Validity as an issue in student interview data

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Abstract

The credibility of informants is a contentious issue in qualitative research, particularly when it involves reporting events that might cast the informant in a negative light. In this paper the validity of Aboriginal student reports of classroom discipline incidents is examined through a comparison with teacher and administrator reports. This comparative analysis reveals a high level of accuracy of reporting the basic facts of discipline incidents, leading the researcher to infer that the reports of events, and the attitudes to the events, provided by students are as accurate as those provided by teachers. These findings are discussed in relation to issues of knowledge and power.

Introduction

The notion of valid interview data is fraught with difficulties in this postmodern world with its multiple truths, the flight of facts from the world of social experience and the existence of multiple influences on the relations among people. The existence of something as solid and confirmable as "valid" interview data is problematic(Scheurich, 1997). Typically, interview data is considered valid when triangulation confirms that what the different parties say about an event coincide. While a basic assumption of interview research, it is possible that all parties are wrong: despite the unanimity, the data may be invalid. A comparison with written records can improve the situation in demonstrating that the events occurred as they were reported, but even then the writer of the records may have presented a version of reality that was not consistent with what others might consider to be more appropriate. In a world where
relativism holds sway, the potential for determining whether interview data is really valid is limited.

The research on which this paper is based entailed an examination of discipline events in a high school in the metropolitan area of Perth (Partington, Waugh, & Forrest, 1995). Teachers and Indigenous students were interviewed as soon as possible after students were sent from the room for infringements of the school rules. The writer and two colleagues - one of whom was Aboriginal - interviewed the teachers while Indigenous research assistants interviewed the students. In total, 22 pairs of interviews were conducted. Of these, it was estimated that 20 showed substantial agreement between the teacher's and student's versions of events and only two were in conflict regarding the facts. In one case, the teacher appeared to be less than honest in her description of events; in the other the student denied the only reasonable description of the course of events. If triangulation is the benchmark of validity of interview data, the results of the present study are quite valid. However, there are many considerations in validity apart from agreement among the key protagonists in classroom altercations. These will be discussed in this paper.

Power in the Classroom

The research focused on the eviction of students from the classroom because this event was regarded as a key act in the maintenance of control by the teacher. This sanction was a clear instance of the teachers' power over the students. Backed up by the school hierarchy, the teachers were able to exert their authority in a way that ensured the maintenance of control. This did not mean that the targets of their sanctions accepted the discipline. In a number of cases students walked out of class following altercations with the teacher, possibly pre-empting the teacher's decision to send them out. As a demonstration of student power, walking out had limited efficacy because it was followed by more severe sanctions on return. Teachers' use of eviction was an effective strategy to alert other students to the fact that the teacher was more powerful than them. The message is that conformity to school rules is a more attractive proposition than indiscipline.

In his analysis of Marxist critical ethnography, Hammersley (1992) states that the oppressor-oppressed framework for interpreting interaction is inadequate as a foundation for practice. The Marxist perspective, in its use of binary opposites (Giroux, 1992), does not represent the full state of affairs that exists in schools. In the research being considered, it is clear that the representation of school discipline as a binary opposition of students and teachers would be quite unhelpful in understanding the situation that existed. Instead there was a range of positions: some students agreed with the teachers' views on discipline; others resisted the teacher, while others adopted a more egalitarian approach, viewing the principles underlying the rules as applying to teachers as well as students. When one teacher demonstrated that she was not sticking to the spirit of the rules by telling students they should go home because they hadn't done their work, some students challenged her (to their detriment). Even so, this challenge demonstrated that, in part at least, the students were seeking to support the structure of schooling rather than challenge it.

The motivations of the teachers in disciplining the students also varied. Some gave little or no leeway in matters of school rules, others were quite flexible. Some were considerate of students' situations and imposed the rules only as a last resort. Others were quick to apply sanctions, going beyond what was reasonable under the circumstances. This suggests that, although the setting was structured in terms of binaries (teacher/student; control/chaos; dominance/submission), in the processes that took place these binaries existed only as convenient labels for what were much more subtle and dynamic processes: individuals acted in a diversity of ways to meet their own and others' needs within changing contexts. Moreover, the use of binary terms to describe the context and the participants had the
danger of obscuring the diversity that existed. Collaboration between teacher and students, rather than conflict, was more a feature of the classrooms[GP1].

