FOURTH EDITION

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

BRUCE L. BERG

FOURTH EDITION

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

BRUCE L. BERG

California State University, Long Beach

51111-23

ALLYN AND BACON

Boston • London • Toronto • Sydney • Tokyo • Singapore

Series Editor: Sarah L. Kelbaugh
Editor in Chief, Social Sciences: Karen Hanson
Editorial Assistant: Lori Flickinger
Editorial-Production Administrator: Annette Joseph
Editorial-Production Coordinator: Susan Freese
Editorial-Production Service and Electronic Composition: Karen Mason
Composition Buyer: Linda Cox
Manufacturing Buyer: Julie McNeill
Cover Administrator: Jenny Hart
Cover Designer: Suzanne Harbison

Copyright © 2001,1998,1995,1989 by Allyn & Bacon
A Pearson Education Company
160 Gould Street
Needham Heights, MA 02494
Internet: www.abacon.com

AH rights reserved. No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the copyright owner.

Between the time website information is gathered and then published, it is not unusual for some sites to have closed. Also, the transcription of URLs can result in unintended typographical errors. The publisher would appreciate being notified of any problems with URLs so that they may be corrected in subsequent editions. Thank you.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Berg, Bruce Lawrence
Qualitative research methods for the social sciences / Bruce L. Berg. —- 4th ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-205-31847-9
1. Social sciences—Research—Methodology. I. Title

H61 .B4715 2000
300'.7'2—dc21
00-023770

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 05 04 03 02

CONTENTS

Preface xiii

CHAPTER 1
Introduction 1

QUANTITATIVE VERSUS QUALITATIVE SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT 2
USE OF TRIANGULATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 4
QUALITATIVE STRATEGIES: DEFINING AN ORIENTATION 6
FROM A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONS PERSPECTIVE 8
WHY USE QUALITATIVE METHODS? 10
A PLAN OF PRESENTATION 11
REFERENCES 12

CHAPTER 2
Designing Qualitative Research 15

THEORY AND CONCEPTS 15
IDEAS AND THEORY 16
LITERATURE REVIEW 19
The Two-Card Method 21
FRAMING RESEARCH PROBLEMS 24
OPERATIONALIZATION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION 25
DESIGNING PROJECTS 28
Setting and Population Appropriateness 29
Sampling Strategies 30
DATA COLLECTION AND ORGANIZATION 33
Data Storage, Retrieval, and Analysis 35
DISSEMINATION 36

TRYING IT OUT 37

REFERENCES 37

CHAPTER 3
Ethical Issues 39

RESEARCH ETHICS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE 40

FROM GUIDELINES TO LAW: REGULATIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS 44

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS (IRBs) 45
IRBs and Their Duties 46
Clarifying the Role of IRBs 48
Active versus Passive Consent 50
Membership Criteria for IRBs 51

ETHICAL CODES 52

SOME COMMON ETHICAL CONCERNS IN BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH 53

PHYSICAL AND ETHICAL DANGERS IN COVERT RESEARCH 54

INFORMED CONSENT AND IMPLIED CONSENT 56

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY 57
Keeping Identifying Records 58
Strategies for Safeguarding Confidentiality 58

SECURING THE DATA 59

OBJECTIVITY AND CAREFUL RESEARCH DESIGN 60

TRYING IT OUT 62

REFERENCES 63

CHAPTER 4
A Dramaturgical L°ok at Interviewing 66

DRAMATURGY AND INTERVIEWING 67

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS 68
The standardized Interview 69
The Unstandardized Interview 69

The Semistandardized Interview 70

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 72

SCHEDULE DEVELOPMENT 74
Question Order, Content, and Style 74

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY 77

A FEW COMMON PROBLEMS IN QUESTION FORMULATION 78
Affectively Worded Questions 78
The Double-Barreled Question 79
Complex Questions 79
Question Sequencing 79

PRETESTING THE SCHEDULE 80

LONG VERSUS SHORT INTERVIEWS 80

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS 82

CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW: A NATURAL OR AN UNNATURAL COMMUNICATION? 84

THE DRAMATURGICAL INTERVIEW 85
Interviewer Roles and Rapport 86
The Interviewer as a Self-Conscious Performer 89
Social Interpretations and the Interviewer 90

THE INTERVIEWER'S REPERTOIRE 93
Interviewers' Attitudes and Persuading a Subject 95
Developing an Interviewer Repertoire 96
Techniques to Get New Researchers Started 97
Taking the Show on the Road 98
The Ten Commandments of Interviewing 99

