



AI INTERVIEWING HAS POTENTIAL – SCALABILITY, REACH, REPRODUCIBILITY, CAUSALITY

Qualitative approach: These procedures approach the stakeholders and their stories as far as possible without preconceived templates, to remain open to emerging and unexpected changes in respondents' causal landscapes.

Scalability and reach: The AI's ability to communicate in many languages and even to switch languages presents an opportunity to reach more places and people, subject to internet access and the AI's fluency in less common languages, and to include representative samples of populations.

The interview and coding processes are machine-driven and use zero temperature, so this approach should be mostly reproducible. Reproducibility opens the possibility of comparing results across groups, places and timepoints.

The low cost of gathering and coding large amounts of information means that it is much easier to develop, compare and discard hypotheses and coding approaches, something which qualitative researchers have previously been understandably reluctant to do.

Qualitative causality: These procedures have the potential to help evaluators answer evaluation questions which are often causal in nature, like: understanding stakeholders' mental models; judging whether "their" ToC matches "ours"; investigating "how things work" for different subgroups of stakeholders; tracing impact from mentions of "our" intervention to outcomes of interest; triaging the key outcomes in stakeholders' perspectives.

In summary, this kind of semi-automated pipeline opens up possibilities for monitoring, evaluation and social research which were unimaginable just three years ago and are well suited to today's challenging, complex problems like climate change and political and social polarisation. Previously, only quantitative research claimed to produce generalisable knowledge about social phenomena validly and at scale, by turning meaning into numbers. Now perhaps qualitative research will eclipse quantitative research by bypassing quantification and dealing with meaning directly, in somewhat generalisable ways.