NEW STORIES FROM OLD SURVEYS

Poverty in the UK narrative analysis
Ann Phoenix

The generating of data for poverty studies over time
Ros Edwards
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THE GENERATING OF DATA FOR POVERTY STUDIES OVER TIME

Poverty in the UK (1967/8) and Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK (2012) surveys

Rosalind Edwards, David Gordon and Ann Phoenix with Heather Elliott, Karen Bell and Eldin Fahmy
Technological Change

• On your own → electronic leash
• Paper palimpsest → digital files
Social change

• What can be asked: money/sex/race, household divisions
• How can be asked: length and probing
• Ethics: conversion pressure → informed consent
• Human relations evident → obscured
Professional role

• Visible skill → disembodied
• Ad hoc → standardised training
• Caveat quaerenti → safeguarding
• Mental calculation → computer calculation
Our data:

- c. 2500 scanned images of the *Poverty in the United Kingdom* 1967/8 survey booklets
- Video interviews with 7 field interviewers on the *Poverty in the UK* survey, and 10 researchers who worked with Peter Townsend
- Transcripts of 23 audio-recorded interviews for the *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK* 2012 survey

Aim:
To investigate the possibilities of narrative analysis for paradata, and attendant ethical issues, through working with historically situated archived data

* Possibilities of narrative analysis for marginalia in Townsend’s Poverty in the UK survey material.
* Secondary narrative analysis with data not collected for this purpose.
* Historically situated narrative analysis.

• Telling new stories from an old survey without being anachronistic
• Applied to a substantive topic that resonates with a contemporary era of austerity and divisions about dealing with poverty.
• Methodological and substantive themes
Marginalia - A Poem by Billy Collins

Preface
Robert G. Burgess

1. Introduction: Working with Paradata, Marginalia and Fieldnotes
John Goodwin, Henrietta O'Connor, Ann Phoenix and Rosalind Edwards

2. Paradata for Non-response Investigations in Social Surveys
Gabrielle B. Durrant and Olga Maslovskaya

Eldin Fahmy and Karen Bell

4. ‘Another Long and Involved Story’: Narrative Themes in the Marginalia of the Poverty in the UK Survey
Ann Phoenix, Janet Boddy, Rosalind Edwards and Heather Elliott

5. ‘The House Seemed to be Falling Down Around Their Ears’: Contesting and Amplifying Observations of Housing Through Qualitative Survey Paradata
Daniel Kilburn

6. The Secondary Analysis of Fieldnotes, Marginalia and Paradata from Past Studies of Young People
Henrietta O'Connor and John Goodwin

7. John Adam's Marginalia: Then and Now
H.J. Jackson

8. 'Soiled by Use' or 'Enlivened by Association? Attitudes Towards Marginalia
William H. Sherman

9. Afterword: The Craft of Paradata, Marginalia and Fieldnotes
Rosalind Edwards, Ann Phoenix, John Goodwin and Henrietta O'Connor
Iterative and Cumulative Research Process

- Sample four types of area: special areas, affluent, high immigration, seaside
- Identify extensive marginalia
- Emergent categorisation of marginalia
- Focused thematic analysis (69 cases): inductive/deductive, individual/team
- Selected for narrative analysis (6 cases): team/paired
Typology of Paradata Forms

- **AMPLIFICATION**
  - figures and computation
  - background clarification
  - direct quotes

- **JUSTIFICATION**
  - of coding decision
  - of lack of coding

- **EXPLANATION**
  - relates to substantive focus and coding

- **EVALUATION**
  - individual or household personality/emotions
  - material/resource circumstances
  - veracity of interviewee information
  - what may have happened/will happen

- **DEBRIEFING**
  - offload/explain to self
  - discuss/explain interview process
  - comment on research focus or questions
  - exchanges between interviewer and core team

- **STANDPOINT**
  - wider political context
  - wider general or local social situation
  - active/voice beyond fieldworker role
Narrative method