There was no simple story to emerge from the research, and so validation was made more complex by this complexity. The diverse ways in which power was employed by teachers in the classroom demonstrated quite clearly the absence of a binary opposition within the classroom.

Collaboration with the Interviewers

Similarly, the relationships between the interviewers and the participants was marked by collaboration rather than tension. A principal reason for this may have been that all the students who were interviewed were Aboriginal and the interviewers were Aboriginal also. Furthermore, the teachers, all non-Indigenous (there were no Indigenous teachers in the school), were interviewed by non-Indigenous interviewers. In designing the research project it was considered that the students should be interviewed by Aboriginal interviewers known to the students. Consequently, a former Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker from the school was employed to conduct interviews. When she became unavailable, the mother of one of the Aboriginal students, and a part-time AIEW, conducted most of the remaining interviews. Finally, for several interviews a male Aboriginal who was a recently graduated teacher was used to conduct several interviews.

It was assumed that the context of the interviews would be an important factor in obtaining quality data. Rather than holding the interviews in vacant classrooms, etc. it was decided to hold them in the AIEWs room, an office set aside for them and the Aboriginal Education Specialist Teacher (AEST). Aboriginal students frequented this room during breaks as well as during class time if they were free, and so it would have been regarded as a friendly location.

As a result of this approach to the interviews, most students felt sufficiently unconstrained in the interview situation to express their feelings openly with the interviewer. In some cases there was a clear rapport with the interviewer which indicated that they felt an affinity with her. In other cases, however, rapport was lacking. This can be attributed to the discourse of the interview. The interviewers who were able to establish rapport demonstrated inclusive language, empathy and a non-judgmental approach to the interview.

The choice of Aboriginal interviewers, however, may be akin to the process of matching pairs of subjects for comparative quantitative research: only the one variable is being taken into account, and how certain can we be that Aboriginality is a sufficient criterion for successful relationship building? It is possible that the interviewer belongs to a group that is in conflict with the child's group, and so the decision to use an Aboriginal interviewer might contribute to the problems of interviewer rapport rather than solve them. The establishment of rapport is a complex matter that might involve culture, shared experiences, appearance, language, dress, status, interests or relationships. There seem to be so many variables that it would be difficult to say that a good relationship is certain, given the characteristics of the interviewer and the interviewee.

The quality of the interviews, however, suggest that correct decisions were made. The student responses were detailed and frank. Rather than being just identity, it is likely that Aboriginality encompasses a range of attributes not immediately evident: identity, language, relationships, history, schooling and so on. Forrest (1998) described the significance and extent of influence of identity as a unifying characteristic of Indigenous people, and it is likely that this factor made a major contribution to the quality of the interviews.
The parent and the former AIEW both were able to establish good rapport with the students and elicit quality responses from them. Students spoke freely and readily admitted their offences in relation to the school rules and their perceptions of the justice or otherwise of events:

I: So how were you acting

Colin: Pretty stupid.

I: What were some of the things you were doing

Colin: Oh, shoutin, not shoutin but just talkin and like concentratin on work and just walkin around the library looking for other things on the computers, other books.

I: Who do you think caused it

Colin: Me.

I: You? Was anyone else involved

Colin: No. There wasn't. Just me.

Regardless of the behaviours described by the students, the two female interviewers accepted their statements without judgment. This was in contrast to the more stilted response to the interviewer who was also a school teacher. The discourse of interviews with this interviewer was more akin to a teacher interacting with students than, in the case of the former interviews, a 'mother figure'. As a consequence, the outcomes of the interview were more stilted responses and less expression of the resistance that students demonstrated in the former interviews. The exclamation in the following extract immediately suggests that the student has gone beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour. The students interviewed by this interviewer were not as forthcoming as the others.

I: So with Miss Drummond you've had a bit of trouble with her before?

Colin: Yes.

I: So what's happened on previous occasions, can you remember, you know has it been just talking and shouting and stuff like that, has it?

Colin: All sorts of stuff.

I: All sorts of stuff.

Colin: Fightin too.

I: Fighting too? Goodness! So there's been a bit of fighting and there's been a bit of talking and a bit of shouting. Anything else?

