Q
R

Strategies for conducting elite interviews

Qualitative Research
11(4) 431–441

DOI: 10.1177/1468794111404329
qrj.sagepub.com
SAGE

William S Harvey
Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies,
University of Sydney Business School, Australia

Abstract
This article addresses some strategies for conducting elite interviews. It draws upon material from a significant number of interviews that the author has conducted with this group in a variety of economic sectors and countries, as well as from the social sciences literature on elites. The aim of the article is to provide insights into the particularities of interviewing elites for those new to researching this group. In particular, it focuses on gaining trust and gauging the tone of the interview, how to present oneself during the interview, asking open- and closed-questions, the appropriate length of an interview, whether to record the conversation, coping with difficult scenarios, asking awkward questions, managing respondents who do not answer the question, keeping respondents interested in the interview and finally gaining feedback from respondents.

Keywords
elites, interviewing, qualitative methods

Context

In the last few decades, social scientists have increasingly turned their attention towards the role of elite members within business and society, which has led to a growth in work on some of the methodological challenges of interviewing this group. However, although there have been some groundbreaking texts on these methodological challenges (Dexter, 1970; McDowell, 1998; Ostrander, 1993), there have been few attempts to bridge these different experiences across the social sciences. Furthermore, there is little formal guidance or indication of the specific challenges for those new to researching elite subjects in general texts on qualitative methods. Over the course of interviewing many elite subjects, for example, I have found myself falling into a number of traps which could have been avoided. Consequently, one of the major motivations for this article is to help scholars new to interviewing elites to avoid some of these pitfalls.

Corresponding author:
William S Harvey, H03 Institute Building, The University of Sydney, NSW 2006 Australia
Email: w.harvey@sydney.edu.au

This article provides a high degree of practical guidance for researchers interviewing elite members and draws upon my own experiences of interviewing over one hundred CEOs, Vice-Presidents, Directors and Senior Partners in a range of economic sectors during my doctoral and post-doctoral research, as well as from the experiences of scholars across the social sciences. I begin by briefly introducing and addressing some of the problems with defining elite members. The remainder of the article focuses on a number of particular challenges that researchers may face during interviews with this group. In particular, I focus on gaining the trust of respondents, gauging the tone of the interview, how to position oneself in an interview, using open- and closed-ended questions, assessing the appropriate length of an interview, recording versus not recording, conducting difficult interviews, asking awkward questions, dealing with respondents not answering questions, keeping interviewees interested, and gaining feedback from respondents. The article does not pretend to provide definitive answers to the above issues, many of which have been extensively addressed in general social science texts on research methods (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Silverman, 2006). However, the aim is to briefly discuss the particularities of these issues in the context of elite interviews and highlight some possible strategies that have proved effective for those scholars who have conducted elite interviews. This is important because the general advice that scholars receive on interviewing is by no means the best advice for interviewing elite subjects.

Introducing elites

In the last two decades there has been a small but growing literature on elites. In part, this has been a result of the resurgence of ethnographic research such as interviews, focus groups, case studies and participant observation, but also because scholars have become increasingly interested in understanding the perspectives and behaviours of leaders in business, politics and society as a whole. Yet, until recently, our understanding of some of the methodological challenges of researching elites has lagged behind our rush to interview them.

There is no clear-cut definition of the term ‘elite’ and given its broad understanding across the social sciences, scholars have tended to adopt different approaches. Zuckerman (1972) uses the term ‘ultra elites’ to describe individuals who hold a significant amount of power within a group that is already considered elite. She argues, for example, that US senators constitute part of the country’s political elite, but among them there is a ‘subset of particularly powerful or prestigious influentials’ who she terms ‘ultra elites’ (Zuckerman, 1972: 160). She suggests that there is a hierarchy of status within elite groups. McDowell (1998) analyses a broader group of ‘professional elites’, who are employees working at different levels for merchant and investment banks in the City of London. She classifies this group as elite because they are ‘highly skilled, professionally competent, and class-specific’ (McDowell, 1998: 2135). Parry (1998: 2148) uses the term ‘hybrid elites’ in the context of the international trade of genetic material because she argues that critical knowledge does not necessarily exist in traditional institutions, ‘but rather as increasingly informal, hybridised, spatially fragmented, and hence largely “invisible”, networks of elite actors’. Given the under-theorization of the term elite, Smith (2006) recognizes why scholars have shaped their definitions to match their

respondents. However, she is rightly critical of the underlying assumption that those who hold professional positions necessarily exert as much influence as initially perceived. Indeed, job titles can entirely misrepresent the role of workers and therefore are by no means an indicator of elite status (Harvey, 2010).

