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Exploring Qualitative Analyses utilising Semi-Structured Interviews on Beauty

ABSTRACT

Qualitative research as an epistemological perspective, and several qualitative methodologies (conversation, thematic, and discourse analysis), were investigated utilizing a series of interviews of the topic of beauty. This researcher carried out an individual interview on a male relative, 21; whilst the research group as a whole interviewed 35 participants, of mixed age, in two groups. This researchers group consisted of 11 researchers, who interviewed 11 participants, 4 male and 7 female. Interviews were recorded and transcribed; with two sections of each interview transcribed in additional detail utilising conversational analysis conventions. Themes were collated from all interviews (in this participants group), and subjected to detailed meta analysis. Content, and discourse analysis were performed on two extracts from this researchers interview. Methodological issues raised by the research, the results of this researchers interview itself, and the role of qualitative methodologies in psychology are discussed, and avenues for future research suggested.

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INTRODUCTION

This research was a multi part project, involving class discussion of the issues raised by the current 'Dove Real Beauty' advertising campaign; the construction and execution of a semi-structured interview on issues relating to beauty, the medias influence on the perception of beauty, attractiveness and cosmetic surgery; individual and group thematic analysis of all interviews conducted; content analysis; and discourse analysis. All within the context of an exploration of the process of qualitative research in general, with particular emphasis on the qualitative techniques utilized in this research. The follow a brief outline of the techniques and objectives of this report.

Qualitative research

The roots of qualitative research stretch back as far as the separation of subjective qualia, meaning and intentionality from the physically comprehensible and describable universe, implicit in Cartesian dualism. However its development as a perspective on the utility and meaningfulness of scientific research, and as a set of techniques which endeavor to practically confront the intractable philosophical difficulties behind concepts such as objectivity and scientific proof; stretches back Postmodernism, structuralism, and social constructionism; which have each in turn emphasized the subjectivity of formal systems, and the uncertainty underlying any given interpretation of reality. Strictly speaking qualitative methodologies are those which use none non measurement, and non-statistical forms of analysis. However qualitative research is also the broad term applied to methodologies which, have emerged from the epistemological perspective the of the subjectivity of knowledge, and proceed on the basis that reality is construed and constructed from subjective experience. Thus qualitative research, rather than straining for certain replicable 'scientific objectivity', embraces the reflexive, inconclusive subjectivity of observation (Johnson, 1999). It does this by making its assumptions and theoretical assumptions explicit, and by developing methodologies inductively from data collected, rather than deductively attempting to uncover underlying truth (Hayes, 1997),

This has both positive and negative research consequences, some of which are discussed in this reports discussion.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis consists of the synthesis of underlying themes from a text. Themes are subjectively identified from multiple readings of the text, and grouped together to cohesively and or exhaustively categorise trends and underlying meta-themes in the data; which may then be examined and argued utilizing literature from the subject area (Aronson, J, 1994).

Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis is the creation of the Sociologist Harvey Sacks (Sacks, 1992, cited in Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998), and has its roots in ethnomethodology's focus on participant's own conceptions of their interactions. Conversation analysis details how participants manage and negotiate their interactions; and can help to identify the systems and implicit understandings used to facilitate communication (Hurchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Additionally, through its conventions it provides a methodology for the transcription of broader, more contextually rooted, and more readily understood information, than techniques such as phonetic transcription; enabling detailed micro-sociological and psycholinguistic analysis of talk in interaction.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a basket of methodologies, all of which involve the application of a philosophical or ideological perspective to the analysis of a text (Palmquist, 2005). Perspectives utilized include Deconstructionism, Marxism, Feminism, and Queer Studies.

Semi Structured Interview

This research utilised a series of semi-structured interview, in order to gain an insight into participants opinions on the topic of beauty; and more importantly to provide a text suitable for thematic, content and discourse analysis. A semi structured interview is one in which the prearranged questioned are used to provoke wider discussion on the theme of the interview; and to constrain and delimit the exploration of further questions.

The goal of these interviews was to provide researchers with practical experience of a variety of qualitative methodologies, and additional experience interviewing subjects; in the context of a communication and language course.

METHOD

Participants:

A male subject, aged 21 years, familiar to the researcher, was interviewed by this researcher.

Overall, 35 second year undergraduate students of Trinity College Dublin were carried out interviews, as part of a statistics and methodology course. Participants interviewed ranged from 19 to 45 years old, and were of mixed gender. Interviews were conducted individually by each researcher; and results were collate in two groups.

Measures:

After a class discussion on the issues raised by the 'Dove Real Beauty' advertising campaign (Unilever, 2005), a collection of questions for a semi-structured interview were agreed (Appendix 1). These questions were intended to be used to provoke discussion and further investigation of the interviewee's responses during the interview.

Research Questions

The questions selected to be asked in this interview were

- (1) What does beauty mean to you?
- (2) How important do you think beauty is?
- (3) Do you think the media has had an influence on what's perceived to be beautiful?
- (4) What do you perceive as attractive in a male female? (Asking the participants own gender first)
- (5) Do you think how much you know someone affects beauty?
- (6) Do you think the concept of beauty is the same now as it was in the past?
- (7) How do you feel about cosmetic surgery?