The significance of this interviewer's teacher background cannot be underestimated. In his position as an interviewer, he was compromised by the power relationship he unconsciously fell into. It was interesting to note that in the few interviews he conducted, there were frequent markers of dominance, such as stating the student's name at the end of the question, remarking on the extent of misdemeanours and using a tone of voice which
communicated control. In contrast, the two female interviewers were known to the students as familiar support figures, one as a parent of two students in the school, the other as a popular former AlEW. For these two interviewers, power was not a factor in the relationship established for interviewing. It is likely that the interviewers were able to communicate empathy for the plight of the students - it would have been fifteen years or so since the interviewers were at school, but they would have experienced similar events in their schooling.

Although there were differences among the interviewers in the quality of interviewing that occurred, it is likely that all of them would have been able to secure superior responses than non-Indigenous interviewers. The teachers responded volubly to the non-Indigenous interviewers who interviewed them. All gave extensive responses to the questions posed, and often answered questions without being asked.

Despite the establishment of good rapport, there is no guarantee that the respondent is going to tell "the truth". Instead, there is the potential for such rapport to result in data of lower validity as a result of pandering to the interviewer. For example, he or she may guess what the interviewer wants to hear - and go ahead and provide that answer. The student may choose to present him or herself in a good light and so gloss over the more damaging elements of the altercation with the teacher. Also, the rapport may reflect mutual understandings and implicit knowledge that does not have to be voiced to be understood. As a consequence, the researcher may only acquire the verbal shell of a much deeper discourse.

There were checks on the validity of data that didn't rely on the quality of the relationship between the student and the interviewer. In particular, there was a strong relationship between what the teachers said and what the students said about incidents.

Agreement among Students and Teachers

For the research, the actual events were less important than the perceptions of those events. Agreement on the course of events concealed more significant differences among the participants. These differences existed in the explanations for the events, which were in opposition in many cases. This was expected, but what was surprising was the considerable support among the students for the maintenance of the school rules. Approximately half the students accepted the rules as given and acknowledged that they had infringed them and stated that they deserved to be disciplined for their misdemeanours. Of the other half, many students denied being the principal cause, arguing that either other students were at least partly responsible or that the teacher was a principal cause of the problem. It is unlikely that these students were constructing excuses for themselves because teachers reported the students’ arguments in a number of cases:

Fran: At the beginning of the lesson we do mental and of course they organise their files and [inaudible] and there was bit of giggling at the back of the room. The only thing is, the room is not mine, so there were desks all over the place. So there were three boys sitting right at the back and when I heard the giggling I straight away said to myself "Are they up to some mischief?". So, what I only asked them, if they could shift their desks to the middle of the room, all three of them. They just refused.

I: Just point blank?

Fran: Yeh, they just said they're not doing anything. I said, "I know you're not doing anything but I want you to shift your desk in the middle of the room" because the way the room was
set up there was nothing in the middle, it's all blank. Desks on the side so I just wanted them to put their desks in the middle and they refused.

Students gave a very similar version of events to this, including the point that they thought they should not have to shift because they had done nothing wrong. One of the difference in motivations between the teachers and the students is clarified in this particular incident. The teachers were concerned that classroom discipline be maintained; the students were interested in maintaining their reputations and autonomy. When these two came in conflict, the potential for escalation increased considerably. Often, there was a lack of awareness of the interests of the other party. Students played up despite the teacher's desire to maintain discipline; Teachers imposed sanctions that denied the students' claims to social justice. It was evident that a lack of communication was at the root of many discipline problems in the classroom, including the above incident, in which the teacher stated,

Fran: Well, I feel a bit disappointed because all I asked was to shift their desk and when they came back to resolve the problem with me I pointed that out to them and they couldn't understand why I shifted them because they didn't do anything wrong. I said "I know you didn't do anything wrong" I explained to them "The reason I moved you is that I was avoiding any conflict or any situation in the future for the next 20 or 30 minutes or whatever, for the rest of the lesson." So, they understood that after I'd explained to them but at the moment in time, no. Having other kids you can't explain in detail.

Had she explained earlier, three students would have been spared disciplinary action, much wasted time would have been saved and the teacher would have had a more relaxed time in class.

Given the agreement between the teacher and the student, it can be assumed that they were providing accurate accounts of the events and their perspectives on those events. However, such need not be the case.

