.

The procedure in broad terms for what (Wengraf 2001) called ‘Thematic Field Analysis’ is not changed from 2001; the way of understanding it and some of the detail of doing it is, I hope, improved….

For TFA details, see *SGDM Volume III*:  *Interpretation Detailed Manual.*

I am also working to relate *Track Two as Perspectives Data Analysis* to an overall concept of ‘*Subjectivity/Perspectives’*….and both of these to *‘Historically Dated Situated Subjectivity’.* But this is exasperating work-in-progress. To help you ignore it, this paragraph is in small font

**These are the main differences of the current version from earlier ones. They have accrued gradually over the past two or three years or so.**

### 1.11*.7. More examples of ‘writing up’ the various stages in different ways*

The *Detailed Manual on BNIM Interpretation*  now provides further examples of the actual *writing-up of the different types of intermediate documents needed at the different stages of the BNIM interpretive process*, to make clear the type of thinking and the type of text-writing you should decide to aim for.[[79]](#footnote-80)

Each piece of intermediate writing up -- as listed below -- is very different, in ways that are not immediately obvious to the beginner. Because they are not, and cannot be, immediately obvious to the beginner, the definite differences have to be slowly and painstakingly learnt.

Generalisations without sufficient examples (examples to be positive *and negative*: truth is perceived and corrected error as Gaston Bachelard might have said) don’t guide enough.[[80]](#footnote-81)

So, in the *Detailed Manual Volume III*, there is now a *set of fullish example or examples* of written-up accounts of

* Track One: Living of Lived Life
  + Biographical Data Analysis (Phase Model of the Living of the Lived Life) – both the ‘first bare’ and the ‘second enriched’ BDA.
* Track Two: Telling of the Told Story
  + TFA-Teller Flow-*Flow* Analyses of the subjectivity-in-interview (mostly present perspective)
  + TFA- Teller Flow -*Structure* Analyses of the subjectivity-in-interview (largely present perspective), and
  + Phase Model of Successive States of Subjectivity over the period of the Lived Life (up to and including the interview)

(previous subjectivity/perspectives)\*[[81]](#footnote-82)

* Case History: Connecting of Lived Life (Track One) to Told Story (Track Two) [[82]](#footnote-83)

These examples are not prescriptive, but they should be suggestive of the sort of differences that you need to aim for…and hopefully provoke further exploration and innovation.

*If you start to feel that you are being asked to write ”the same thing as before”,* this is a sign that you have not yet sufficiently grasped the difference between the different tasks set. You have either not grasped the task set before, or the task set now, or both. *Study the examples of both in this book.*

*Do not expect the differences to be obvious.*

*They take time and close attention—and above all practice, and review by comparing them with model examples -- to learn.*

*At a certain point,* a pre-metric UK coin,  *the penny, will drop. and you will see the difference and be able to recognise and correct the places where, when trying to write to one genre-requirement, you have inadvertently been tempted and slid into another.[[83]](#footnote-84)*

### 1.11.8. McGilchrist’s ‘divided brain’; and the pleasure of practices

Ian McGilchrist’s work on the divided brain – a resource for understanding BNIM

(April 2010). I’ve just come across the work of McGilchrist (2009). It has really illuminated and re-awakened my sense of how some of the unexpected peculiarities and imperatives of BNIM work are supported by recent brain research and by clinical experience.

All references to left and right hemispheres in this version of the Guide are based primarily on this extraordinarily interesting book. Warning: it’s not a quick read, but it’s engrossing as it – quite inadvertently – adds a new dimension to handling and understanding the productivity of BNIM’s procedures and approach.

For example, McGilchrist makes a very interesting point which can be related to the qualitative difference between an ‘in-PIN’ and several other textsorts (including about-PINs and GINs, Reports etc. His account suggests to me that the ‘in-PIN’ alone comes from the right hemisphere, and that the others depend on left-hemisphere processing. He writes:

The *right temporal lobe* deals preferentially with memory of a personal or emotionally charged nature, what is called episodic memory,….. where *the left temporal lobe* is more concerned with memory for facts that are within the public domain (McGilchrist 2009: 54)

At this point he inserts an endnote of which I quote part:

…True recall of personal experience is consistently more associated with the right hemisphere….. Objective data about the self, or imagined (fabricated) autobiographical memories are less strongly lateralised to the right hemisphere…. *The distinction that matters seems to be whether or not the episode is re-experienced in the moment of recall; clearly recall of some autobiographical information can become little more than objective recall of facts.* There is this a distinction to be drawn between episodic and …[non-episodic, TW] autobiographical memory

(McGilchrist 2009: 471). *Material in square brackets supplied TW]*

According to this model, the pushing towards in-PINs in the BNIM sub-session two is in fact an attempt to push towards a shift of dominant function to the right hemisphere. It is only then that the ‘re-experiencing’ happens. The distinction between ‘in-PINS’ and ‘out-PINs’) emerged empirically over the course of the last 10 years teaching and doing BNIM: for me, it was fascinating for me to find in McGilchrist’s work a line of neurological research and argument which explains and justifies the distinction.