Materials

1 x Windows 98 PC
1 x Sony Headphones
1 x Microphone
1 x Creative Recorder Software
1 x Apple iPod Mp3 Player
Planned Questions (Appendix 3)
Consent Form (Appendix 7)

Procedure:

An initial seminar established the questions to be asked in semi-structured interviews, to be carried out individually by each researcher on a one to one basis. Researchers carried out mock interviews, in alternating pairs, during this seminar, to establish familiarity with the interview process and the use of the semi-structured question methodology.

Interviewee's were instructed to be uncooperative in order to make the interview process more challenging.

This researchers interview was carried out on the 20/02/05 at 8.00pm, in the home occupied by both the interviewer and interviewee. The purpose of the interview was explained to the participant; additionally issues of anonymity and confidentiality were discussed, and verbal consent was obtained. A consent form detailing the participant's rights under the data protection and freedom of information acts, was read by the participant, and written consent obtained, (Appendix 7).

The interview was electronically recorded into a computer, utilizing 'Creative Recorder' software; and an attached microphone. This method was utilized in order to ease later transcription and detailed analysis of the interview. The interview took a total of just under ten minutes; completing at 8.09:55pm.

The interview was transcribed from an ipod MP3 player in a two-hour laboratory

practical; utilizing conversational analysis conventions provided (Appendix 6). A thematic analysis was carried out on the interview (Appendix 3), and collated with those provided by other students at a seminar.

Group themes collected during the class discussion were organised by the gender of the interviewee, and sub-grouped by the gender of the interviewer (Appendix 4). Themes were then numbered to facilitate analysis and discussion. Themes directly replicated across interviews were identified with a star (Appendix 4). Meta themes were identified (Appendix 5).

Conversational (Appendix 6) and Discourse analysis (results section) of two extracts from this researchers interview data was carried out.

Ethics

As per instructions from group supervisors, and the procedures laid out in the psychology department handbook and website, a consent form was created, and the purpose of the interview explained to the participant prior to his participation. Full verbal and written consent was obtained (Appendix 7).

Reflexivity

An expectation this researcher had preceding the interview, and the collation of themes from interviews carried out by all researchers in the group; was that the interview process would be both awkward (due to the sensitive nature of several questions), and stilted (due to the participants desire not to appear shallow or superficial). This researchers personal opinion, rooted in evolutionary psychology theory, and attractiveness consistency research (Penton-Voak & Perrett, 2000) is that the differentiation of physical beauty according to a set of criteria such as facial symmetry, waste to hip ratio, clarity of skin, and youthfulness; operates on a heritable phenotypic spectrum (Pinker, 2000).

This researchers expectation was that the participant interviewed would provide 'politely correct' stock responses, detailing the value of 'inner beauty'. While the term beauty implies any aesthetically affecting stimulus, this researchers experience and cynicism precludes a belief in the beauty of personality as a primary determinant of what is generally considered as 'beauty'.

On an interpersonal level, this researchers prior history of conversational interaction with the interview participant in question, led him to expect a degree of inarticulacy; as the participant (a fraternal relative) is more mathematically and less communicatively inclined.

RESULTS

Conversation analysis

Thematic Analysis

This Researchers Interview

Phrases and words which recurred throughout the text were synthesised and central themes identified. Four main themes were identified in this interview. Themes are identified and more heavily referenced in Appendix 3. Their follows a brief discussion of each theme.

1. Several conceptions of beauty

That several differing conceptions of beauty exist, rather than a unitary societal view; the participant emphasised the distinction between his own perceptions of beauty, and those promoted by the media [55 – 60].

2. Media as pressure to become beautiful

That the media create a pressure to conform to a set of idealistic heavily promoted images. The participant emphasised the role of celebrity in creating such unattainable and undesirable expectations [57 – 60]; and the negative impact of such media pressure [143 – 146]

2. Beauty in relation to relationships

The participant emphasised the importance in his own relationships of physical attractiveness [30 - 31], and the initial importance of attractiveness in establishing any romantic relationship [19 – 21]

3. Beauty synonymous with attractiveness

D's responses provided the impression that for him, beauty is synonymous with attractiveness. Twice he replied using the word 'beautiful'[73 & 77], when asked to describe what he considered 'attractive'. This suggests an implicit link in D's conception of beauty and physical attractiveness; although it must be remembered that these responses occurred within the context of an overall interview on the topic of beauty.

Group Themes

Group themes (Appendix 4) were identified during class discussion; organised by the gender of the participant, and further organised by the gender of the researcher. Themes were then studied and (between participant) recurring themes isolated three central meta themes (Appendix 5) synthesised.