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE 100
Curtain Calls 101

ANALYZING DATA OBTAINED FROM THE DRAMATURGICAL INTERVIEW 102
Beginning an Analysis 103
Systematic Filing Systems 103
Short-Answer Sheets 105

Analysis Procedures: A Concluding Remark 105

TRYING IT OUT 105

NOTES 107

REFERENCES 107

CHAPTER 5
Focus Group Interviewing 111

WHAT ARE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS? **111**

THE EVOLUTION OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS **112**

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWING **114**
- Focus Group Interviewing and Face-to-Face Interviewing 115
- Focus Group Interviewing and Participant Observation 117
- Focus Group Interviewing and Unobtrusive Measures 118

FACILITATING FOCUS GROUPS DYNAMICS: HOW FOCUS GROUPS WORK **120**

THE MODERATOR'S GUIDE 121
- Introduction and Introductory Activities 121
- Statement of the Basic Rules or Guidelines for the Interview 122
- Short Question-and-Answer Discussions 122
- Special Activities or Exercises 122
- Guidance for Dealing with Sensitive Issues 123

BASIC INGREDIENTS IN FOCUS GROUPS **123**

CONFIDENTIALITY AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS **127**

RECENT TRENDS IN FOCUS GROUPS **129**

CONCLUSION **130**

TRYING IT OUT **130**

NOTES **130**

REFERENCES **131**

CHAPTER 6
Ethnographic Field Strategies 133

ACCESSING A FIELD SETTING: GETTING IN **136**

REFLECTIVITY AND ETHNOGRAPHY **139**
- The Attitude of the Ethnographer 139
- The Researcher's Voice 140
- Gaining Entry 144

BECOMING INVISIBLE **147**
- Dangers of Invisibility 148
- A New Problem in Data Protection: The Case of Mario Brajuha 150

OTHER DANGERS DURING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH **151**

WATCHING, LISTENING, AND LEARNING 153
- How to Learn: What to Watch and Listen For 155
- Field Notes 158
- Analyzing Ethnographic Data 164

OTHER ANALYSIS STRATEGIES: TYPOLOGIES, SOCIOGRAMS, AND METAPHORS 165
- Typologies 166
- Sociograms 167
- Metaphors 171

DISENGAGING: GETTING OUT **171**

TRYING IT OUT **173**

NOTE **173**

REFERENCES 173

CHAPTER 7
Action Research 178

THE BASICS OF ACTION RESEARCH 180

IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH QUESTION(S) **181**

GATHERING THE INFORMATION TO ANSWER THE QUESTION(S) **182**

ANALYZING AND INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION 182
- Procedures for Using Interview and Ethnographic Data 183
- Guiding Questions of Analysis: Why, What, How, Who, Where, When? 183
- Descriptive Accounts and Reports 184

SHARING THE RESULTS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS 184

THE ACTION RESEARCHER'S ROLE 185

TYPES OF ACTION RESEARCH 185
- Technical/Scientific/Collaborative Mode 186
- A Practical/Mutual Collaborative/Deliberate Mode 186

Emancipating/Enhancing/Critical Science Mode 187

TRYING IT OUT 187

REFERENCES 188

CHAPTER 8

Unobtrusive Measures **in** Research **189**

ARCHIVAL STRATEGIES **190**
Public Archives 191
Private Archives: Solicited and Unsolicited Documents 200
A Last Remark about Archival Records 203

PHYSICAL EROSION AND ACCRETION:
HUMAN TRACES AS DATA SOURCES **203**
Erosion Measures 203
Accretion Measures 204

Some Final Remarks about Physical Traces 205

TRYING IT OUT **206**

REFERENCES **207**

CHAPTER 9

Historiography and Oral Traditions 210

WHAT IS HISTORICAL RESEARCH? 210

LIFE HISTORIES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY 213

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF DATA OF HISTORICAL RESEARCHERS? 214

DOING HISTORIOGRAPHY:
TRACING WRITTEN HISTORY AS DATA 214
External Criticism 216
Internal Criticism 218

WHAT ARE ORAL HISTORIES? 219

TRYING IT OUT 222

REFERENCES 222

CHAPTER 10

Case Studies 225

THE NATURE OF CASE STUDIES 225

THE INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY 226
The Use of Interview Data 226
The Use of Personal Documents 227

INTRINSIC, INSTRUMENTAL, AND COLLECTIVE CASE STUDIES 229

CASE STUDY DESIGN TYPES 229
Exploratory Case Studies 230
Explanatory Case Studies 230
Descriptive Case Studies 230