Marion Milner has written about the importance of learning to make “a small gesture of the mind (2011:47)” which could select different ways of perceiving:

one, my everyday way, in which I saw only what concerned me and saw everything with the narrow vision of personal desires; the other, a way which was difficult, which I achieved only in certain moments, but which brought a contentment beyond the range of personal care and anxiety (Milner 2011: 108).

Milner refers to making a switch between default ‘narrow focused vision’ and ‘wide free-floating attention’ by an ‘internal gesture of the mind. I found it plausible to think that it related to some sort of switch from McGilchrist’s left-hemisphere lineal apprehension to (or at least towards) right-hemisphere holistic apprehension.

It was interesting that one of the phrases that Milner used to help her do this ‘small gesture of the mind’ was to say and feel “I want nothing”. This might be the equivalent of saying ”Left-brain, I have no purpose that you have to pursue, so take some downtime….”

*Two working points February 2012:*

Prue Chamberlayne suggests that vividly-experienced ‘condensed situations’ might also be stored in this way, image of ‘states of mind’, of ‘the atmosphere of situations’ which can only be grasped in metaphors and fragmentary glimpses, and maybe worked up into poetry.

Clearly, the exploration of ‘images of the felt sense of traumas’ or for that matter of what Freud called ‘oceanic feeling’ such as bliss’ (individual collective) might well fall into such a category where ‘screen images’ of vivid experience cannot be unpacked into narratives but can convey lived experience like crazy.

Such ‘lived situations’ can be expressed in a visual register by a verbal description equivalent to a photograph.

Under other conditions, they emerge as something like a poem.

See Eva Hoffman’s *After such knowledge* on the preconceptual apprehensions of young people, children of parents who experienced and survived the Holocaust):

May others who grew up in households like mine remember the torn, incoherent character of those first communications about the Holocaust, the speech broken under the pressure of pain. The episodes, the talismanic litanies, were repeated but never elaborated upon. They remained compressed, packed, sharp. I suppose the inassimilable character of the experiences they referred to was expressed – and passed on – through this form. For it was precisely the indigestibility of the utterances, their fearful weight of densely packed feeling, as much as any specific content, that I took in as a child. The fragmentary phrases lodged themselves in my mind like shards, like the deadly needles I remember from certain fairy tales, which pricked your flesh and could never be extracted again (Hoffman 2004: 11)

Poetry can also convey something similar, not requiring ‘narrative’ (although what follows can appear as narrative):

From the window

you see in the sky

a thunderous hulk of metal

with complacent wings and an unerring aim

circling as it hunts for its next target

(could it be the woman in mourning?).

It pursues her

beneath the threatened domes,

it pins her against her bedroom wall

(where the picture of her absent son

fixes his last smile in black and white),

It hunts for her

beneath her clean white bed sheets,

and in between her clothes’ lines.

It hounds her into streets

whose bruises are still warm.

It seeks out her blood

today;

it will seek it out again tomorrow

and tomorrow and tomorrow

(Mourid Barghouti 2008, translated by Radwa Ashour: *Midnight* p. 39-40)[[84]](#footnote-85)

NB: I shall add an example of a ‘condensed situation’ description from a BNIM interview as soon as I find a good example.

I feel that McGilchrist’s work also illuminates what goes on in the mind of the individual and collective researcher working on and after the two tracks during the BNIM interpretive process.

A variety of features of the BNIM protocols both use left-brain capacity *and*  *also* guard against its dominance. Some of these are insistences:

* that the data be examined in a number of ways, each of which comes to a part-model, considered as provisional only
* that all ‘conclusions be considered as ‘provisional hypotheses’, and that the search for counter-hypotheses and tangential hypotheses be systematically pursued by the panel facilitator;
* that the researcher works in panels that undermine left-brain ‘confabulation of bogus certainties’ and come to no premature closures;
* that in these panels, the chunks of data be presented future-blind and that that both following-hypotheses and structural-hypotheses be sought, and that any and all of them be considered solely as hypotheses;
* In every case of working towards the ‘three pre-case columns’, there is both a first micro-lineal movement (BDC,TSS,quotations-in-SSS-order), then a more meso-movement embodied in the upper part of the three columns (phases of life, phases of successive states of subjectivity, phases of the interview), and then in each column, still separately, the ‘bottom-of-column’ “structural synthesis” of what that column was all about.
* that an attempt to reconcile or transcend the carefully distinguished part-models of BDA and SDA occur only at the end of the process; and
* that eventual theorising is partial and emergent (grounded) and must both generalise and particularise, staying in touch with the particularity of each particular case, and not sacrificing them in to get a ‘grounded generalising theory’ that loses particularity and specificity.