Recurring Themes

- Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness
- Inner beauty more important than outer
- Personal influence on interviewee of media conception of beauty
- Media have strong influence on societies perception of beauty
- Positive influence of beauty of career potential
- Physical attractiveness very important in initial stages of relationship; later personality becomes more important

Meta Themes

1. Strong Media influence on beauty
2. Positive attitude toward elective plastic surgery
3. Distinction between Inner and Outer Beauty

Conversation Analysis

A detailed conversational analysis was carried out on two extracts of the transcribed data, covering 3 questions and answers in total. Excerpt 1 stretched from [23] to [44] (Appendix 1); excerpt 2 stretched from [62] to [84] (Appendix 1). Due to the length of this analysis, it is provided in Appendix 5.

Discourse Analysis

The discourse analysis that follows, again focus's on the 2 excerpts defined above.

The text under consideration is a transcription of a tape recorded interview, between a researcher and participant. The questions asked were formulated by a group of researchers from this researchers psychology class, and the questions were worded and presented in a semi-structured format by this researcher. The relationship of the researcher and participant is a fraternal one; the participant is the researchers younger sibling. The interview took place in the family home.

Excerpt 1

Excerpt 1 consisted of two questions and answers, on the topic of the importance of beauty; the first directly addressing the participants own view of the importance of beauty; the second elaborating on the participants statement that for him a relationship ‘..with someone I wasn’t attracted to’, would not be successful.

The researcher conducting the interview adopts a professional role, emphasising his power as shaper and definer of the interview; both by speaking a formal manner, and asking the participant to elaborate on his spontaneous responses (see Appendix 2, line 35). This forces the participant to give careful consideration to responses he is aware he will have to justify, or at least elaborate. In this way the researcher utilises the dominance

afforded by his greater age and role as a researcher, to enforce his script of the interaction.

In his initial response (see Appendix 2, line 29) the participant qualifies his statement with 'I think', the words 'in relationships anyway', and his emphasis of the word 'successful', when stating the importance of attractiveness; to detract from the appearance of superficiality; a possible incidence of Positive Self Representation (Van Dijk, 1998).

When asked to elaborate on the reasons attractiveness is important to relationship success (Appendix 2, line 35), the participant prefixes his justification with a list of additional qualities important in relationships (e.g.: the ability to communicate with a partner, see Appendix 2 lines 39 – 40), in order to de-emphasise the apparent superficiality of his previous response. The participants final qualification (Appendix 2, line 42) is stated uncertainly – as it by implication admits that less physically centred interpretations of relationship success are possible – potentially creating a dissonance between a desire to emphasise his own unsuperficiality & a possible superficial interpretation of his statement (Festinger, 1957).

Excerpt 2

Excerpt 2 consisted of a question and response on the topic of the participant's view of the determinants of attractiveness in men and women.

The researcher presents the participant with an enormously loaded question; focusing on the attractiveness of both men and women (Appendix 2, lines 64 – 66). His repetition and correction 'man and a woman' (Appendix 2, line 66), emphasises his anticipation and reinforcement of the uncomfortable question he has confronted his participant with. The researcher's out breath before his request for depiction of the attractive qualities in men, indicates a desire to suppress amusement (Appendix 2, lines 64). The researcher is

aware of the discomfort which may be provoked by this question, yet is enabled by a pre-existing fraternal relationship with R, to avoid 'softening' the question or framing it in a less threatening context; an example of a use of both a pre-existing relationship and the role of interviewer, to legitimate power.

In the participants response (Appendix 2, lines 69 – 82) his desire to answer the question asked, be a 'good' participant, contradicts his cultural conditioning against any implication of homosexuality, and his desire not to appear foolish; possibly emphasized by his fraternal jocular / mocking relationship with the researcher.

The participants drawn out introduction to his answer, serves to provide him time to construct an unloaded response (Appendix 2, lines 69 – 74). The participant again qualifies the importance of attractiveness with reference to relationships 'personally I would..consider...many peoples personality..to..be beautiful..It would be a factor in relationships' (Appendix 1, lines 72 – 74).

The participants loud locution of 'generally' restates his distance from a potentially 'superficial' opinion (Appendix 2, line 75); a Credibility Enhancing Move (Van Dijk, 1998).

The participant's ability to clearly articulate completely breaks down during his description of the attractive qualities of men (Appendix 2, lines 77 – 79); he is careful to emphasise that this is what he would consider beautiful (Appendix 2, line 77), rather than attractive; distancing himself from any homosexual implication.

The participant's description of the attractive qualities of women (Appendix 2, lines 80 – 82); is of note for its personification (e.g.: 'her eyes', 'her lips', 'her hair'). This may be due to his counterfactual visualisation of a particular woman. The participant is again conflicted between his role as a responsive participant, and the potentially lascivious interpretation of his remarks.

DISCUSSION

Conducting this interview, and the qualitative analysis of the text it provided, raised a number of issues relating to the interviews topic (beauty), qualitative research in general, and the techniques specifically used here (conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis).