THE SCIENTIFIC BENEFIT OF CASE STUDIES 231
Objectivity and the Case Method 231
Generalizability 232

CASE STUDIES OF ORGANIZATIONS 233

CASE STUDIES OF COMMUNITIES 233
Data Collection for Community Case Studies 234
Community Groups and Interests 235

TRYING IT OUT 236

REFERENCES 236

CHAPTER 11

An Introduction to Content Analysis 238

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA 238
Interpretative Approaches 239
Social Anthropological Approaches 239
Collaborative Social Research Approaches 240

CONTENT ANALYSIS AS A TECHNIQUE 240

CONTENT ANALYSIS: QUANTITATIVE OR QUALITATIVE? 241
Manifest versus Latent Content Analysis 242
Blending Manifest and Latent Content Analysis Strategies 243

COMMUNICATION COMPONENTS 243

WHAT TO COUNT: LEVELS AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS 244

CATEGORY DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING GROUNDED THEORY 245
- What to Count 246
- Combinations of Elements 247
- Units and Categories 248
- Classes and Categories 250

OPEN CODING 251

CODING FRAMES 253
- A Few More Words on Analytic Induction 255
- Interrogative Hypothesis Testing 256

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS PROCESS 258

COMPUTERS AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS 259
- Word Processors 261
- Text Retrievers 261
- Textbase Managers 261
- Code-and-Retrieve Programs 262
- Code-Based Theory Builders 262
- Conceptual Network Builders 262

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT 263

TRYING IT OUT 265

REFERENCES 265

CHAPTER 12

Writing Research Papers: Sorting the Noodles from the Soup 268

IDENTIFYING THE PURPOSE OF THE WRITING: ARRANGING THE NOODLES 268

DELINEATING A SUPPORTIVE STRUCTURE: VISUAL SIGNALS FOR THE READER 269
- The Abstract 271
- The Introduction 273
- Literature Review 273
- Methodology 275

- Findings or Results 276
- Discussion/Conclusion 277
- References, Notes, and Appendices 278

PRESENTING RESEARCH MATERIAL 280
- Disseminating the Research:
- Professional Meetings and Publications 280

A WORD ABOUT THE CONTENT OF PAPERS AND ARTICLES 284

WRITE IT, REWRITE IT, THEN WRITE IT AGAIN! 284

A FINAL NOTE 286

NOTES 287

REFERENCES 287

Name Index 289

Subject Index 296

PREFACE

In this, the fourth edition of *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences,* my goal remains identical to that of previous editions: to offer a handbook for anyone interested in but unfamiliar with qualitative research methods. I continue to envision that this book will be used along with more general quantitative texts traditionally used in a research methods course as well as a stand-alone core text in courses on qualitative methods. Since the 1980s, the social sciences have developed a much more encompassing orientation toward research and have embraced qualitative techniques and texts in general research courses. This book, as a supplement to other methods texts, offers students a basic look at qualitative research techniques and analytic strategies in a clear-cut fashion. As a stand-alone text, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* offers students a solid grounding in many of the mainstream orientations commonly used in qualitative research today.

In this edition, I have revised material in the text and focused greater attention on methodological rigor. The research style presented in this edition remains chiefly sociological. The application of data-gathering and data-analytic strategies, however, is not designed exclusively for students of sociology or for sociologists. In fact, an increasing number of my readers have come from the disciplines of English, nursing, education, social work, and business, besides the more traditional social sciences such as psychology, anthropology, and criminology.

The book's central purpose remains a desire to instruct inexperienced researchers in ways of effectively collecting, organizing, and making sense from qualitative data. This edition also seeks to demystify the research process. I believe that what makes the research process frightening for many is a fear of the unknown. When novice researchers learn how a process or technique works, it becomes comfortable, relaxed, and dare I say it—easy!

In keeping with my general pedagogical style, this edition of the book moves readers beyond the point of collecting data without knowing what to do with it. The goal is to get fledgling researchers to design, collect, and analyze data and then to present their results to the scientific community. This fourth edition continues to focus on current issues in the world of researchers, which include a serious concern about ethical behavior and protocols in research and a more reflexive and sensitive role for the researcher. Unlike many research texts, which place ethics in the last chapter, creating the subliminal image of ethics being less important than other elements in research, I have placed the discussion of ethics in the third chapter. My intention in doing so is to impress upon new researchers the importance of ethical concerns before they actually begin the research collection, organization, and analytic processes.