Both the left brain and right brain are successfully gratified and frustrated in the interpretation process, but in the end the left brain is forced to serve the synthetic holism of the eventual right brain case synthesis.

The three (April 2012) paragraphs that follow and are crossed out were an attempt to start exploring the likes and dislikes of the left brain and the right brain. I crossed them out because I think that certainly the interview process paragraph is very weak and muddled. The last two interpretive paragraphs are not quite so bad. I leave them here as a suggestion and as a marker for further work…..

~~As regards the interview process, I would like to say that the right brain would not particularly like the fact that the open-question asked in BNIM has so many precise clauses and subclauses, and asks for narrative in particular. And some part of the brain absolutely hates having to delay all questioning until after the end of the initial narrative, and indeed has to delay its own spontaneous questions until subsession three. The left brain preoccupied with systematicity dislikes the fact of having to delay its own spontaneous questions and comments until subsession three as well,…..~~ *~~I’m not sure that this is making any sense, except as a speculative sort of hypothesising.~~*

~~As regards the interpretive process: I want to say that on its own the left brain would only search out a sequence of objective facts and put forward only following hypotheses. It would be interested in developing a sequence of linear phases but would not put forward synthetic intuitions within each separate column of pre-casework and after the HCE phases in a non-diachronic case-account .~~

~~As regards the interpretive process, I want to say that on its own the right brain would just do holistic Impressionism without a separation of analytical aspects into the three columns, and would go straight to the non—diachronic ‘case synthesis’ and neglect the HCE.~~

### 1.11.9. Technical Notes: conclusion

**The pleasures of professional BNIM practices**

“It is the practice that breathes life…. (Armstrong 2005: 131).

The key practices of BNIM that breathe life into the work of the BNIM researcher are

1. the moment of enabling the interviewee to give you an in-PIN and enabling yourself to receive it properly (see the BNIM interview Sub-Session Two extract on p. **39**)
2. the equally live encounter with the other members of your BNIM interpretive panels; and, eventually,
3. the pains-taking and illumination-making of your post-panel interpretive work as you reconstruct and come to understand the lived and the unlived ‘case-journeys’ and ‘life-worlds’ of each of your interviewees.
4. the painstaking and illumination-making of your ‘writing up and conveying’ to different audiences your descriptions and understandings in a way that makes sense to, and helps, each of those audiences with their different needs and their different prior readiness for (mis)-understandings.

## 1.12. Short Bibliography for Short Guide

For full references see the Bibliographies – especially Bibliography A on BNIM materials -- at the end of SGDM vol.5

This ‘Short Bibliography’ is just indicative reading

~~Several key texts can be found in the Bob Miller (ed) 2005 four-volume collection,~~ *~~Biographical research methods.~~* ~~A further brief discussion of Schütze’s approach is in an appendix below (p.~~ **~~1076~~** ~~onwards). The on-line journal~~ *~~FQS~~* ~~frequently has relevant articles, as does the~~ *~~Journal of Social Work Practice.~~*

~~Two recent introductions to the uses of narrative in general are Elliott (2007) and more recently Riessman (2008). Brian Roberts recently introduced and surveyed ‘biographical research’, including the use of biographical narrative, more generally, in his (2002)~~ *~~Biographical Research.~~*

1. Compare Kahneman’s (2011: 233) argument against ‘halo effects’ (or what one might call unsystematic instant holism’) in predicting the future performance of military recruits. His account argues *for* the value of holistic intuition *if preceded by careful analytic disaggregation and separate ‘scoring’.* We are saying the same thing about BNIM’s delayed (and so much more powerful) gratification of the impulse to ‘put everything together right away’. Know that it will take time to get the practice right. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. George Rosenwald ‘Conclusion’ (pp.269/71) in G. Rosenwald and R. Ochberg (eds) *Storied lives: the cultural politics of self-understanding.* New Haven: Yale University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Javier Marías, speech of acceptance at Rómulo Gallegos Award Ceremony 1995. Cited Oriana Bernasconi 2008 *Doing the self: selfhood and morality in the biographical narratives of three generations of Chilean families.* LSE PhD thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. George Steiner *After Babel: aspects of language and translation*  Oxford University Press, 1998: 227-228, celebrating and elaborating Ernst Bloch. See also citations and footnote on p. **480** below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The terms, ‘Description’, ‘Report’, ‘PIN’ are technical terms in BNIM-speak [as are TIN and GIN]. They are explained later and if you are in a hurry are summarised on p. **1173**. Don’t worry about them now. They will make more sense after you have read about BNIM interpretation procedures.

   This ‘Report’ contains four events:

   (i) Sally splitting up from her boyfriend;

   (ii) the offer of a ticket and implicitly its acceptance;

   (iii) the going up to London by coach;

   (iv) the staying up in London and having a fantastic time.