Many scholars have used the term elite in a relational sense, defining them either in terms of their social position compared to the researcher, or compared to the average person in society (Stephens, 2007). The problem with this definition is there is no guarantee that an elite subject will necessarily translate this power and authority in an interview setting. Indeed, Smith (2006) found that on the few occasions she experienced respondents wanting to exert their authority over her, it was not from elites but from relatively less senior workers. Furthermore, although business and political elites often receive extensive media training, they are often scrutinized by television and radio journalists and therefore can also feel threatened in an interview, particularly in contexts that are less straightforward to prepare for such as academic interviews. On several occasions, for instance, I have been asked by elite respondents or their personal assistants what they need to prepare for before the interview, which suggests that they consider the interview as some form of challenge or justification for what they do.

In many cases, it is not necessarily the figureheads or leaders of organizations and institutions who have greatest claim to elite status, but those who hold important social networks, social capital and strategic positions within social structures because they are better able to exert influence (Burt, 1992; Parry, 1998; Smith, 2006; Woods, 1998). Elite status also changes with people both gaining and losing their status over time. In addition, it is geographically specific with people holding elite status in some, but not all locations. In short, it is clear that the term elite can mean many things in different contexts, which explains the range of definitions. The purpose here is not to critique these other definitions, but rather to highlight the variety of perspectives.

When referring to my research, I define elites as those who occupy senior management and Board level positions within organizations. This is a similar scope of definition to Zuckerman's (1972), but focuses on a level immediately below her ultra elite subjects. My definition is narrower than McDowell's (1998) because it is clear in the context of my research that these people have significant decision-making influence within and outside of the firm and therefore present a unique challenge to interview. I deliberately use the term elite more broadly when drawing on examples from the theoretical literature in order to compare my experiences with those who have researched similar groups.

Conducting interviews

Interviewers need to gain the trust of their respondents in order to collect high quality data. Ostrander (1993) argues that this trust is built up over time and researchers should attempt to build a rapport with elite subjects from the moment they first contact them to the interview itself and beyond the interview. Before an interview, I try to be as transparent as possible and provide respondents with the following information: who I am, where I am working, what the nature of my research is (in non-academic jargon), who is sponsoring me, how long the interview will take, how the data will be used, where the results will be disseminated and whether the information will be attributed or anonymous.

During the interview researchers must show that they have done their homework because often elites might consciously or sub-consciously challenge them on their subject and its relevance (Zuckerman, 1972). In several instances, for example, I have found myself being asked questions and assessed by the interviewee and it was important to project a positive impression in order to gain their respect and therefore improve the quality of their responses to my questions. In one notable instance, I expected to conduct an interview with a CEO on his experiences of moving to and working in the USA, but found myself being the interviewee. Although this interview did not directly lead to any valuable data for my research at the time, it did lead to me interviewing at least 50 senior executives as a result of the recommendation of this CEO.

Researchers interviewing all types of respondents need to consider how they will present themselves. When conducting research on industrial and commercial elites, McDowell (1998: 2138), for example, found herself shifting her position including 'playing dumb' with older patriarchal figures, 'brusquely efficient' with fierce older women, 'sisterly' with women of the same age holding similar positions and 'superfast and well-informed' with younger men. Importantly, she decided how to present herself after initially observing and assessing the visual and verbal clues of respondents. Effective interviewers are those that are able to easily adjust their style and make the interviewer feel as comfortable as possible. This is important not only in generating high quality responses, but also in increasing the likelihood of elite members providing other interview opportunities such as additional contacts. I have found that a good way of gauging how well I have conducted an interview is seeing how forthright respondents are at referring other respondents. The reason for this is it reflects well on an individual's reputation if he or she refers a good scholar who is asking pertinent and interesting questions to other elites, but poorly on that person's reputation if the reverse is true.