As in previous editions of this book, I emphasize a more reflexive researcher role and recognize the benefits of this orientation. In several places throughout this text, researcher reflexivity and researcher voice are explained and discussed. In fact, the use of the first person (I, *my*, etc.), which I began using in the second edition of this book, is a small example of my more reflexive researcher's role and voice. The orientation offered in this text does not fully embrace all elements of reflexivity but discusses several of the basic elements associated with this position. This is particularly true in the newly added Chapter 7, Action Research, which discusses how the researcher may collaborate with shareholding subjects in the research.

As something of a traditionalist, I continue to believe that researchers learn their craft through a combination of trial and error and "getting their hands dirty" with data. I also believe this process works best when guided by a more experienced researcher—a mentor. Yet even this approach works more effectively when the apprentice has a firm understanding of the basic elements of the research process. This book is designed especially for accomplishing this purpose.

As has been true in each of the previous editions of this book, my personal bias as a symbolic interactionist guides my choices and explanations. Once again, I admit that all the techniques presented have been grounded in that theoretical approach. However, I continue to believe that the various techniques and strategies offered in this book can be equally effective when grounded in other theoretical perspectives. Inexperienced researchers should thus take my presentation as suggestions and recommendations toward establishing a research foundation and not as the only methodological orientation available to them.

Finally, it is my deepest hope that after reading this book, students will think about research in a positive and even playful manner. Research can be extremely enjoyable when undertaken in the proper frame of mind. Even a trip to Disneyland can be ruined if you focus too much on the costs, the congested traffic, or the long lines. Many people go to Disneyland and never even notice these inconveniences. Research can be like a trip to Disneyland: It can be exciting, interesting, and rewarding. But first, you must open your heart and mind to the research process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks go to my family: my wife, Jill, and our two children, Kate and Alex. Their ongoing support while writing this and other projects—as well as in life—give me sustenance and strength. I continue to owe a debt of gratitude to my students, who provide regular feedback on material in this book and keep me grounded. I thank them again for their honesty, their patience, and their instruction.

I am also grateful to Kristen Esterberg, University of Massachusetts at Lowell; Daniel J. Klenow, North Dakota State University; Stephen Sweet, Cornell University; and Jean Thoresen, Eastern Connecticut State University—readers and users of this book who provided constructive criticism as I set about revising this fourth edition. I remain indebted to Peter Adler, University of Denver; Robert Benford, University of Nebraska; Thomas G. Bloomberg, Florida State University; and James A. Pearsol, The Ohio State University, who reviewed earlier drafts of this book for Allyn and Bacon. Finally, I would like to thank Walter DeKeseredy, who for the past several editions has quietly offered me insightful constructive criticism.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many books discuss a variety of social scientific research methods; thus, you may reasonably question why anyone would bother writing another text. However, a close examination reveals that although a great many texts have been written about such abstract concerns as research design and sophisticated statistical procedures for tabulating quantitative data, few books have concentrated on how to do qualitative research and analysis.

Several fundamental texts were in vogue during the late 1960s and 1970s, but now many of these classic qualitative texts have been permitted to go out of print (such as Becker, 1970; Bogdan, 1972; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Denzin, 1978; Filstead, 1970; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979; Webb et al., 1966,1981). During the 1980s, several publishers began pressing books with qualitative orientations. Sage Publishing is responsible for a great many of these works. For example, they developed a string of short works called the *Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods.* By 1989, the year the first edition of this text was published by Allyn and Bacon, Sage had published 16 books in their *Qualitative Research Series.* Also in 1989, Sage came out with several slightly lengthier works on qualitative methods in their *Applied Social Research Methods Series* (e.g., Denzin, 1989; Fetterman, 1989; Jorgensen, 1989).

A flutter of other qualitative reference works on methods arose during the 1980s (e.g., Berg, 1989; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1989; Van Maanen, 1988). Yet, even with these spurts of qualitative research material, a decided imbalance remains in the literature on research methods in the academic community. While many quantitatively oriented research texts are published each year, only a few qualitative textbooks are available.

Ethnography saw a resurgence of sorts during the early 1980s, especially among educational researchers (e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Dobbert, 1982; Spindler, 1982). However, often these books, like those published in the various Sage series, were limited to single techniques. In 1987, Anselm Strauss produced an excellent text on qualitative analysis, and by the 1990s, an increased number of qualitative handbooks and sourcebooks became available. Some of the more notable ones included

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Weitzman and Miles (1995). Yet, many of these begin with the tacit assumption that data already have been collected or that the researcher at least knows how to go about the task of gathering data.

In contrast, this text focuses on innovative ways of collecting and analyzing qualitative data from natural settings, which are characterized by mainstream strategies, even though various dynamic—perhaps even radical—qualitative innovations have emerged during the past several decades. But rather than offering glossy definitions for these strategies or confusing novice researchers with simplified versions, this text concentrates on basic procedures.