Themes

One issue that occurred to this researcher, in reference to the responses returned by participants, was the assumption that that the medias effect on the perception and construal of beauty is always negative. Neither the participant interviewed by this researcher, nor those questioned by the other researchers (as indicated by the themes provided in group discussion), provided a positive interpretation of the medias influence on beauty (for example the spread of non-discriminatory or inclusive messages, such as ‘Black is beautiful’, or the ‘Dove Real Beauty’ campaign, which instigated this research). Without exception, participants interpreted the media as having a negative effect, or no effect at all. Further research is required to assess whether this is a function of the debate on the effect of the media on conceptions of beauty, within the media itself (e.g.: news reports); or a genuine indictment by participants of their own experience of media pressure to appear physically perfect. One question in particular that needs to be addressed in this regard, is how participants feel the media impacts on their own opinions and self-perception.

Whether positive or negative in impact, participants are almost certainly right in their assessment (Appendix 4) that the media has a powerful effect on what is considered attractive. Evolutionary psychological research suggests that in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness, attractiveness was determined by group norm in tribes of less than 250 individuals (Pinker, 2003); in our contemporary media rich environment (and larger societies) group norms may become distorted (Braun, Grundl, & Marberger, 2001), an effect exacerbated by the medias disproportionate depiction of highly attractive

individuals. Note, this evolutionary interpretation is strongly at odds with social constructionist accounts of the tabula rasa construction of beauty through social interaction.

Although the number of participants interviewed was too small to generalize from (and little information relating to participants relationship with researchers is available), another interesting issue raised was the effect of the relationship of interviewer – interviewee gender on responses provided. The two males interviewed by females de-emphasised the importance of physical beauty (e.g.: Appendix 3 [11.2.FM]), whilst one of the male participants interviewed by a male emphasised the importance of physical beauty throughout the entirety of relationships; a view not expressed by any of the female participants interviewed.

Stereotypically, and in contrast to their male counterparts, female participants interviews tended to have themes relating to non-physical aspects of beauty (e.g.: Appendix 3 [4.2.FF]); while none of the male participants interviewed demonstrated themes of this nature, and in fact one (this researchers participant) had a theme emphasising the synonymy of beauty and attractiveness (see Appendix 3 [8.4.MM]).

Here again the impact of evolved psychological gender differences can be observed; in the lack of emphasis placed by men on non-physical factors influencing beauty.

Another potential avenue for research suggested by the analysis of group themes, is the issue of the perceived impact of beauty on career success (see Appendix 3 [3.1.FF]). This begs the question, is the perceived impact of physical beauty on career potential, a factor of the importance of beauty per say (in societies selection of high status individuals) or the medias lauding of the specific roles beauty can open, such as modelling, acting etc?

Overall this researchers impression was that group themes should have been selected in a more systematic manner (e.g.: through use of grounded theory), and with more attached information (e.g.: relationship of interviewer to interviewee in each case), as this could have facilitated more detailed and reliable thematic analysis.

An additional potential confound (if such a term may be applied to qualitative research), was the collection in groups of thematic data. Due to unclear instructions, the thematic information initially collated by researchers, differed in format from that required for group synthesis; with the result that group themes were identified and proffered in a very brief period of time. The effect of this, together with the discursive group format of theme collection, may have been to increase conformity, orthodoxy pressures and potentially originality pressures in competitive individuals.

Conversational Analysis

The conversational analysis of this participants interview provoked no immediately apparent insights; perhaps due to this participants unfamiliarity with the technique. Ultimately, this participants impression was that conversational analysis implies an illusory objectivity; as pre-existing knowledge is applied throughout the process in order to interpret the provocation for a particular utterance etc. Additionally by distancing itself from theory; and refusing to synthesis its 'discoveries' CA limits its ability to expand and discover/create new knowledge.

Discourse Analysis

Although discourse analysis endeavours to root itself in the text, its emphasis on the interpretation of text in context leaves it vulnerable to the difficulty of delimiting which external information is relevant to the comprehension of a given text (Butler, cited in Brown & Yule, 1983). This participant found that his own knowledge (or fallible memory) of his thoughts throughout the interview, together with his discussions before and after this interview with the participant; were inseparable from the interpretation of the discourse as text. Further, this participant would cast doubt on the utility (in the realm of scientific research at least), of such inherently and defiantly subjective analysis.

This Interview

The interview conducted by this researcher proceeded much as expected (see Reflexivity); with a degree of stereotypical differentiation between societies depiction of beauty, and inner beauty; and a degree of awkwardness resulting in particular from questions related to the attractiveness of members of the participants own gender (e.g.: Appendix 1, lines 69-82). The participant was more candid in relation to the importance, for him in relation to attraction, of physical beauty (e.g.: Appendix 1, line 4 – 5), than expected. Predictably the participant was critical of media pressure to appear beautiful, particularly on young girls and older women (see Appendix 1, line 111 – 114). The participant was surprisingly articulate in relation to the effect of relationship on the attractiveness of a partner over time (see Appendix 1, line 119 – 128).

The experience of conducting this interview was valuable in several regards. Primary it reinforced for this researcher the importance of interviewing unrelated participants with whom the researchers does not have a relationship of any kind. As interviews with friends and family too easily become unprofessional and humorous. Unless such relationships, or their impact on interaction are the topic of investigation, such unprofessionally negates the utility of interview data.