The Possibility of Manipulation

The participants in an interview are not necessarily focused on the interviewer's goals. It is likely that other agendas are entailed in the exchange. Both the teachers and the students are likely to have agendas that conflict with the interviewer's agenda of getting the facts of the situation. Scheurich (1997, p. 67) takes this possibility to its limit when he says, "the 'wild profusion' that occurs moment to moment in an interview is, I would argue, ultimately indeterminable and indescribable." This might be going too far. In the cases encountered in the present research where there were marked disparities between the students and the teachers over the events that occurred, two factors contributed to clarify the analysis. First, deconstruction of the text of the interviews reveals clues to the genuineness of the reports; second, the commonsense knowledge of the interviewer /researcher provides benchmarks for the assessment of responses in this kind of investigation.

One instance of direct contradiction in the stories told of events occurred when Jane Reader swore. Jane claimed that she didn't swear; she said Sheree, who sat next to her, swore. The teacher, Grace Feather, had no doubt that it was Jane: for her, the matter was not an issue.

Grace: Yes, Jane was working quietly on her work - as quietly as Jane can be and then her group went even quieter. The group was Jane and Sheree, they work in pairs, and I knew that something had been said but there was no way I could hear and they went very very quiet and then Jane yelled out, "Fuck off!", to the girl that she was sitting with, Sheree, and I asked Jane immediately to leave the room. Jane then started going off at me, why isn't Sheree being sent out and I just kept saying Jane leave the room. Jane walked past Sheree,
pushed her in the back and left the room. I did that so I could separate the two. I could have even sent Sheree out but it was Jane that actually jumped up out of her seat and had sworn so it was more appropriate at the time to send Jane out. I sent Jane outside. Sheree then came up to me, not wanting Jane to be sent up to the Deputy but they all know when you swear you're sent to the Deputy. I went outside, I had a talk to Jane to see if I could find out a little bit more about what was going on. Jane was then still very angry at me that I had sent her out and she couldn't understand why and I explained to her that that language was not appropriate in the classroom.

Jane gave a different report of events:

Well I was sittin in class and I was sittin near my friend Sheree and like we had a fight about her work because she's been shrieking, and I wanted to get on with my work and she wouldn't listen to me and then she told me to F off and Miss Feather thought that I said that and Miss Feather wrote it down and I said I didn't say that, why should I get sent out? She's goin "Just get out." So I went outside and then I was just complaining to her, saying why should I get sent out and why shouldn't she get sent out and I said it's just because I'm black isn't it? And she didn't say nothing, she just looked at me, and then I just went outside and then I was like talkin to her sayin why, then she's writin more stuff down because I was givin cheek to her, and then I just said 'Alright, I'm going' and I went up to the office and that was all, and I had to make up with Sheree.

It was unfortunate that the research project entailed interviewing only those students who were sent from the room. Ethically, it was not possible to triangulate the claims made by students or teachers by reference to other students. The only evidence available were the reports by the participants and the written records of the behaviour management forms - written, in the first instance, by the teacher and the student. It is possible that Jane was telling the truth, but her version rings less true than the teacher's: the attention to detail, Jane's claim to wanting to do her work when there was evidence that she wasn't a keen worker. (The teacher's view on this was supported by an earlier interview with Jane resulting from her refusal to do work). The teacher also reported that other students came to her afterwards and expressed embarrassment at Jane's behaviour.

While analysis of the interview text provides clues to validity, commonsense judgment reinforces this. For example, the report that Jane jumped up and swore was an action consistent with one's expectations of swearing in such a context. Not only did this make Jane more visible, but it confirmed the teacher's suspicion that something was happening. Jane's initial claim of unfairness fixed on Sheree not being sent out also, not that she was the one who swore. Such behaviour does not seem consistent with someone who has been sworn at and is being accused of doing the swearing.

In many respects, the task of the researcher is akin to a jury attempting to determine who is telling the truth in a court of law. In both situations, evidence is sought from those who were witnesses to the events. Where there is a limited range of witnesses, the jury has to make judgments on the limited evidence before it. Researchers are restricted by ethical principles, resources and the forbearance of the researched in their quest for truth. Ultimately, there is no guarantee that "the truth" will be known. In such circumstances it is likely that we rely on that data which is consistent with our beliefs, values and knowledge, which does not bode well for cross-cultural research.

Seeking Unity of Meaning

The extent to which the participants in the research are in agreement about the purposes, processes and meanings of the research is problematic. The school is a complex place;
individuals are complex. At any one time it is unlikely that all the participants are going to function in a unitary manner. Even in relation to the meanings of the terms used, there is likely to be a variety of different understandings. As Brenner (1985, p.11) pointed out, Total equivalence of meaning can only be assumed when it can be shown, for a particular survey, that the researcher, all interviewers, and all respondents have used the same linguistic "code", in the researcher's wording of the questions, in the interviewers' and respondents' understandings of the questions, in the interviewers' understandings of the respondents answers and in the researcher's understanding of the interviewers' understandings of the respondents' answers, so that we can be sure that in the transmission of meaning, distortion or loss of information did not occur.