Like other types of interviews, the best way to conduct research on elite members will vary from one interview to another and researchers need to gauge early the atmosphere of the interview and adjust their behaviour, speaking voice and mannerisms accordingly. In short, 'What may be suicidal or impractical for one interviewer or in one situation may be feasible or even the best way to proceed for another interviewer or in another situation' (Dexter, 2006: 32). It is generally advised, for example, to avoid asking elites closed-ended questions because they do not like to be confined to a restricted set of answers: 'Elites especially – but other highly educated people as well – do not like being put in the straightjacket of close-ended questions. They prefer to articulate their views, explaining why they think what they think' (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002: 674). Having said this, often interviewers have limited time to speak with elite subjects and therefore a structured approach is often the best way of obtaining focused responses in a short time frame. In addition, asking open-ended questions only provides qualitative data, but often researchers wish to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Rivera et al. (2002), for example, find that open-ended questions can be successfully followed-up by formulaic questions.

I designed my questions on highly skilled professionals around Vancouver so that respondents were initially asked open-ended questions, which were followed-up by closed-ended questions. Although respondents preferred to answer open-ended questions, as Aberbach and Rockman (2002) argue, the combination of open- and

closed-ended questions enabled respondents to initially answer in their own words, but also provided me with the quantitative data that I required for my research questions. Below is an example of an open-ended question followed by a closed-ended question that I asked to highly skilled British expatriates working in Vancouver.

> *Open-ended question*:What would be the most important factors in influencing you to stay in Canada or return to the UK?
>
> *Closed-ended question*: Please rank from 0 to 10 the importance of each of the following factors that might influence you to return to work in the UK:
>
> a) Professional opportunities in the UK
>
> b) Family considerations
>
> c) Culture and lifestyle in the UK
>
> d) Government or company incentives to return to the UK
>
> e) Desire to contribute to the economic development of the UK

Combining open- and closed-ended questions also meant that they could be answered either face-to-face or over the telephone, as well as in an interview or questionnaire format. This was important because it provided elites with as much flexibility as possible in answering the questions, which maximized the response rate. Stephens (2007) rightly argues that telephone interviews can be more time efficient for the interviewer and interviewee, particularly when they are located in different regions. Holt (2010) agrees that telephone interviews are an effective method and she further argues that they should not be seen as a 'second-best' option to face-to-face interviews and in certain circumstances they should be considered as more favourable. One of the obvious advantages of telephone interviews is they are less limited by geography which can help to increase participation. However, cultural differences are more difficult to identify over the telephone and hence Holt (2010) indicates that the context of the research such as the subject group as well as the planned method of data analysis is critical for determining what method should be preferred. When I was conducting research on Chinese management consultants, for example, I felt that it was very important to interview respondents face-to-face rather than over the telephone because given the cultural differences between these elite respondents and me, I wanted to assure them in person that any information they provided me with would be treated both anonymously and confidentially. From my experience, such guarantees are more difficult to convey in less personal settings and therefore can potentially hamper the quality of results.

The literature suggests that respondents tend to provide less detailed responses in a telephone interview than a face-to-face interview (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004) and even less in a questionnaire. However, I decided when designing the method of the project that some data from elite respondents was better than no data. Stephens (2007) initially conducted interviews face-to-face and held subsequent interviews over the telephone. Although I agree that this provides researchers with a more detailed insight and can help improve the confidence of those new to interviewing elites, my own experience was that

many elite respondents would not have been able or willing to speak to me in person. I had great difficulty, for example, arranging a time to speak with one respondent and I finally interviewed him over the telephone when he was on a train between New York and Washington DC. Although I gave a preference for the face-to-face interview, in many instances I found myself conducting a telephone interview at the request of the respondent. Indeed, elite respondents seem to appreciate the flexibility of interviewing over the telephone, which can be rearranged at a lower cost than a face-to-face interview. In many instances, the alternative to a telephone interview was no interview and therefore I would suggest that scholars should be prepared for the possibility of not interviewing some elites in person.