From a technical perspective, the recording of this interview gave this researcher practical experience utilising digital recording equipment. While the computer was found to be a less efficient and more awkward method of recording – tied to one location, and requiring calibration; the method of playback used (a small mp3 player), enabled much more rapid transcription. In future interviews, this researcher intends to record using a standard tape recorder, transferring to digital format before transcribing from the resultant digital recording, using a portable mp3 player.

Qualitative Research

Overall this researcher gained a negative impression of qualitative research; as its denial of the possibility of objectivity quickly resulted in a quagmire of subjectivity, limiting the potential of inference, and enabling lazy methodology (for example – if themes are subjective in any case, what matter if they are collected in a potentially biased manner?). On the positive side, the freedom to state in a more plain fashion impressions gained during the process of research, was a positive experience; and the necessity for conscious reflexivity facilitated the discovery of potential research confounds, and the suggestion of future avenues of research.

Reflexivity as a methodology may well suit quantitative research as much as qualitative; providing a framework for the discovery and admission of implicit biases, which may remain buried in researchers interpretation of their data.

Overall however, the utility of such subjective and easily manipulated methodologies, as discourse and thematic analysis must be questioned. Much of the utility of the scientific method comes from its testability; one article makes an assertion, another refutes it. Interpretations may differ (especially in the social sciences), but ultimately a consensus is reached, or at least the consensus that more data is required is arrived at. By denying the validity of objective scientific enquiry, qualitative research works to forestall the collection of knowledge. Qualitative researchers contest such a view with reference to the unprovability of objectivity, and the implicit subjectivity of all interpretation (Salmon, 2003). While this view has logical validity; it denies the reality of the progressive acquisition of knowledge, which is so manifest in the physical sciences (Morgan, 1998). Undoubtedly we know more than we did in the past, more mathematics, more physics, and how to make more, and more sophisticated devices; and this knowledge has been provided by effective objective research. Whilst the application of such positivism to the social sciences is indeed questionable, this researcher would argue that to deny objectivity, denies the possibility of any progress in psychology, and ultimately brands the endeavour futile.

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APPENDIX 1 – Semi Structured Interview Questions

Initial questions for semi-structured interview, arrived at through group discussion of the issues raised by the Dove beauty campaign, and the interview process.

1. What does beauty mean to you?
2. How important do you think beauty is?
3. Do you think the media has had an influence on what's perceived to be beautiful?
4. What do you perceive as attractive in a male/female (participants own gender first)?
5. Do you think how much you know someone affects your perception of their beauty?
6. Do you think the concept of beauty is the same now as it was in the past?
7. How do you feel about cosmetic surgery?

[These questions were to be used to instigate conversation and elicit initial responses, which would be explored further in the ten-minute interview. They were designed to be rather bald and provocative, due to the brief nature of the interview, and in an attempt to provoke thought in the participant.]

APPENDIX 2 – Interview Transcript

‘Beauty Interview’

– *Subject: D, Date: 20/02/05, Time: 8.00pm, Location: Subject's home,*

Interviewer: Gareth Stack

Key: R = Researcher, D = Participant

R: Em good evening D, and thank you for participating in this interview em I’ll begin. 1

R: Could you tell me what does beauty mean to you? 2

3

D: I suppose it means different things for different people but to me personally eh I 4
would consider someone with a beautiful face to be beautiful. (2.0) 5

D: Or depending on how their body looks would also be a factor of their beauty em 6
people have inner beauty but em (1.0) I suppose in todays society and I think in most of 7
history beautiful people would have had an effect with their beauty, on other people. 8
9

R: Ok thank you, can you tell me what you mean by inner beauty? 10
11

D: (2.0) Em, I suppose that I mean your personality and how you relate to other people 12
through conversation, communication and the way you act twords others. 13
14

R: Em can you tell me em, is beauty in the eye of the beholder? 15
16

D: (3.0) Em (1.0) I think personally that most people would be fairly effected by the 17
physical beauty of other people, and that personality has eh a big effect on the success of 18
relationships and such but that the most important thing to most people is the their 19
attraction the they they they aim in relationships anyway for the person that they believe 20
would be, they can ascertain.. 21
22

[Excerpt 1 – Time from start: 00.01.47] 23

	24
R: So ya you've described em beauty as being.. <i>physical</i> beauty <as being quite important>..how important do <i>you</i> think beauty <i>is</i> ↑?	25
	26
	27
D: Em (3.0) Eh to <i>me</i> em I, beauty <i>is</i> important↑, I THERE IS <many other things> which are important but I <i>think</i> beauty is em is quite important.=In, in that like (0.5) I don't think (0.5) <in relationships <i>anyway</i> >, I don't think I could 'em' get on with someone I wasn't attracted to. Who <i>I didn't</i> consider (.) beautiful. I di <I don't think that the relationship> eh (0.5) would be (.) <i>SUCCESSFUL</i> .	28
(1.0)	29
	30
	31
	32
	33
	34
R: <And can you tell me <i>why</i> you think> that (.) that <wouldn't be successful>?	35
	36
(1.0)	37
D: Em <cause I <i>think</i> > ↓in order to <i>to love</i> someone (0.5) em <i>you need</i> (2.0) you need to be <able to <i>get on with them</i> > and <em converse well with them> communicate well=<but I think there you need to be attracted to them>, <in order to that you can> in order to be attracted to them, <you need to> (0.2) <to consider them> <i>beautiful</i> . (.)	38
Wha..Whatever level you need to consider them (.5) 'beautiful'↓.	39
	40
	41
	42
	43
[Excerpt 1 – End – Time from start: 00.02.48]	44
	45
R: And em, can you tell me, do you think the media has an influence on whats perceived to be beautiful?	46
	47
	48
D: (2.0) Could you repeat the question?	49
	50
R: Can you tell me, do you think the media has an influence on whats perceived to be beautiful?	51
	52
R: Does the media effect what is <i>considered</i> beautiful?	53
	54