   The interviewer could push for PIN-detail (more narrative detail, more detailed narrative) on any (or all) of these four events.  You will learn how to do this later. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The distinction between in-PINs and about-PINs is very important for doing BNIM interviews thoroughly. It is dealt with later. Here, the important difference is between (all sorts of) PINs (Particular Incident Narratives) and other sorts of (non-PIN) interviewee talk…. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. And the kick-start panels enable you to learn from the experience of others *before* your initial hypotheses, insights and your typical oversights and insensitivities harden….. The 6 hours (3 for the lived life, 3 for the told story) may be tricky to learn how to do, but are amazing in the amount of extra-insight and professional self-knowledge they *invariably* deliver….. and the interested participants who then (even if they weren’t already) often become some of your own ‘project research community’….. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. For example, you may wish to do (say) 20 semi-structured interviews, and have even worked out a draft schedule of initial questions (topic guides). You may find it useful to start by a phase of doing BNIM interviews on (say) no more than1-2 interviewees, in order to improve and enrich your draft schedule of initial questions for the non-BNIM remaining 17*…… This first (BNIM pre-quel) phase can be treated as an initial theory-building phase on which to build a more powerful and insightful second theory-development, theory-testing, phase* of non-BNIM interviewing, or non-BNIM interpretation (e.g. Standish-Kuon 2007) …… The three-Sub-session model of BNIM is particularly congruent with such a design. Catherine O’Neill (2011) did one case BNIM-way and her remaining cases in other ways). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For a discussion of the more general controversially-labelled ‘German school’ of biographical research, see Apitzsch and Inowlocki (2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The predictable environment and interview procedures of the BNIM interview and of the BNIM interpretation procedures can be thought of as providing an environment in which ‘regularities of pattern both in the living of the life and the telling of their story’ can become relatively apparent to the BNIM researcher. He or she has thus an opportunity of becoming a *relative* expert (obviously the ‘expertise’ is only relative) about particular BNIM interviewees, as per the citation of Iris Murdoch on the previous page. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Which are, of course, not ‘trivia’ at all, otherwise they wouldn’t be remembered. It will take you sustained interpretive work to understand why they are not ‘the trivia’ as which they might and want to appear. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. This is a deliberately restrictive use of the term ‘narrative’. Other people use the term more generally, without reference to temporal sequence, so that it can refer to any (or at least a much broader) sort of self-account, self-description, self-justification, etc (see, for example, Bernasconi 2008; Herman 2002, Hyvarinen XXX) . I suggest that experience shows that the ‘restrictiveness’ of Labov’s definition is pragmatically helpful. For us, an attempt to obtain a narrative about lived experience is an attempt to get the interviewee to respond primarily by attempting to tell the story of that experience, how one thing happened after another. Such a direction of questioning is – as you will see and learn – as you may have seen from the direction of questioning in the “Sally” example (section 1.1.2)-- the strategic core of BNIM.

    This is the strategic direction: it doesn’t mean that all the non-narrative material that you inevitably get is not wanted. It is. It is very much wanted. But you get such non-narrative material (such as descriptions, position-takings, etc.) *differently* if they emerge during a push for narrative. *You definitely want non-narrative material , but you definitely want it primarily (and only in subsessions 1 and 2) as it emerges unasked-for from that different way of getting it.* So, strategically, in subsessions 1 and 2 you push for Labov-defined narrative and in particular for particular-incident-narrations (PINs). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. It also means ‘interpreting’ critically and thoughtfully one’s own interpretation. See later. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. DARNE/DRAPES refer to the ‘textsorts’, the manners in which a topic may be spoken about. This is a term used for BNIM interpretation work. [See Booklet TWO: DARNE Box]. Don’t worry about the textsorts at this stage.

    The textsorts include:

    D*escription* A*rgumentation (Condensed Situation)*

    R*eport* N*arrative* E*valuation*

    *GIN = generic incident narrative PIN = IN-pins ABOUT-pins* [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. In its method of interviewing and in its methods of interpretation (especially the procedure within the kickstart panels), it also may well support under-valued right-hemisphere brain functioning, and bring the mind of the researcher into a better-balanced relation of left-brain and right-brain functions.