QUANTITATIVE VERSUS QUALITATIVE SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

As Dabbs (1982) remarks, "Qualitative and quantitative are not distinct." Yet in many social sciences, quantitative orientations are often given more respect. This may reflect the tendency of the general public to regard science as related to numbers and implying precision. It is not the purpose of this text to argue against quantitative procedures; it is, instead, to demonstrate the fruitfulness and, often, the greater depth of understanding we can derive from qualitative procedures. Thus, the orientation of this book does not entirely either embrace or reject Kaplan's (1964, p. 206) statement that "if you can measure it, that ain't it!"

Certainly, qualitative methodologies have not predominated in the social sciences. After all, qualitative research takes much longer, requires greater clarity of goals during design stages, and cannot be analyzed by running computer programs. Qualitative research methods and analytic strategies are not associated with high-tech society in the ways quantitative techniques may be. Nonetheless, as Bogdan (1972) makes clear, qualitative research has left its mark conceptually and theoretically on the social sciences. The lasting contributions to social understanding from qualitative research, as well as the sheer number of contributing social thinkers, are significant.

Even though the virtue of qualitative research is seldom questioned in the abstract, its practice is sometimes criticized for being nonscientific and thus invalid. However, these critics tended to lose sight of the probability factor inherent in quantitative practices and replaced it with an assumption of certainty. Of course, some qualitative research projects have been just as poorly conducted as have some quantitative studies, but one need not dismiss the entire qualitative school of thought just because some studies inadequately applied the paradigm and methods.

In his attempt to differentiate between quantitative and qualitative approaches, Dabbs (1982, p. 32) indicates that the notion of *quality* is essential to the nature of things. On the other hand, *quantity* is elementally an amount

of something. Quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing-its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things. This distinction is illustrated in Jackson's (1968) description of classroom odors in an elementary school:

> [The] odors of the classroom are fairly standardized. Schools may use different brands of wax and cleaning fluid, but they all seem to contain similar ingredients, a sort of universal smell which creates an aromatic background that permeates the entire building. Added to this, in each classroom, is the slightly acrid scent of chalk dust and the faint hint of fresh wood pencil shavings. In some rooms, especially at lunch time, there is the familiar odor of orange peels and peanut butter sandwiches, a blend that mingles in the late afternoon (following recess) with the delicate pungency of children's perspiration.

It would be impossible to capture the odors that Jackson alludes to with any type of count or measure. Clearly, certain experiences cannot be meaningfully expressed by numbers. Further, such things as smells can trigger memories long obscured by the continuing demands of life. Qualitative research strategies provide perspectives that can prompt recall of these common or half-forgotten sights, sounds, and smells.

Some authors associate qualitative research with the single technique of participant observation. Other writers extend their understanding of qualitative research to include interviewing as well. However, popular qualitative research additionally includes such methods as observation of experimental natural settings, photographic techniques (including videotaping), historical analysis (historiography), document and textual analysis, sociometry, sociodrama and similar ethnomethodological experimentation, ethnographic research, and a number of unobtrusive techniques.

American colleges have become pragmatic places where students train to get jobs rather than to obtain educations. As a consequence, students and graduates of social science programs increasingly use the research of others and/or conduct research themselves. Thus, students must confront the myriad problems associated with understanding empirical results as well as the process of research itself. This book provides much needed assistance for all researchers, including the inexperienced, through a discussion of various qualitative research strategies, design development, data organization and presentation, and analysis procedures.

Like other texts on qualitative methods, this one emphasizes methodological strategies. However, methodology cannot be examined in a vacuum. Instead, the core substance of qualitative sociological practice, including methods, theory, and substantive interests, has to be explored (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Denzin, 1978; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Miles & Huberman,

1994). In this text, data-gathering techniques are intentionally coupled with theoretical perspectives, linking method to theory. Data gathering, therefore, is not distinct from theoretical orientations. Rather, data are intricately associated with the motivation for choosing a given subject, the conduct of the study, and ultimately the analysis.

Advocates of such particular methodological styles of research as participant observation are frequently more concerned with asserting or defending their techniques than with indicating alternative ways of approaching the study subject. In contrast, this book describes in detail seven primary ways to collect qualitative data: interviewing, focus groups, ethnography, sociometry, unobtrusive measures, historiography, and case studies. These action research include an examination of the basic theoretical assumptions of each technique and advice on how to start each procedure and how to resolve problems that may arise. In addition, the technique of content analysis is related to grounded theory and the use of narrative ethnographies. This book also considers the ethical dimensions of conducting research on humans.