It is not clear from the literature on elites how long is most appropriate for conducting interviews. In part, this is because it depends, among other things, on the characteristics of the interviewer and interviewee, the time, location, as well as the context of the interview. Ostrander (1993) found that her interviews typically lasted an hour and a half. Stephens (2007) also found that an average interview lasted the same amount of time, but the length varied significantly from one interview to another, from nearly three hours to less than one hour. My own experience is that interviews with elite subjects were significantly shorter and often around 45 minutes in length. Surprisingly, there was no significant difference in the length of my average face-to-face interview and my average telephone interview. My interviewees would typically ask their personal assistants to schedule an hour to speak with me, but they expected the interview to be completed in less time. A large number of them also asked, when I was in the process of trying to gain access, how long the interview would take and at the time I judged that I would face a number of refusals to participate if I asked for more than one hour. Conti and O'Neil's (2007: 71) experience of a government official beginning an interview by saying 'What can I tell you in 45 minutes?' is from my experience a typical attitude that many elites adopt in terms of time. Thus, although interviewing elites will vary in length, it is important to strike the right optimistic/realistic balance in order to achieve the best quality data from the most feasible amount of time. In short, asking for too much time might lead to respondents refusing to participate, but asking for too little time might lead to serious limitations in the quality and quantity of data provided by respondents.

In general, academics prefer to record rather than not record interviews because they do not have to focus on writing a lot of information down and can instead focus on conducting the interview. In the case of elite interviews, scholars disagree on whether they should be recorded. Byron (1993) argues that this group are often more relaxed and Peabody et al. (1990) found that people are more likely to talk 'off the record' without a recording device. Aberbach and Rockman (2002), on the other hand, found that few elite members refused to be recorded and most quickly lost any inhibitions through the presence of a recorder. The major advantage of a recording device is that it provides a verbatim script of the interview and the interviewer can focus more on engaging with the respondent (Richards, 1996). I decided not to use a recorder for my doctoral and postdoctoral research because many of my respondents felt uncomfortable with me recording interviews because they typically worked in sectors such as pharmaceuticals and law, which have strict rules for employees about disclosing confidential company information. In addition, my interview questions were quite structured and, as I mentioned

above, included open- and closed-ended questions, which made it considerably easier than purely open-ended questions, for writing down responses accurately. Hence, the benefit of having a verbatim script of the interview did not outweigh the cost of losing potentially important off-the-record information. The problem with not using a recording device is that some qualitative data is lost regardless of how fast researchers can write. It is also more difficult to make observational notes while writing down the responses of interviewees. In short, there is a balance between recording which provides a more detailed record of the interview, but is weaker because of the interviewee's discretion, and writing which provides a weaker description of the interview, but potentially more detailed off-the-record information (Byron, 1993).

Researchers new to interviewing should be conscious of how to cope with difficult interviews. During my doctoral research I was interviewing a CEO of a pharmaceutical company whom I had previously spoken to as part of a pilot study. During the interview he became extremely agitated saying that my questions were 'so vague' and 'not relevant' and his responses to my open-ended questions were extremely short. During the course of this very uncomfortable period I suggested that we continue the interview at another time that was more convenient, but he insisted on finishing the interview. This experience hampered my confidence in my research project and it affected my conduct in a few other subsequent interviews. What I learnt was to take away some positive aspects of the interview. First, the respondent agreed to be contacted again. Second, he provided the details of other elite members whom I could contact which he presumably would not have done if he thought that I would be wasting their time. It also transpired that the company had very recently made a large number of redundancies which was out of my control. However, I should have done my research more thoroughly on the company beforehand so that I could have either rearranged the interview or at the very least had a better idea of the interviewee's context. I also needed to respond better to criticism and have a good reason for why all of my interview questions were significant and relevant. In short, it is important to be thoroughly prepared and not to let an uncomfortable interview hamper one's confidence in a research project as well as one's performance in subsequent interviews.

A challenge for all interviews is asking subjects questions that they might not be at ease answering. Richards (1996) suggests that these types of questions should be posed in the middle of an interview once there has been an opportunity to build some rapport with the interviewee. As a junior researcher, one of the questions that I have found awkward asking elite members is their annual salary because in many cultural contexts this is still considered a very private question. In addition, this question has highlighted the economic disparity between the respondent and me, with several interviewees earning a net annual income in excess of 10 times my net annual income at the time of the fieldwork. I typically tend to start by asking general questions about a respondent's educational or professional background before moving onto more focused and personal questions. Ostrander (1993: 24) suggests that interviewers acknowledge when they have asked an awkward question: 'That's not a question I would ask you if we met socially, but my purposes here are quite different.' Stephens (2007) found that mimicking the supervisor/PhD relationship was effective provided that he moderated the interview closely. This method has the advantage of respondents opening-up and providing candid

answers, but it does lend itself to interviewees having greater scope for veering off from the focus of the research. In summary, when asking potentially difficult questions, it is critical to be aware of the positionality of the participants, the appropriate language to use, as well as being sensitive with the tone of the questions.