D: Em yeah yeah I think that the definitely the media has an effect a great influence on 55
 what people consider (1.0) consider eh what people consider beautiful, cause eh (1.0) me 56
 personally I don't agree with everything they consider beautiful, but I'd say teenage (1.0) 57
 kids running round with pictures of Christina Agulera and Brittany Spears on their walls 58
 telling them beautiful I wouldn't necessarily consider them beautiful but like (1.0) in 59
 relation to to that. 60

[Excerpt 2 – Time from start: 00.03.44] 61
62

R: So you you you've *stated* that you <kind of disagree> with the me medias portrayal of 64
 beauty. Can you tell me what do *you* perceive as attractive in a man or a woman..°hhh 65
 Man *and* a woman, (h) if you could? 66

(1.0) 67
68

D: Em (2.0) I <suppose theres many different aspects of beauty> that you'd <have to 69
 consider when answering that question>. Theres em ((cough, cough)) somebodys 70
 personality (.) then theres <their their physical beauty> °hhh em °hhh personally I would 71
 fff I would em, I would (.) consider (.) eh <many peoples personality eh to be 72
 beautiful>.=But I'm not sure necessarily <that that would be the the first thing that would 73
 attract you to them>.=It would be a factor in relationships °hhh so ah em ((cough)) in 74
 relationships but em (1.0) ge <GENERALLY if you just see a stranger in the street, you 75
 you couldn't, you don't know their personality, you'd have to go from external> °hhh 76
 physical (1.0) looks. But EM ((cough)) <in relation to what I consider beautiful> (0.5) em 77
 about (.) people <physically>, I suppose (2.0) ah em (.) <toned guy> <guy muscle> 78
 <muscle guy> tall (1.0) *dark* guy would <would be em considered beautiful and em 79
 relation to a *woman*>; em womans body and °hhh (1.0) her eh her face.=ME in particular 80
 I would em, <I'd be probably attracted to> to womans face more than eh, <any other 81
 attributes> (0.5) eh her *eyes*, her (0.2) lips, her *hair*. 82

[Excerpt 2 – End – Time from start: 00.05.16] 83
84

85

- R: Ok. Eh thank you David, and eh do you do you feel pressure yourself to become more beautiful. To to alter your image or to eh change in any way? 86
87
88
- D: Em. No, I feel that I have to em keep a certain level of (1.0) level. A certain standard 89
to my looks in relation to eh gell and hygine. But I don't feel compelled I think to the 90
same level that eh teenage girls feel to look like Brittany Spears or Christina Aguilara. 91
92
- R: Ok thankyou. Kind of (1.0) along the same lines how do you feel about cosmetic 93
plastic surgery? 94
95
- D: (2.0) Em. (2.0) Eh I suppose (1.0) that if I was em (2.0) I dono if I'd be personally 96
attracted to eh somebody with cosmetic surgery I suppose that if I knew they had cometic 97
surgery and I could see the difference even if it did make them wha (1.0) the public or the 98
general would consider beautiful, I don't know if I would be personally attracted to tha, I 99
don't think I would be (2.0) bu if I didn't know that they had eh, and it di make them 100
more beautiful I suppose I would be have to be more attracted to them than I would 101
necessarily otherwise. 102
103
- R: Do you think that there might be a pressure, or no pressure at all do you think that 104
there is eh any kind of tendency or or.. 105
106
- D: Media pressure ? 107
108
- R: Media pressure exactly on people to be more beautiful? 109
110
- D: Yeah yeah I think that there definitely is eh external pressure from from the media 111
especially for women in general, younger women would feel the need to look like the 112
idols of today. And I suppose the older women would feel the need to look younger em 113
so there would be a want there for cosmetic surgery and liposuction etc. 114
115