• Close reading of all the booklet paradata, with attention to the genre of ‘story’
• Interviewer and participant positioning
• Attention to inconsistencies and non-sequiturs.
• Graphic data, such as placement on a page, emphatic notations such as underlining, and punctuation, as well as linguistic material and calculations (e.g. of incomes and expenditure).
  – At end, beginning of the questionnaire, or interspersed throughout.
• Multiple sources of paradata on booklets
  – Half the interviewers wrote both numerical and textual paradata
  – Coders and checkers from the central research team frequently added their own paradata.
Narrative analysis

• How the story of one ‘informant’/family emerges from paradata
• How the story of the research relationship emerges
• How marginalia reveal research practices
Possible to conduct narrative analysis on paradata from the PinUK study

- Same theme could be addressed through different genres and by positioning researchers and researched in differing ways.
- ‘Flash fiction’ narrative
- Shakespearian tragedy --themes reminiscent of *King Lear*’s decline and loss of power in old age, ill-advised intergenerational transfer of property and mental ill health.
Interviewer positioning consonant with contemporary researcher positioning

• As fair, dispassionate observers; one consisted of brief notes, with no names or relationships, depersonalising ‘informant’ and interviewer.

• Counter-narrative challenge to social prejudices of the time or told stories in factual, social campaigning styles that evoked our sympathy as readers.

• ‘Detective’ interviewer. For example, strong narrative of mystery around the family’s finances: ‘hidden income’, ‘unable to uncover’ and ‘suspect’ suggest that the family is being duplicitous about their income.

• Evoking sympathy for ‘informant’. 
319X5: Detective narrative

- Relatively little paradata recorded
- Strong narrative of mystery around the family’s finances.
- ‘Hidden income’, ‘unable to uncover’ and ‘suspect’ suggest family is being duplicitous about their income.
- Establishes a puzzle on the basis of assumed discrepancies between the ‘well to do family’ in their ‘old and falling down’ surroundings
- Contrast between the age of the six-year-old daughter and the husband’s departure from the family home 12 years previously.
Interviewer notes and additional comment

‘6 yr old child. This is the answer housewife gave but there is no evidence that husband has been back in the house’[handwriting style 1]

‘Though we do know he only live a couple of streets away and the wife sees him from time to time. ‘[handwriting style 2]
‘Although this is a very old house and falling down, the family living there seem quite well to do, so I feel there is some “hidden income” I have been unable to uncover. One discrepancy is that the husband has left home 12 yrs ago yet there is a daughter of 6 yrs old. Also I know there is a brother working in England who I suspect sends money from time to time.’
‘Small story’ careful counter-narrative

“2nd was concerned about the practice of ‘greasing’ which he claimed had operated in the last two jobs he had and which he thought was responsible for him losing his job the last time. Briefly his story was that bribes (watch, shirts, cig lighters etc.) had been offered by Pakistanis to the foreman (English and white) in exchange for jobs which they got. Once in the jobs they (there were 2) continued to give ‘presents’ to the foreman while also accepting money from other Pakistanis and West Indians to procure jobs for them. 2nd claimed that this money (often £50 from each job seeker) was shared out between the foreman and the Pakistanis already in jobs. The foreman then made life as unpleasant as he could for those workers not giving him ‘presents’ and either waited until they were so miserable at [unclear] avoided, shouted at etc. that they left of their own accord or found an excuse to sack them.
2nd claimed that the sort of reason given for dismissals were ‘rule-book’ things like smoking in the toilets, which everyone infringed but only the few were sacked for. In his last job, 2nd and 3 English/white workers were the only ones left out of 15 men, who were not bribing the foreman. One English worker then left of his own accord, while 2nd and the other 2 were sacked for taking 5 minutes over the allowed tea-break. Within four hours of his dismissal 2nd claims his job was taken by a Pakistani. He was understandably bitter about this series of events which happened in Bradford (Yorks) and said that his case was not unique. It unmistakeably influenced his opinion of Pakistanis, whom he despised and was upset because being coloured himself he was lumped in with those who were ‘getting every decent man a bad reputation’.
I asked him whether job seeking for friends and relatives wasn’t characteristic of Arabs too and said it was: the difference was he said that an Arab would do it as a matter of duty and try to use influence. He admitted that some Pakistanis might be doing this too, but was convinced that for the majority it was a money making racket ‘based on bribery and without any sense of what is right for one’s family and oneself’. It was sad to realise during this interview that even within a minority group (non-white) what was really a social situation (the situation at work) was now being viewed in terms of race by the participants and had been generalised out to include other aspects of behaviour. He even ended up saying ‘And what’s more they are terrible with women!’ which in view of some similar comments often heard about Arabs, struck me as rather ironic!’
Difficult task of producing counter-narratives & lack of attention to emotional impact

