QM
QUALITATIVE MIND
Professional Training

How to do Bracketing

A process to help manage interviewer bias

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Bracketing – Setting Aside Your Biases

We know we can never remove our biases completely, because in some ways they are an integral part of our identity. However it is a worthwhile discipline to learn to set them aside as much as possible. The process opens up your worldview and enables you to work more sensitively and creatively.

How to do it:

First, make a list of your characteristics:

1. Your gender
2. Your age
3. Your ethnic or national identification
4. Your religion or philosophy of life
5. Your political party or orientation
6. Your favourite psychological theory or approach – or at the very least how your beliefs about people are motivated.

Add four more words or phrases which are descriptive of you as an individual.

It is likely that these 10 characteristics will be at the roots of your most obvious biases; that they will underlie the ethnocentric and egocentric tendencies we all have.

Now

List ways in which your characteristics might bias you in your research interviewing. (E.g. if you are interviewing people without a job you might unconsciously feel they are to blame for their own situation. If you keep yourself fit, you may feel overweight people are lazy; if you hold right wing beliefs you may judge 'softer' motivational approaches as inadequate, etc.)

Then write how you might counteract these biases – for example, over-compensating for your initial prejudice.

On any project also make it a habit to write out your preconceptions and hypotheses about the respondents and subject, including the findings you expect.

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Bracketing – worked example

Your gender   FEMALE   Your age   FORTIES (mid-life)

Your ethnic or national identification EUROPEAN

Your religion or philosophy of life THE MARK OF AN EVOVLED SOCIETY IS HOW IT CARES FOR THE OLD AND SICK. Not religious but socially aware & believing in One overall Spirit.

Your political party or orientation LIBERAL, +INCENTIVES TO SUCCEED

Your favourite psychological theory or approach – or at the very least how your beliefs about people are motivated.

Believe in the unconscious and that people seek to meet a range of needs they are not always aware of. Like the Human Givens approach.

Add four more words or phrases which describe you as an individual.

- Flowing – like water; I don't like rigid or static
- Introverted – interested in inner thoughts and feelings
- Into self-development – always curious, wanting to know more,
- Hardworking – possibly at the expense of free time

List ways in which your characteristics might bias you in your research interviewing.

- Find it hard to empathise with right wing people
- Tend to judge people who talk a lot about nothing of consequence or don't do anything with their lives other than socialise
- Hard to understand people who are stuck in their lives, who feel they are victims of circumstance
- See young people as undeveloped
- Real difficulties with the underclass
- Afraid of fundamentalists of any persuasion

How you might counteract these biases

- Ultra-conservative / fundamentalist people – don't push them too much to avoid getting annoyed
- Put on a temporary extrovert persona (that takes effort)
- Become very therapist'y with people I don't understand rather than accepting them.