- R: Could you tell me, do you do you think how well you know someone effects your perception of their beauty? 116
117
118
- D: Em (1.0) I suppose there's different levels of knowing people theres li your family n 119
your friends the stranger in the street I think tha em I think it does it does effect your 120
relationship with people. Relationship with peoples and persons effects how em how 121
beautiful you consider that person to be. The stranger in the street you may consider him 122
at the same level, whatever level you consider beautiful. Your always going to consider 123
that person to be at that level cause you don't know them its not going to change over 124
time cause you don't have the time to get to know them. But your friends I think (cough) 125
I think if you if you meet a girl and over time as you as you eh get a rapport with that 126
person, your levels of attraction twords that person change I'm sure, could be examined 127
bu I don't know. 128
129
- R: Ok thank you. Eh just kind of winding the interview to a close one final central 130
question in eh (2.0) Do you think that the concept of beauty is the same now as it was in 131
the past? 132
133
- D: (3.0) Em (1.0) I suppose there would have been an underlying eh concept of beauty in 134
like in eh in Victorian times and in stonage times an that the most beautiful person, which 135
probably would be considered the most beautiful person today em would have been the 136
most highly esteemed in the in the group, because of their beauty. But I think its become 137
very extreme, the the striving twords beauty in the present day anyway, due to idols and 138
icons and eh I suppose the media portraying those icons as beautiful. 139
- R: Do you think that the media in particular is the cause of em any kind of modern 140
concern with beauty. 141
142
- D: eh I think the media picks up on the the fact that people em want to be more beautiful 143
and they pressure them eh I suppose they don't pressure them. They just exploit the fact 144
that people want to be more beautiful eh and by exploiting that fact they create avenues 145
(2.0) that wouldn't normally be there.. 146

R: Ok David, thank you very much for participating in this interview.

147

148

D: Thank you.

149

150

[Interview terminated – time from start – 00.09.55]

Appendix - 3 – Themes Identified in this interview

Codes

1. Several conceptions of beauty

- (i) D emphasizes how his perception of beauty is one of several [4] [42]
- (ii) Distinction between society's/media's perceptions and personal. [55 - 60] [111]

2. Media as pressure to become beautiful

- (i) Pressure to attain level of appearance of celebrities [57 - 60] [91]
- (ii) Media opinion formation of attractiveness [55]
- (iii) Negative / exploitative media [143 - 146]

3. Beauty in relation to relationships

- (i) Perception of partner's beauty important for success of relationship [30 – 31]
- (ii) Attraction important in selection for relationships [19 - 21]

4. Beauty synonymous with attraction

- (i) Substitution of 'beautiful' for 'attractive' [73] [77]
- (ii) The attractiveness of 'un-natural' beauty [96/97] [100 – 102]

APPENDIX - 4 - Group Themes

Themes identified through post interview class discussion.

Coding: First digit indicates researcher, second digit indicates theme, first letter indicates gender of researcher, second digit indicates gender of participant. Recurring themes are marked with a star.

N.B: As only 3 to 4 themes were provided per researcher, group theme grouping are of necessity reductive.

Codes

Female Subjects

(I=M)

- [1.1.MF] Classic / traditional perception of beauty – refined, well groomed, includes personality
- [1.2.MF] Interviewee's overuse of beauty products
- [1.3.MF] Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness *2

(I = F)

- [2.1.FF] Inner beauty more important than outer *6
- [2.2.FF] Personal influence on interviewee of media conception of beauty *1
- [2.3.FF] Media have strong influence on societies perception of beauty *3
- [2.4.FF] Media influence development of anorexia
- [2.5.FF] Physical attractiveness more important aspect of beauty for women than men

(I = F)

- [3.1.FF] Positive influence of beauty of career potential *4
- [3.2.FF] Strong influence of media on interviewee's perception of beauty *1
- [3.3.FF] Negative perception of elective cosmetic surgery

(I=F)

- [4.1.FF] Subjectivity of important elements of beauty
- [4.2.FF] Confidence important in beauty
- [4.3.FF] Personality as aspect of beauty
- [4.4.FF] Positive social influence on male 'personal beauty habits'
- [4.5.FF] Masculinity no longer incompatible with use of beauty products
- [4.6.FF] Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness *2

(I=F)

- [5.1.FF] Inherent historically consistent beauty
- [5.2.FF] Physical attractiveness biologically based
- [5.3.FF] Physical attractiveness related to life opportunities *4

(I=F)

- [6.1.FF] Physical attractiveness very important element of societal perception of beauty
- [6.2.FF] Negligible influence of media on beauty
- [6.3.FF] Physical attractiveness very important in initial stages of relationship; later personality becomes more important *5
- [6.5.FF] Generosity and kindness as important aspects of beauty
- [6.6.FF] Inner beauty more important than external beauty *6

(I=F)

- [7.1.FF] Physical attractiveness important element of societal perception of beauty
- [7.2.FF] Size [weight] as important element of societal perception of beauty
- [7.3.FF] Inner beauty more important than external beauty *6
- [7.4.FF] Perception of inner beauty requires time

Male Subjects

(I=M)

[8.1.MM] Various perceptions of beauty

[8.2.MM] Negligible influence of media on perception

[8.3.MM] Physical attractiveness very important throughout relationships

[8.4.MM] Physical attractiveness synonymous with beauty

(I=M)

[9.1.MM] Media an influence on perception of beauty *3

[9.2.MM] Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness *2

(I=F)

[10.1.FM] Physical attractiveness important aspect of beauty only if absent

[10.2.FM] Physical attractiveness subjective

[10.3.FM] Beauty more than just Physical attractiveness

(I=F)