This fourth edition of *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* begins with the assumption that the reader knows little or nothing about the research process. Chapter 2, therefore, offers a basic description of how to design a research project.

USE OF TRIANGULATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Most researchers have at least one methodological technique they feel most comfortable using, which often becomes their favorite or only approach to research. This might be why many previous qualitative research texts presented only a single research technology (participant observation, interviewing, or unobtrusive measures). Further, many researchers perceive their research method as an atheoretical tool (Denzin, 1978). Because of this, they fail to recognize that methods impose certain perspectives on reality. For example, when researchers canvass a neighborhood and arrange interviews with residents to discuss their views of some social problem, a theoretical assumption has already been made—specifically, that reality is fairly constant and stable. Similarly, when they make direct observations of events, researchers assume reality is deeply affected by the actions of all participants, including themselves. Each method thus reveals slightly different facets of the same symbolic reality. Every method is a different line of sight directed toward the same point, observing social and symbolic reality. By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements. The use of multiple lines of sight is frequently called *triangulation.*

Triangulation is a term originally more common in surveying activities, map making, navigation, and military practices. In each case, three known

points or objects are used to draw sighting lines toward an unknown point or object. Usually, these three sighting lines will intersect, forming a small triangle called the *triangle of error.* The best estimate of the true location of the new point or object is the center of the triangle, assuming that the three lines are about equal in error. Although sightings could be done with two sighting lines intersecting at one point, the third line permits a more accurate estimate of the unknown point or object (Berg & Berg, 1993).

Triangulation was first used in the social sciences as a metaphor describing a form of *multiple operationalism* or *convergent validation* (Campbell, 1956; Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In these cases, triangulation was used largely to describe multiple data-collection technologies designed to measure a single concept or construct (data triangulation). However, Denzin (1978, p. 292) introduced an additional metaphor, *lines of action,* which characterizes the use of multiple data-collection technologies, multiple theories, multiple researchers, multiple methodologies, or combinations of these four categories of research activities.

For many researchers, triangulation is restricted to the use of multiple data-gathering techniques (usually three) to investigate the same phenomenon. This is interpreted as a means of mutual confirmation of measures and validation of findings flick, 1983; Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989; Leedy, 1993; Mitchell, 1986; Sohier, 1988; Webb et al., 1981). Fielding and Fielding (1986, p. 31) specifically address this aspect of triangulation. They suggest that the important feature of triangulation is not the simple combination of different kinds of data but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each.

Denzin (1978) insists that the multiple-methods approach is the generic form of this approach. But triangulation actually represents varieties of data, investigators, theories, and methods. Denzin (1978, p. 295) outlines these four categories as follows:

> (1) Data triangulation has three subtypes: (a) time, (b) space, and (c) person. Person analysis, in turn, has three levels: (a) aggregate, (b) interactive, and (c) collectivity. (2) Investigator triangulation consists of using multiple rather than single observers of the same object. (3) Theory triangulation consists of using multiple rather than simple perspectives in relation to the same set of objects. (4) Methodological triangulation can entail within-method triangulation and between-method triangulation.

The research literature continues to support Denzin's (1970,1978) recommendation to triangulate during research. For example, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) describe its use as a means of refining, broadening, and strengthening conceptual linkages. Borman, LeCompte, and Goetz (1986) similarly stress that triangulation allows researchers to offer perspectives other than their own. Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias (1996, p. 206) suggest that ^searchers can "minimize the degree of specificity of certain methods to

particular bodies of knowledge," by using "two or more methods of data collection to test hypotheses and measure variables; this is the essence of triangulation." Unfortunately, the practice of triangulation often does not move much beyond a single theoretical explanation or an alternative hypothesis (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Hammersley, 1984). This cursory use of the triangulation strategy fails to capture the essence of what Denzin (1978, p. 28) describes as the "logic of triangulation":

> I conclude that no single method will ever meet the requirements of interaction theory. While participant observation permits the careful recording of situations and selves, it does not offer direct data on the wider spheres of influence acting on those observed. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed. This is termed triangulation.