Respondents will often advertently or inadvertently not answer the questions asked of them. In particular, and as I mentioned above, many political and business elites receive extensive media training about how to avoid answering questions. In circumstances when respondents have not answered the question, I have politely asked the question again. If they still have not answered the question then I have asked another question and then circled back to the original question (Berry, 2002). At times, respondents have continued not to answer the question, at which point I have taken this as a clear sign that they do not want to answer it and have made a note of this and moved on to other questions with as little fuss as possible. All respondents and elites in particular can often become distracted during an interview through for example their telephone ringing or their personal assistant entering the room. I agree with Dexter (2006) that if a respondent's telephone rings during an interview then it is a good idea to encourage him or her to answer it as it provides an opportunity to catch up on one's notes and gather a clearer picture of the respondent. However, interruptions are only good to a limited extent because from my experience extended or frequent disturbances typically create disjointed and unfocused interviews.

Towards the end of interviews, respondents can start to become tired and less detailed and focused with their responses. To help avoid this, one strategy is to clearly signal to the respondent throughout the interview if the questions are going to address different topics as well as to occasionally state approximately how much longer the questions will take. Elite groups often find it difficult receiving a steady flow of questions because it can be strenuous answering continual questions (Dexter, 2006). I have found it effective mixing-up questions which require longer and shorter responses. In addition, occasionally responding to and commenting on the responses of subjects can provide the latter with a break from speaking. Caution is necessary here because the interviewer should avoid not leading interviewees towards particular responses through interjections. Holt (2010: 118) avoided this problem by using terms such as 'umms', 'ahhs' and 'yes's'. The potential problem with adopting this strategy with elites, who often expect focused interviews, is the researcher runs the risk of giving the impression that he or she is dithering. Having said this, interviewers can employ other words to stimulate greater responses including using encouraging phrases such as 'Really?' or 'Interesting!' (Marshall, 1984). Writing notes rapidly with occasional glances at the interviewee can also encourage more detailed responses (Dexter, 2006). Berry (2002) suggests that maintaining silences can be useful for creating a tension which can lead to more detailed answers. I would suggest that there is a fine balance here because creating long silences can potentially produce an overly awkward atmosphere so much so that respondents feel uncomfortable elaborating on their answers and therefore are also less willing to disclose certain types of information.

At the end of an interview I try to receive some feedback from interviewees. This has not only been important during the pilot stage of research when I have been

looking to clarify and focus my questions, but also in the course of my main fieldwork so that I can gain feedback on what respondents thought about the questions and the interview process. I typically ask if they have any comments, observations or criticisms regarding my research. This is also significant for determining whether there are certain questions or areas of research that have been overlooked which are potentially germane for the study or a follow-up research project. Similarly, Holt (2010: 118) gained some useful 'suggested tips' from respondents about how to improve her narrative interviews. Exchanging business cards is useful, particularly for junior researchers, in raising their status and reducing the power gap between the interviewer and interviewee (Yeung, 1995). It can also increase the likelihood of respondents referring other elite members to interview because they have better access to the researcher's contact details. Having said this, for those researchers conducting telephone interviews, reducing the power gap is more challenging because many social differences are hidden. Gestures such as handshaking, eye contact, body language and exchanging business cards, for example, help to reduce this gap, but are not possible in a telephone interview format (Holt, 2010).

Conclusions

This article has provided a number of guidelines for researchers interviewing elite members and it has drawn upon my own experiences as well as the experiences of more senior scholars in various disciplines within the social sciences. The article has focused on a range of issues related to interviewing elites, including gaining trust and gauging the tone of the interview, how to present oneself in the interview, asking open- and closed-questions, pitching the appropriate length of an interview, whether to record the interview, coping with difficult interviews, asking awkward questions, managing respondents who do not answer the question, keeping respondents interested in the interview and finally gaining feedback from respondents.