[11.1.FM] Media has little influence on beauty

[11.2.FM] Real beauty more meaningful than superficial media version

[11.3.FM] Perception of beauty changes over time

[11.4.FM] Physical attractiveness very important in initial stages of relationship; later
personality becomes more important*5

APPENDIX - 5 – Group Meta Themes

Media's influence on beauty

[2.3.FF] Media have strong influence on societies perception of beauty

[2.4.FF] Media influence development of anorexia

[3.2.FF] Strong influence of media on interviewee's perception of beauty

[9.1.MM] Media an influence on perception of beauty

[6.2.FF] Negligible influence of media on beauty

[11.1.FM] Media has little influence on beauty

Appropriateness of plastic surgery related to personal happiness

[1.3.MF] Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness

[4.6.FF] Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness

[9.2.MM] Appropriateness of elective plastic surgery related to personal happiness

Inner vs Outer Beauty

[2.1.FF] Inner beauty more important than outer

[4.1.FF] Subjectivity of important elements of beauty

[4.2.FF] Confidence important in beauty

[4.3.FF] Personality as aspect of beauty

[1.1.MF] Classic / traditional perception of beauty – refined, well groomed, includes
personality

[6.5.FF] Generosity and kindness as important aspects of beauty

[6.6.FF] Inner beauty more important than external beauty

[10.2.FM] Physical attractiveness subjective

[10.3.FM] Beauty more than just Physical attractiveness

[7.2.FF] Size [weight] as important element of societal perception of beauty

[2.5.FF] Physical attractiveness more important aspect of beauty for women than men

[6.3.FF] Physical attractiveness very important in initial stages of relationship; later
personality becomes more important

[7.1.FF] Physical attractiveness important element of societal perception of beauty

[8.3.MM] Physical attractiveness very important throughout relationships

[8.4.MM] Physical attractiveness synonymous with beauty

[10.1.FM] Physical attractiveness important aspect of beauty only if absent

[11.4.FM] Physical attractiveness very important in initial stages of relationship; later
personality becomes more important

APPENDIX – 6 – Conversation Analysis

Excerpt 1

Question 1

[25] I's reference back to R's previous statement 'so you've described em beauty as being...important' serves to restrict the participants potential responses, by reminding him to be consistent. Additionally, by emphasizing R's physical interpretation of I's initial question '..what does beauty mean to you' [2]

[25/26] I's emphasis on 'physical' and 'you', stressed that his question addresses the surface definition of beauty, and seeks a personal opinion.

Answer 1

[28] 3 Second pause at start of response indicates R's attempt to succinctly answer question. Prior to the interview R had related anxiety over his perceived inarticulacy.

[29/30] Repetition of 'I don't think', and use of qualifier 'in relationships anyway', may imply R's reluctance to be perceived as superficial – as might be implied by his claim that about the necessity for him of attraction to underlie relationships (as implied by line 34) 'I don't think I could 'em' get on with someone I wasn't attracted to'

[30/31] R's prefix of his statement with the de-emphasis 'In, in that like', and the qualifier 'I don I don't think', weakens the strength of his assertion that attraction is required for successful relationships.

[31] Emphasis on 'I didn't' indicated that the R's opinion is personal rather than proscriptive.

[32] Loudness of 'Successful' demarcates termination of statement – attempts to portray conciseness. Additionally, provides a restatement of qualifier on necessity of attraction to partner.

Question 2

[35] I's emphasis on 'why' attempts to be complicit with R's desire to concretely define the question and elicit articulate responses.

Answer

[39] R's acceleration of speech when defining non beauty related elements as essential to a relationship – may indicate that they are not as important as the need to consider them 'beautiful' (emphasized), with the additional implication that physical attraction is synonymous with beauty.

[42] R's final qualification is stated uncertainly – as it by implication admits that less physically centered interpretations of relationship success are possible.

Excerpt 2

Question

[64] By reminding the participant of his previous assertion, the interviewer attempts to constrain the limits of potential responses. The researcher directs the participants attention to this question, both in order to provide a smooth segue into the next topic of discussion, and to emphasise the desire for consistency.

[65 – 66] The researchers hesitation out breath and clarification ‘man *and* a woman’, may indicate the delicateness of the question; and or the researchers amusement at confronting the participant with an awkward question.

Answer

[69] R's delay at the beginning of his response may be due the awkwardness of the question.

[70] R coughs twice before stating personalities relative importance in measurement of beauty. Perhaps due to the statements contrast with R's stated beliefs in excerpt 1.

[75] R's loud locution of 'generally' restates distance from potentially 'superficial' opinion.

[77 - 80] Personification of women – 'womans face', rather than 'womens faces' or 'a womans face', 'her eyes', 'her lips', 'her hair'; stands in contrast to the distinct list like quality to the participants description of attractive masculine features.

[78 - 80] R's grammatical fluidity and structure break down when describing qualities perceived as beautiful in male. Additionally R substitutes word 'beautiful' for interviewers term 'attractive'. Indicates an increase of tensions.

[80] R emerges from ambiguous ground with emphatic 'me', distancing his previous statements from his own opinion.