As Brenner went on to state, such unity of meaning is most unlikely, and yet this is only one element in the discourse of research on which there needs to be agreement if researchers and participants are to come to an understanding of the meaning of experience. We can only assume that such understanding is at best partial and temporary. Yet we know from our own experience and from the biographies of others, that shared meanings surround us. From the parables in the bible and the curses on the offerings in the Roman baths at Bath, we can share the meanings and the feelings of those who spoke and wrote so long ago. While there may be many grounds for difference, there are possibly more grounds for similarity if the contexts surrounding the specific social situations are similar. A teacher in one classroom confronted with a threat to his or her classroom control is likely to experience similar feelings and use similar strategies as another teacher in the same situation, given similar social settings. Of course, if the laws and regulations governing the two teachers' responses to classroom discipline differ, then there will be different responses; however such laws and regulations are a part of the social situations within which the teachers perform their roles, and so differences in these things should be clearly explained if others are to make sense of the descriptions of events in classrooms.

It is only when we view the "common understandings" from a totally different perspective that we realise that they are a social construction, and not necessarily universally accepted (Scheurich, 1997). It is possible that the construction of the common understandings is an outcome of dominant ideologies and power relations. When, for example, Indigenous students in school perform acts which, to them, are quite within their socially accepted frames of reference, they find they get into trouble (Malin, 1990). The commonality of experience does not guide their behaviour in the classroom and as a result, where other students experience positive interactions, they are cast into a negative frame.

In seeking advice and instruction on the effective conduct of teaching, teachers expect advice that is stable over time. If the events and actions of teachers reported today are not going to be the same as tomorrow (of course, within similar social and physical contexts) then such reports will be seen to fail to contribute to teachers' understanding of their job. Once again, in appealing to commonsense judgments of stability versus change, we know that teachers - and students - come to operate in characteristic ways. What this has resulted in is a construction of Indigenous students as more difficult than other students, more likely to play up in the classroom, less likely to be attentive and motivated, etc. Over a period of time, such actions may come to be regarded as typical.

However, from a postmodern perspective it can be argued, as Scheurich does in relation to the outcomes of interviewing in research, that, rather than consistency, there is chaos (Scheurich, 1997). From this perspective, the consequences of social interaction are so beset by multiple variables that consistency is unlikely, prediction impossible.
There is a problem in this analysis, however. The use of discourse analysis posits the existence of regularities in the operation of social interaction at the level of signification. Arguments related to the ways in which power is used in social situations to construct others in certain ways points to regularities in social exchanges. Scheurich's argument, that chaos is a possibility in discourse, would hold water only if there were no regularities - that is, discourse analysis would be impossible: In order to dissect the discourse, there must be alternative meanings that are sufficiently cogent for people to understand them. These can be regarded by others as reasonable alternatives to the dominant narratives. These meanings are not absolute. Rather, they are influenced by power. Those who have the power to construct the situation according to their precepts will see the emergence of legitimate meanings. Those who lack the power will suffer the consequences of having their reality ignored. The outcome is the development of knowledge - "common understandings" - which applies so long as those with the power continue to exercise it to uphold the social context in which those common understandings are legitimate (Usher & Edwards, 1994).

Critique is only meaningful if others can understand it, which implies it has alternative narrative power. Some alternative meanings which are identified through discourse analysis have within them the potential to become the dominant narratives. Not all meanings have this potential because some are rightly regarded as idiographic: isolated instances which have no application beyond the specific, related to a context so narrowly specified that the narrative does not develop.

So, for example, in one interview a 13 year old Year 8 student made statements which were unlikely to be generalised. This student was highly alienated, to the extent that the Aboriginal Education Specialist Teacher sought, and found, him for the interview in a park over the road from the school. He agreed to return to the school for the interview. According to the AEST, this student was on drugs and close to exclusion for his behaviour: swearing at teachers, running amok in the school and absenting himself from classes. It was clear that he felt he was so alienated that he had nothing to lose from being suspended, seeing it instead as a benefit:

I: Do you try and stir up the teachers?

John: Some times, when I'm angry.