    See McGilchrist (2009) and Grotstein (2010) for explicit discussion of these neurological questions. As of early 2010, I have applied them speculatively to BNIM below at points in the Detailed Manual. The notion of the *Gestalt* or whole pattern/configuration that was so important earlier on the understanding of the method – as a correction to linear-thinking, and bits-agglomeration thinking -- was itself based on an earlier ‘neurology of perception’. Contemporary brain research has developed such early right-brain appreciations in a more sophisticated way, being able to use neuro-imaging and other techniques not available even 20 years ago. We are becoming the beneficiaries of these new developments. However, the contributions of *Gestalt* psychology remain important. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. For a simple approach to the ‘self-deceiving subjectivity’ from a psychological point of view, see (but only for example) Daniel Goleman *Vital lies, simple truths: the psychology of self-deception* (1997 Bloomsbury. From a sociological one, on other-deceiving subjectivity, Erving Goffman *The presentation of self in everyday life* is a good starting-point*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. It may be that the approach is now being used in what might be termed ‘group self-interview’. See a piece by Mark Vicars (2012) . I have not yet read this article, so may be quite wrong! Perhaps also Clark 2012? *highly provisional footnote, pending access to the writings in question.* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Given the amount of work done in German in Germany, starting well before the UK, with which I have only an informal and episodic acquaintance, I have no doubt that, taking German and English PhDs together, the total number of BNIM-Quatext-and-related PhD work since the 1990s would be in the 150-250 range. That is without adding post-doctoral research. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Manion (2005) indicated that BNIM as a methodology already held a significant place in a European gathering of social work doctoral students in 2004. Greenhalgh et al (2005) discusses the broader topic of ‘narrative methods in quality improvement research’ in respect of healthcare provision (but her article has wider application) and provides useful criteria for distinguishing higher from lower quality in narrative research. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. For a discussion of the way such distinctions between the ‘routine’ and the ‘non-routine’ are highly relative, see my discussion of the approach of Sewell, below p. **936.** But at any level of actor and action, such a distinction is always a ‘working necessity’. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Put “narrative policy analysis” (in quote marks) into Google Scholar (perhaps with “since 2009” to cut down the field). See for example, Fischer (2003: ch.8). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Though they are powerful indicators of institutional reality. Perhaps “indicating important things about the institution through the traces of its functioning left in the lived experience of the individual” might have been a better formulation! [TW note]. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. The importance of contrasting-source narrating for policy analysis and evaluation is well brought out in the discussion and case studies (non-BNIM) by Emery Roe (1994) *Narrative policy analysis: theory and practice.* For understanding the complex configurations of cultural and personal presuppositions of policy practices and situations, the biographic narratives of those located in ‘different but linked’ relevant situations are of great interest.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Ian Shaw has helped clarify for me the limits of ‘practitioner-only’ and ‘client-only’ research in a talk that he gave in November 2007 in an ESRC seminar series on ‘Practitioner research and practice-near methods’. He also provided the Iain Sinclair reference. Thanks, Ian. Elsewhere in this Guide I discuss the value of comparative (cross-regime) research for illuminating the ‘glocal’. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Nicolaysen notes that “the case-study drew on a number of sources: *private documentary sources about the local associations* (letters, memos, photographs, unpublished manuscripts, sheets of draft accounts); *organisational materials* (annual reports, board and member meeting protocols, membership lists, treasurer reports etc.); *fieldwork* (attendance at membership meetings, fund-raising activities etc); and, *material from the regional and central level of the association, articles from the Housewife magazine* (Husmorbladet), *and songs, speeches, and letters from the local associations*” (italics provided, TW). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. But see Middleton and Hewitt (2000) on life-story work with a severe case of disability. If you are prepared to *not get* ‘complete narratives’ (big or small), then material from even apparently-unpromising cases may turn into gold-dust [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Eva Hoffman (1991) also wonders whether weak educational achievement and other factors can leave young men and women with a vocabulary and a relation to language quite inadequate for adequate story-telling: an inarticulacy that leaves only ‘acting out’ as a mode of communication. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Asta Zbarauskaite in Lithuania completed a BNIM-based PhD (2009) exploring children’s experiences of foster care under the specific institutional arrangements and conditions (regimes) of that country now. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. As Rosenthal also points out, *if* skilfully and thoughtfully managed and followed up, a narrative interview *can become* (*not* ‘inevitably will be’) an important opportunity for a traumatised interviewee to‘reorganise’ their experiences in a positive way. Rosenthal (2003) is very helpful on this possibility of a BNIM interview enabling the interviewee to do ‘biographical work’ on themselves. See also my appendix on the ethics of BNIM interviewing in Volume IV. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. I discuss this excerpt very slightly more later on on p.**352.** Brannen’s article is well worth reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. ‘Defended’ in this text means to me that we are all (interviewees or researchers) limited in our understanding of ourselves and others. There might be an omniscient God for whom everybody is transparent and who can understand everything and everybody fully. We are all creatures of our local space-and-time context, we speak from our limited experiences and our local ‘standpoint’. There are always ways of thinking and feeling that we anxiously don’t want to engage in, don’t want to recognise in ourselves. We are always ‘somewhat defended’, our perspectives on ourselves and others are always limited, and conscious and unconscious anxiety is both cause and product of such defensiveness (For the notion of defenses and defensiveness applied to social work, see Trevithick and Wengraf 2011: co-editors of a special issue of the *Journal of Social Work Practice.* [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. The counter-argument: a state(s) of mind of one or more persons or groups at a particular moment of time *is* a social/historical fact itself, as Emile Durkheim’s insistence on *conscience collective* identified. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. See now Archer’s remarks on anti-psychology sociology’s smuggled-in notions of the human subject in her account of the ‘Two-Stage Model’ (Archer 2007: 11-12): her examples are rational-choice theory, critical realism, and “Bourdieu/discourse theory”. I explored institutional theories-in-use of situated subjectivity in Wengraf 2002a. I try to develop the notion of ‘historically-variable agency’ in a conference paper (Wengraf 2011) taken up in Polish in Wengraf 2012a. The English version is available from me on request. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. And there is much to be said about fanatical market state fundamentalists pillaging, bombing and besieging whole populations over decades to make the world safe for markets and more profitable for themselves as market-rulers. A strangely-neglected aspect of State terror, but one unlikely to be explored by Western-funded biographic research! [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. I was recently asked whether BNIM could be used for internet interviewing. I replied that I had no personal experience of this but (video) phone conversation [SKYPE] would be a best substitute for face-to-face in-the-same-room interviewing, and that chat-room conversation in real time would be a best substitute for phone interviewing. There is a programme PAMELA for SKYPE which I’m told is good. However*, exchange-of-email* interviewing would – because of the possibility of correction and rewriting and because of the lack of visual connection – be a very poor third to chat-room recorded improvised real-time exchange. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. But for a counterview at least of BNIM interviewing, see the remark by Peter Lomas cited at the top of p. **50**. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. If you don’t make mistakes, you can’t learn from them. If you aren’t helped to learn *how* they are mistakes, you have only made mistakes that you haven’t perceived and therefore from which you haven’t learned….. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Having the opportunity to read published work based on BNIM and, in particular, being sent electronic copies of articles and of M.A. and PhD theses using BNIM has been of very great importance to me in understanding the uses and adaptions of BNIM and also in helping me think about questions of presentation. Many thanks to those who have informed me of their writings, and particularly to those who have sent me copies. Please continue to do so….. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. If you are enrolled on a BNIM training course (5-day or other), you will find it useful to try such a ‘practice-interview’ before you come on the course. You will almost certainly fail to a significant extent. Next time, you will fail better. Like learning to ride a bicycle: you always start by falling off (to some extent) and these fallings-off are what you learn from. You will certainly do this after the training; you will benefit more from the training if you do a bit before. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. *Do not confuse these BNIM-practice interviews with what comes after* you are satisfied that you have a strong-enough grip on the generics of BNIM interviewing. What comes after your BNIM ‘generic practice’ interview or interviews (you might need two or three, getting feedback on each) is the *later stage. This is where you start with a ‘pilot interview for your own research with your own designed SQUIN’.*