In a manner similar to those of Denzin (1978) and Webb et al. (1981), this book stresses several discrete yet intertwined strategies and techniques involved in each of the seven primary research schemes. In fact, the decision to discuss field research strategies under the broad umbrella of *ethnography* ensures the inclusion of a wide combination of elements, such as direct observation, various types of interviewing (informal, formal, semiformal), listening, document analysis (e.g., letters or newspaper clippings), and ethnomethodological experimentation. Spradely (1979) calls this creating "an ethnographic record." Novice researchers are thus instructed in the use of research strategies composed of multiple methods in a single investigation. Denzin (1978, p. 101) also suggests that triangulation includes multiple data-collection procedures, multiple theoretical perspectives, and/or multiple analysis techniques. The use of multiple research-design strategies and theories increases the depth of understanding an investigation can yield (see also Janesick, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1983).

QUALITATIVE STRATEGIES: DEFINING AN ORIENTATION

A simplistic explanation of qualitative techniques might lead researchers to believe in the adequacy of any procedure resulting in nominal rather than numerical sorts of data. Such an assessment, however, fails to appreciate both the theoretical implications of qualitative research and the basic purpose of scientific research in general. We do not conduct research only to amass data. The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures.

Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers, then, are most interested in how humans arrange

themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth.

Research methods on human beings affect how these persons will be viewed (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). If humans are studied in a symbolically reduced, statistically aggregated fashion, there is a danger that conclusions—although arithmetically precise—may fail to fit reality (Mills, 1959). Qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to or people represented by their personal traces (such as letters, photographs, newspaper accounts, diaries, and so on). As a result, qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Researchers using qualitative techniques examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others.

As Douglas (1976, p. 12) suggests, the methods used by social scientists fall along a continuum from totally uncontrolled (and perhaps uncontrollable) techniques arising in natural settings to totally controlled techniques of observation. It remains, then, for researchers to choose their procedures keeping in mind the problems that may arise in specific research settings among certain research groups and in unique research circumstances. The analysis of qualitative data allows researchers to discuss in detail the various social contours and processes human beings use to create and maintain their social realities.

This is not to suggest that qualitative methods are without methodological rigor. In fact, good qualitative research can be very rigorous. As will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, qualitative methods can (and should) be extremely systematic and have the ability to be reproduced by subsequent researchers. Replication and reproducibility, after all, are central to the creation and testing of theories and their acceptance by scientific communities.

In some methodological situations, this may include the use of various descriptive or nonparametric statistics (frequency distributions, proportions, ratios, chi-square, etc.). On the other hand, the orientation presented in this text should not be understood as intentionally promoting stark positivism. Rather, the intention is to offer an introductory level of information developing and conducting high-quality qualitative research. From my perspective, this means research that can stand the test of subsequent researchers examining the same phenomenon through similar or different methods.

Theoretically, this explanation of the general purpose of qualitative research derives from a symbolic interactionist perspective that is central to the concept of qualitative methodology presented here. *Symbolic interaction* is an umbrella concept under which a variety of related theoretical orientations may be placed. The theme that unites the diverse elements of symbolic interaction is the focus on subjective understandings and the perceptions of and about people, symbols, and objects.

FROM A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

Symbolic interactionism is one of several theoretical schools of thought in the social sciences. It involves a set of related propositions that describe and explain certain aspects of human behavior. Human beings are unique animals. What humans say and do are the results of how they interpret their social world. In other words, human behavior depends on learning rather than biological instinct. Human beings communicate what they learn through symbols, the most common system of symbols being language. Linguistic symbols amount to arbitrary sounds or physical gestures to which people, by mutual agreement over time, have attached significance or meaning. The core task of symbolic interactionists as researchers, then, is to capture the essence of this process for interpreting or attaching meaning to various symbols.

The substantive basis for symbolic interaction as a theory is frequently attributed to the social behavioral work of Dewey (1930), Cooley (1902), Parks (1915), Mead (1934,1938), and several other early theorists, but Blumer is considered the founder of *symbolic interactionism*. In fact, he coined the term symbolic interaction. In articulating his view of what symbolic interaction is, Blumer (1969) first establishes that human beings account for *meaning* in two basic ways. First, meaning may be seen as intrinsically attached to an object, event, phenomenon, and so on. Second, meaning may be understood as a "psychical accretion" imposed on objects, events, and the like by people. Blumer (1969, p. 5) next explains:

> Symbolic interactionism . . . does not regard meaning as emanating from the intrinsic makeup of the thing, nor does it see meaning as arising through psychological elements between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person; thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products formed through activities of people interacting.

Blumer thereby suggests that meanings derive from the social process of people or groups of people interacting. Meanings allow people to produce various realities that constitute the sensory world (the so-called real world), but because these realities are related to how people create meanings, reality becomes an interpretation of various definitional options. Consequently, as Thomas states, "It is not important whether or not the interpretation is correct. If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Swaine, 1928, p. 572).