I: How do you do it? What do you do?

John: I just keep makin noises or somethin. I keep talkin and they say be quiet, so I say what they say, and say it in a different voice and then they get annoyed and then when I see them I just yell out to them like if they come I yell out 'Hello' real loud. It get's 'em wild.

His views were quite different from the other students. Rather than focusing on feasible solutions to the problems they experienced, he proposed solutions that, while they may have benefited his situation, were unlikely ever to come to fruition.

I: Okay so you've got these teachers. What would you like them to do?

John: What do you mean?

I: Well you say that they're not nice to you.

John: I'd just like them to just do the work and go to class and just go and do what they want to do and then just let the students stay in and do no work. And at lunch time don't supervise any kids because when there's no dress code you should be able to wear what you want.
Reports from teachers confirmed that this was John's pattern of behaviour. Discussions with his mother indicated that she was distraught at his behaviour but, like the teachers, acknowledged that he was extremely alienated. The above suggested solutions are unlikely to form an alternative narrative. Given the present social and political situation regarding discipline in schools, along with John's extreme alienation, it is unlikely that the school situation will adapt to make students whose experiences are similar to his more accepted in school.

In contrast to John, the majority of students accepted that they were at fault in the discipline situations, even though at times it was quite clear that the teacher was the principal cause of the situation (Partington et al., 1995). Most of the students were willing to accept the teacher's construction of discipline in the classroom. Given the existence of teacher complicity in causing the problems in at least 25% of cases, such faith in the teachers' judgments is misplaced. Even though they invalidly represented a situation - the accuracy of the teacher's judgments - these representations were the students'. The interviews were valid because they elicited the information from the students in ways that demonstrated their accuracy.

The Processes at Work

Various authors have focused on resistance as a dominant theme in Aboriginal students' education. This study, however, suggests that there is a considerable level of engagement by students with the dominant culture of the school. It is possible that resistance is only one of several - or many - processes at work. Perhaps the students are resisting, colluding etc all at the same time. There was certainly resistance to unfairness and injustice on the part of the teacher, and often there was resistance to engagement in learning. However, there was also a range of other emotions and motivations.

It appeared from the transcripts of student interviews that most interview interactions were marked by purposeful activity: the interviewer and the interviewee both had intentions and desires and interact to fulfil these through the interview. If they fail to coincide to make a "valid" outcome, this is because of a mismatch. The interviewer brought a number of resources to the interaction which enabled them to interpret the interview data on the run.

• An understanding of the nature of human interaction.

• An understanding of the way classrooms function.

• Ability to interpret discourse. Deconstruction on the run.

• Rather than just accepting answers to interview questions, interrogating the interviewee regarding meanings, etc. is essential. The interviewer who does this is more likely to get valid data than the interviewer who doesn't.

Their familiarity with the school's structure and processes, as well as their knowledge of the students, let the female interviewers perform their task using the above resources.

Conclusion

Although there may be validity in the record of events and perceptions, this may not be the case with the interpretation. We have to consider the uses to which the interviewer will put the data. It is likely to be in his or her interests to accept or reject data on the basis of its usefulness to his or her agendas.
The context in which reports are made and in which they are judged is important. There appear to be three contexts in the research, each of which brings related issues to the research. These are:

- The context in which the events being reported occurred;
- The context in which the events are reported;
- The context in which they are interpreted.

It appears that at any of these three stages the report can be read in ways that might lead to diverse interpretations. Recently I was discussing student discipline in schools with a colleague. I argued that many students were victims of the system and a solution, in part, required the education of teachers. In contrast, he identified student responsibility as the sole focus of responses to discipline problems. In his eyes, the teachers were there to carry out an objectively determined set of rules and if the students infringed them then they were at fault. He saw the situation as a clear case of the student doing wrong; I saw it clearly as a case of oppression by the system.

Even though the actors involved may agree on the events that occurred, their interpretation of those events may be very different. The extent to which they hold different perspectives on the need for and nature of student discipline, as the example above suggests, is obviously going to be a key factor in analysis. Thus, while the students and teachers may report accurately what happened and why they believe it happened, the perspective of the researcher can influence the results of the research. It is essential, therefore, that researchers address issues of perspective in conducting their studies.
References


[GP1]Do I need a concluding sentence here - or a paragraph. It goes on to collaboration, which is mentioned here, so there is a link. Partington: The validity of interviews AARE 1998 Page 13