    Don’t try to ‘economise’ by trying to do a pilot interview research and simultaneously make that a generic BNIM practice interview as well. You will do both badly*.*

    *First* get the generic BNIM practice interview right; *afterwards and*

    *only then*, draft your SQUIN for your pilot interview (get the SQUIN right, also with the aid of feedback), and, *afterwards and*

    *only then*, having mastered the generics of BNIM interviewing through practice interviews, having got your SQUIN right for your pilot*, move on to do your first ‘pilot interview’*. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. The notion of a Particular Incident Narrative (PIN) is central to BNIM. If you wish to get the notion clear at this stage – and you may decide to wait till later – you could look at the detailed discussion on p**. 811** below. And there is the ‘Sally and the purple sweater’ example of ‘pushing for a PIN’ that you may have already looked at starting on p. **50**. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. See Wengraf 2001: chapter 10 on ‘Copying, indexing and transcribing’ , especially pp. 218-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. For a discussion of Central Research Questions (CRQs) and of (Theoretical) Sampling in qualitative interview research, see Wengraf (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. For technical reasons, you can’t use the “*Do you remember* ” formulation when somebody has spoken “I now realise”…. Otherwise, and normally, *“Can you tell*” formulations are bad ones in BNIM. Avoid them. Go for “*You said QUOTE XXX; do you remember…..particular…”* [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. For further discussion of the writing and selecting of ‘narratable items’ for further narrative interviewing, see SGDM Vol. II on the ‘Interlude’, p. **303** onwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Note that, because there are nearly always situating background remarks before the story starts with the first story-item, the first thing said in subsession 1 is usually not the first story-item. See below , section 2.4.1. I use the terms ‘story-item’ and ‘narratable-item’ rather indiscriminately, I notice. A strong evaluation *(“I had a terrible time in my adolescence”)* can suggest that there is a narratable item there, even though the phrase is not in itself a story-item but just suggests that there are stories and PINs *to come* indicated by the ‘adjective-evaluation’ “terrible”. You can start with the first item (even if it isn’t a story-item); you can finish with a last non-story item after last story-item, but you must always push for PINs on the first and the last story item, whatever else you do. The starting and ending lines of stories (especially the latter) are crucial. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. An ‘in-PIN’ is when the interviewee is apparently speaking at least in part from within the sequence of past events being recounted. An ‘ab/out-PIN’ is when the interviewee is clearly speaking from the now, firmly recounting an anecdote of what happened then, and emotionally distanced from the (earlier) person/subjectivity that the story is ‘about’. The ‘ab/out-PIN’ is told from *outs*ide and ab*out*… The in-PIN is told from with*in.* This distinction will be explored later, and practice is needed to get the interviewee to move from an ‘ab/out-PIN’ towards an in-PIN rendering of the same or other memories. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Obviously, you stop pushing immediately you are explicitly asked to do so by the interviewee, or when it becomes clear that the interview can’t or won’t add to what they have said already. Until that happens, since they have raised the cue-phrase item onto the ‘agenda for remembering’, then it is legitimate to ask for more detail (until *they* clearly want to stop). In one perspective, the key importance of sub-session 1 is that it provides an agenda for what may be asked about in the longer, key, sub-session 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. You always start by saying “You said” (not you ‘mentioned’ or anything else). In the place of “XXX”, you always by citing a cue-phrase from your notes, only words *they* used (never your own). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Other examples of mini-detail menu are in the Sally purple sweater example (p.**51**) and the Ugandan fisherman caught in a storm (p.**161**). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. These ethnographic/subjectivity footnotes are discussed more in section 2.6.3. and 1.8.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Used in this way, your eventual Sub-session Three with many fully- and/or semi-structured interview questions can be much shorter, since much material was previously generated by the previous BNIM Sub-sessions 1 and 2. It can also be more precisely directed and tailored to the particular person.