• The interviewer steers a course between showing understanding for her male participant (‘he was understandably bitter’) and taking care not to reproduce racist discourses.

• She keeps two narratives going – her own and the informant’s – and is careful to distinguish which is which. ‘Briefly his story was’; ‘his story’.

• ‘Admitted’ suggests response to incisive questioning.

• Currently done in fieldnotes and papers.
Graphic materiality of marginalia: Visual narrative

Q. 22. Another

long one in a held story.

John received tax

worth for the support

of his brother and

children.

But this has been

repeated. Partially,

partially.

It seems that tax

information about

rent and other
costs is very

variable. It's too

hard.

The money actually

in fact being

received and

widowed the

amount

but not to the

benefit of the

purchaser.

I'm writing

to the

writings

as messenger,

which is

highly

significant

for

myself.

At present

it has been

waiting

for

13 weeks for a letter.

From

this

situation I

must

be

brought

from

Abingdon

to

England and

received

as

such.

Meanwhile

has

been

paying

tax.
‘Another long and involved story!’

‘Another long and involved story! 2nd was receiving tax relief for the support of his mother and children abroad but this has been suspended. Partly due to the new vigilance of tax board about money sent out of the country to relatives and partly *(See below) due to change of job (difficulties about tax code number etc.). 2nd has been asked to furnish proof that the money actually goes to his mother. This is difficult, since in fact being a female and widowed she cannot [unclear] out to the bank to collect it (purdah et al) so 2nd’s cousin acts as messenger which is highly suspect to the tax people. At present, 2nd has been waiting for 13 weeks for a letter sent from this cousin to Inland Revenue to be translated from Arabic to English and accepted as proof. Meanwhile has been paying tax.

* 2nd was married in Aden and has 2 children there. His wife died in 1950 he came to England and re-married; the children are looked after by his mother. He pays what he can when he can to support them.’
Sceptical, exhausted account

- A mix of emotions in ‘another long and involved story!’
- Frustration, possibly exhaustion and apologetic justification to the central research team.
- Reported clearly but not particularly sympathetically, and with less detail than in the previous account.
- Having to piece together a somewhat puzzling story about tax, benefits and income.
- The shorthand phrase, ‘purdah et al’ is distancing.
- Fluent story telling
- Graphically clear, in how the story was set out on the page, with few crossings out or signs of hesitation in the writing.
Narratives-in-interaction
Intersectional ‘small stories’

• Bamberg and Andrews’ (2004) counter-narratives are multi-layered, fluid, relational and positional categories
• ‘Narratives-in-interaction’ often use both counter- and master-narratives in the construction of identities (Bamberg, 2004).
• The paradata functions performatively -- interviewer ‘does’ self-presentation as a careful researcher who is concerned with equity and social justice.
• Presents herself as a careful researcher whose openness to the family is tempered by an objective, sceptical stance.
Paradata highlight the labour of interviewing and positioning

- Presents interviewer efforts and expertise in stories of hard work, and of the embodied efforts of interviewing:
  ‘This was my HEADACHE HOUSEHOLD!’
  ‘In a small room she SHOUTS – the effect is extraordinary – the children whine about each other and the dog barks – frequently’
- Informants’ accounts as pieces of jigsaw puzzles.
- Defends the interviewer against the possibility that the central team would disagree with their coding.
- One interviewer presents four voices, three for ‘informants’ and one for herself, separated by colour of ink and style.
- Stories of persistence with reluctant interviewees & sceptical detective work to uncover ‘truth’ about informants’ socioeconomic circumstances.
- Making inferences about interviewees’ moral culpability.
Interviewers struggle to make meanings—of the lives of participants, the project and researcher/employer expectations & own feelings.