All of the above issues are not exclusive to any particular group, but what I have demonstrated is there may be particularities that are exclusive to elites. I have suggested, for example, that elites will often try and control an interview and be more particular about the questions they are willing to answer than other interview subjects. This is important because those new to researching this group may not be aware of these subtle differences from reading a general social science text on conducting interviews. I agree with Smith (2006) that it is problematic to segregate people into simplistic dualisms of 'elites' and 'non-elites' and adopt methodological strategies subsequently. Indeed, there is no doubt that there are: 'an assortment of potential problems which *all* interviewers *may* encounter' (Smith, 2006: 652; original emphasis). Having said this, I would argue that these potential problems, although different from one subject to the next, often have certain general traits depending upon the subject group and therefore our interviewing methods need to be adjusted accordingly. In my experience, for instance, interviews with business elites are often significantly shorter than interviews with other professionals within business. Of course, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to interviewing elite subjects and the research subject, the personality of the interviewer and the interviewee, as well as the

location, time and context of the interview should to a large degree shape individual approaches.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to David Ley, Elaine Ho, Jude Walker, Rupert Younger, Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb and two anonymous reviewers for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I am grateful for the financial support from the Government of Canada's Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program.

References

Aberbach JF and Rockman BA (2002) Conducting and coding elite interviews. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 673–676.

Berry JM (2002) Validity and reliability in elite interviewing. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 679–682.

Bryman A (2004) *Social Research Methods* (2nd Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burt RS (1992) *Structural Holes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Byron M (1993) Using audio-visual aids in geography research: questions of access and responsibility. *Area* 25: 379–385.

Conti JA and O'Neil M (2007) Studying power: qualitative methods and the global elite. *Qualitative Research* 7(1): 63–82.

Creswell JW (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dexter LA (1970) *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Dexter LA (2006) *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*. Colchester: European Consortium for Political Research.

Harvey WS (2010) Methodological approaches for interviewing elites. *Geography Compass* 4(3): 193–205.

Holt A (2010) Using the telephone for narrative interviewing: a research note. *Qualitative Research* 10(1): 113–121.

Marshall C (1984) Elites, bureaucrats, ostriches, and pussycats: managing research in policy settings. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 15(3): 235–251.

McDowell L (1998) Elites in the city of London: some methodological considerations. *Environment and Planning A* 30: 2133–2146.

Ostrander SA (1993) Surely you're not in this just to be helpful. Access, rapport, and interviews in three studies of elites. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(1): 7–27.

Parry B (1998) Hunting the gene-hunters: the role of hybrid networks, status, and chance in conceptualising and accessing 'corporate elites'. *Environment and Planning A* 30: 2147–2162.

Peabody RL, Hammond SW, Torcom J, Brown LP, Thompson C and Kolodny R (1990) Interviewing political elites. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23: 451–455.

Richards D (1996) Elite interviewing: approaches and pitfalls. *Politics* 16(3): 199–204.

Rivera SW, Kozyreva PM and Sarovskii EG (2002) Interviewing political elites: lessons from Russia. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 683–688.

Silverman D (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (3rd Edition). London: Sage.

Smith KE (2006) Problematising power relations in 'elite' interviews. *Geoforum* 37: 643–653.

Stephens N (2007) Collecting data from elites and ultra elites: telephone and face-to-face interviews with macoeconomists. *Qualitative Research* 7(2): 203–216.

Sturges JE and Hanrahan KJ (2004) Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: a research note. *Qualitative Research* 4(1): 107–118.

Yeung HWC (1995) Qualitative personal interviews in international business research: some lessons from a study of Hong Kong transnational corporations. *International Business Review* 4(3): 313–339.

Woods M (1998) Rethinking elites: networks, space, and local politics. *Environment and Planning* A: 2101–2119.

Zuckerman HA (1972) Interviewing an ultra-elite. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36: 159–175.

William Harvey is a Lecturer in the Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies at The University of Sydney Business School and an associate fellow in the Centre for Corporate Reputation at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. His current research focuses on how global professional service firms measure and manage their reputations amongst stakeholders in different countries. His other research interests surround international talent and in particular what mechanisms drive highly skilled professionals to move abroad.