    When you are starting to learn to use BNIM, you will be anxious about “not getting the material you need”. To guard against this anxiety, spell out an interview schedule for a Sub-session 3 semi-structured interview as you would if you had never heard of BNIM. Then do the BNIM interview (Sub-sessions 1 and 2). Then see what you still need to ask about in your Sub-session 3, given the material already given. (Then see what new questions you need to ask about, new questions thrown up by the responses in Sub-sessions 1 and 2). Then have the redesigned Sub-session 3. If you need it. As you need it. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. As well as pre-interview and post-interview experience as well [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. ‘Holistic form’ methodology has several similarities to BNIM’s interpretative stress on form. See the approach of A. Lieblich et al (1998) as exemplified for example in Edwards and Gabbay (2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Walter Benjamin sarcastically remarks that *“To historians who wish to relive an era, Fustel de Coulanges* [a nineteenth century French letter historian] *recommends that they blot out everything they know about the later course of history* (Benjamin 1999: 247-8).

    The future-blind chunk-by-chunk method crucial to *the initial panel-work stage* of BNIM does exactly that ‘blotting out’ disapproved-of by Benjamin at each point in the course of the improvised interview’s telling of the told story, at each point in the course of unfolding objective events in the lived life. At any given panel-moment, future chunks are *not-known* to the panel, just as they (the future) weren’t known to the historical actors ‘living’ the moment that the historian wants to ‘re-live’..

    However, *after the panel-work*, at later stages of BNIM interpretation, retrospective and contextual understanding of the case-history as a whole become central in ways on which Benjamin would quite correctly insist. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. If the ‘object of study’ is not a whole life but, say, a whole committee meeting or surgical intervention or observation-session, or even a BNIM interview, then a useful ‘objective account’ of at least some aspects could be obtained by an audio-tape or video-tape. The idea of track 1 is to get a non-controversial account of at least some of the more ‘observable events’ occurring in the period-space under consideration…. in order to get some mental distance from the present perspective embodied in the current telling of the told story. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Processes of ‘sequentialisation’ with examples of the same transcript sequentialised differently can be found in my textbook (2001: 239-55). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. If you proceed to use BNIM, in the Detailed Manual on Interpretation volume III you will come across a discussion of how you explore thematic fields and flows to get to a Teller Flow Analysis. The distinction is not important in this Short Guide. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. It should be born in mind that panels should be composed of at least three, preferably four and not more than, say, five or six people, and it is a bad thing if they are all academic specialists, much worse if they are dominated by the same discipline or paradigm or professional socialisation or life-experience. They should be as heterogeneous as possible, though it is good if at least one of them has some experience comparable to that of the interviewee. Differences of age, nationality and ethnicity help. If panel members are too similar to you, the researcher, you will gain less…. Go for difference, even (be bold) otherness! For any particular ‘case’ being studied, you need two such three-hour panels: one to start the lived-life track and the other the telling-of-the-told-story track. Cornish et al (2006) discuss ‘collaboration in difference’ at a European level in an interesting way. Every panel member has ‘hot-spots’ and ‘blind spots’, including you. You need people who are very sensitive to the ‘scent’ of types of hypothesising that you are insensitive to (have a blind spot for). You want people different from yourself. I have a bit of a blind-spot about religion; I therefore try to find someone for my panel for whom religion is a hot-spot. *What are the types of hypothesis that you on your own would hardly ever or never spontaneously think about?* Can you answer that question? Easily? Fully? How would you know? [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. For certain purposes, you may not wish to make those connections – at least not explicitly or thoroughly or at length – in your published writings. . Much depends on your research problem and Central Research Question…. and the demands, capacities and allergies of your proposed audience…. and of yourself.