- Co-construction of interviewers, participants & analysts made visible by analysing codes & themes.
- Claims to 'liveable lives'.
- Identities and worldviews are visible in narrative accounts: ‘Marginalia can be used to construct and to monitor identity’. (Jackson 2001: 91 & 210)
- Following pre-given wording does not guarantee commonality/full interviewer understanding & accord.

These paradata constitute marginalia in being produced to engage with the texts and codes as well as the research team (Sherman, 2008).

- Multiple aims and some annotations (drawings).

‘Those who choose to make the effort to register their responses must foresee some advantage for someone...For whose benefit is it done?’ (Jackson: 82)

- Interviewers’ narratives are recognisable because they reflect current divisions about people living in poverty.
- Material that has become covert in fieldnotes and coded in research papers.
- Show that we can do a great deal that is new with material generated for a different purpose.
- Illuminate power relations that characterise research teams.
Interviewer debriefing and aiming to evoke sympathy from the research team

The informant in this case was deaf. Two calls were made at the house. No answer 1st visit. At 2nd visit no answer was received. I called next day. Was told that informant was deaf. I asked if help could be given with the questionnaire, but was told that informant was "odd" and no one had anything to do with her. I called at home again, informant came to door. After a while she allowed me in and stayed about an hour. Informant was very deaf, had a hearing aid, but did not use it. Apparently never in ear. Have very hearing aid no help. Informant managed to hear some of what I was able to talk down her ear. She was 88 years of age and it was obviously impossible to ask her the questions in the written form. We talked and I managed to ask her a few of the relevant questions. It was rather sad, informant had lived alone for two years, sister died in 1966. Informant kept on crying. On this bright summer evening, we sat in front of a piano with contact lens and lights on, newspapers covered the "good" chairs. Informant did not really understand why I was there, hoped that perhaps I might manage to get her more help to live on. She would need more, however, since the national pension. I think though that sometime could be done for her. Informant enthusiastically said "there is no need" here. I have completed the questionnaire as best as I can.

Informant said that she never had anyone in, was completely independent. I ate away wishing I could help, but the informant would not like to call again. Also, informant talked so much about her deaf sister, that I completely forgot to ask her name.
IMPORTANT - please note:
The informant in this case was deaf. Two calls were made at the house. No answer 1\textsuperscript{st} visit. At 2\textsuperscript{nd} no answer was received. I called next door and was told that the informant was deaf. I asked if help could be given with the questionnaire, but was told that the informant was ‘odd’ and no-one had anything to do with her. I called at house again and informant came to the door. After a while she allowed me in. I stayed about an hour.
Informant was very deaf, had a hearing aid but did not use it. Apparently ‘nerves in ear’ have gone and hearing aid no help. Informant managed to hear some of what I said if I talked down her ear. She was 83 years of age and it was obviously impossible to ask her the questions in an ordinary way. We talked and I managed to ask her quite a few of the relevant questions.
It was rather sad, informant had lived alone for two years, sister died in 1966. Informant kept on crying. On this bright summer evening we sat in front ‘parlour’ with curtains drawn and lights on, newspapers covered the ‘good’ chairs. Informant did not really understand why I was there – hoped that perhaps I might manage to get her more money to live on.
She would not however, think of applying for national assistance, I think though that something could be done for her. Informant constantly said there is ‘no debt’ here. I have completed the questionnaire as best as I can.
Informant said that she never had anyone in, was completely independent. I came away wishing I could help informant and would like to call again. Also, informant talked so much about her dead sister Ada that completely forgot to ask informant’s name.