    See for example Meares (2007) for a socio-biographical use of BNIM in which, for a variety of reasons, too much exploration of the ‘inner-world reality and dynamics’ of South African migrants to New Zealand is avoided. See also King (2000). There are other BNIM-based research studies in which, for a variety of reasons, too much exploration of ‘outer-world context and dynamics’ is avoided (see for example Jones 2001, Nicholson 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Normal English has “*transition to”,* so that my formulation *‘between’* is *deliberately odd*. By using it, I want to help the reader think that the interviewee has alternative futures between which they are choosing/moving towards; that those futures are not always knowable; that, at any given moment, they are already in transition towards more or less probable unknown futures, and their thoughts and actions are always already mutating the probabilities of one of those unknown futures or another. *Hence “transition between alternative unknown futures”.* [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. I refer to this model the researcher ends up with of a particular ‘historically-situated subjectivity’ or ‘historical situation subjectively experienced’ – both in transition to one or other unknown futures -- as HISS/TUFF2 (see below p. **484** for a discussion of HiSS/TUFF2). You can put ‘HiSS/TUFFs’ in the plural to suggest that any situated subjectivity that we study (an interviewee) has been and is marked by a variety of other subjectivities and by past and present situations. If you have a less relational model you can think instead of the terms being in the singular.

    August 2010: You can add an extra ‘S’ for “strategising”, to read “Historically-Situated Strategising Subjectivity”. This will ensure you keep an ‘action’ frame of reference! HiSSS! [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. It is important that the living-of-the-lived-life and the telling-of-the-told-story tracks are handled separately and you come to independent results that then have to be ’reconciled’ in an explicit further and different research moment. Some sociologists wishing to ignore (self) representations would tend to ignore the ‘telling-of-the-told-story’ track (or deal with it very skimpily) ; some psychologists wishing to ignore the historically- and societally-situated and contextualised nature of lives would tend to ignore the ‘living-of-the-lived life’ track (or deal with it very skimpily). Psycho-societal researchers would not.

    BNIM’s default stress on distinguishing and following both tracks and finding subsequently a way of making sense of both sets of data at least attempts to avoid the involuntary methodological one -sidedness entailed by anti-societal psychologisms and anti-psychological sociologisms, and the neglect of history and historical specificity and process by both. On history-writing, see eventually below the Appendix discussions **D.1** and **D.2.** below. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. I find that a research presentation which presents only generalising theory or only particular case-accounts is for me weaker than one which does both. It is hard and artful work to learn to convey both together in a way felt to be more than just a juxtaposition. [However, for me, personally, the ‘newness’ comes from understanding that reality is historical, and that struggling to understand the ‘historically unique’ is the way that generalising grounded theory is dragged into further self-enrichment]. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. A fuller discussion of ‘theory-language’ – and why I use that term rather than, say, ‘professional discourse/orthodoxy’ can be found in Wengraf 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. In selecting members of BNIM interpretation panels, as heterogeneous as possible, it is therefore a good idea to have at least one ‘inner-world specialist’ and one ‘outer-world specialist’…. and defer to neither! [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. The part-model of the dated situated subjectivity being at any moment varyingly ‘defended’ against some inner-world knowledge and some outer-world knowledge may or may not appeal to you. Or, for some (? inspectable?) reason, you may feel happy about one, but not about the other….. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. BNIM if carefully followed can fairly automatically leave a very clear audit trail. This is becoming increasingly demanded, and is in any case very helpful material for reflection. On the importance of audit trails, often demanded by PhD supervisors especially, see for example American Educational Research Association (2006) on empirical social science in general and Liz Ritchie et al (2003) on qualitative evaluation research in particular. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Abstractions need to be “fully charged with the concrete of experience… and thinking..[needs to be] unquestionably faithful to it (Leavis 1945, cited Inglis 2009: 94)”. “Concepts without intuition are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind (the philosopher Kant)”. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. To get a quick sense of my use of my term Subjectivity-phases, look at the central columns in the figures on p.**1179** (Harold) and on p.**1180** (Janette). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. My thanks to Ciara Bradley. Our work together in 2012-3 powerfully clarified the need to distinguish types of writing which always take time and sometimes take peer support and feedback to learn to distinguish. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. This I take it refers to the victims of the victims of the climax (so far) of European anti-semitism. Had it been written more recently, the agents of global-reach imperial state assassination would have been the new contribution to the great war of civilisation: US pilotless drones illegally killing worldwide at imperial will and with the eager support of the media and the governments of the West, and in particularly the British government. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)