For instance, the first day of each semester, students walk into their classroom and see someone who appears to be the professor. This supposed professor begins to lecture, distribute syllabi, discuss course requirements, and conduct various other traditional first-day activities. Few, if any, students ask to see the professor's credentials. Yet the students, within certain limits, perform their roles as students so long as this professor continues to perform the role of instructor. Suppose that several weeks into the semester, however, the class is notified that the person they assumed to be a professor is really a local dog catcher who has no academic credentials. The question then becomes whether the reality of the classroom experience during the previous weeks is void merely because the dog catcher was incorrectly interpreted as a professor. Although it would remain to be seen whether any information conveyed by the dog catcher was accurate, certainly, the classroom remained a classroom and students continued to perform their expected roles. From Thomas's perspective, these youths had defined the reality as a class, and it became one for them.

Symbolic interactionists tend to differ slightly among themselves regarding the relative significance of various aspects of an interactionist perspective. Several basic elements, however, tend to bind together even the most diverse symbolic interactionists. First, all interactionists agree that human interactions form the central source of data. Second, there is a general consensus that participants' perspectives and their ability to take the roles of others (empathy) are key issues in any formulation of a theory of symbolic interaction. Third, interactionists agree with Thomas (Thomas & Swaine, 1928) concerning "definitions of a situation": How inhabitants of a setting define their situation determines the nature and meaning of their actions as well as the setting itself.

Objects, people, situations, and events do not in themselves possess meaning. Meaning is conferred on these elements by and through human interaction. For example, the videocassette recorder (VCR) in a college classroom may be defined by the professor as a teaching device to be used for showing educational videos. For the student using a VCR in his or her dormitory to view rented movies, this instrument may be seen as a source of entertainment and pleasure, and for the inmate held in a maximum security prison who watches home movies sent from his or her family, it may be considered a window to the outside world. The meanings that people attach to their experiences and the objects and events that make up these experiences are not accidental or unconnected. Both the experiences and the events surrounding them are essential to the construction of meanings. To understand behavior, one must first understand the definitions and meanings and the processes by which they have been created. Human behavior does not occur on the basis of predetermined lockstep responses to preset events or situations. Rather, human behavior is an ongoing and negotiated interpretation of objects, events, and situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For the researcher to understand the meanings that emerge from these interactions, he or she either must enter into the defining process or develop a sufficient appreciation for the process so that understandings can become clear.

Although social roles, institutional structures, rules, norms, goals, and the like may provide the raw material with which individuals create their def-

initions, these elements do not by themselves determine what the definitions will be or how individuals will act. In essence, symbolic interactionism emphasizes social interactions (action with symbolic meaning), negotiation of definitions, and emphatic role-taking between humans (Gecas, 1981; Turner, 1978).

WHY USE QUALITATIVE METHODS?

Many researchers believe that the social sciences have depended too much on sterile survey techniques, regardless of whether the technology is appropriate for the problem. For instance, nurses, when encouraged to do research at all, are strongly urged to use scientific strategies of quantification over more sociologically or anthropologically oriented ones considered less scientific. Unfortunately, clinical settings in which nurses are likely to conduct their research fail to meet most quantitative requirements for representativeness and sufficiency of sample size to allow statistically meaningful results.

For instance, let us say the average number of beds in a critical care unit varies between 8 and 12. Even when there are multiple units (such as in a medical intensive care unit or a cardiac intensive care unit), typically fewer than 40 cases are available at any given time. With regard to research strategy, such a situation should preclude most quantitative investigations. On the other hand, 40 cases would prove ample for a number of qualitative strategies. In fact, as Chapter 8 describes, a setting such as a hospital would provide researchers with numerous opportunities to implement unobtrusive measures.

It is also important to examine the reasons for the charge that qualitative methods are nonscientific. As Schwartz and Jacobs (1979, p. 4) point out, "There are many, in both qualitative and quantitative sociology, who advocate and bask in the value of science." Further, Borman, LeCompte, and Goetz (1986, p. 51) have argued that criticism of qualitative approaches arises out of an "erroneous equation of the term 'empirical' with quantification, rather than with any real defect in the qualitative paradigm itself." Although various technologies may be used by different researchers, it turns out that everyone is doing science, provided that *science* is defined as a specific and systematic way of discovering and understanding how social realities arise, operate, and impact on individuals and organizations of individuals.

Scientific researchers may thus emphasize a more positivist view or may be primarily interested in individuals and their so-called life-worlds. In the case of the former, positivists utilize empirical methodologies borrowed from the natural sciences to investigate phenomena. Quantitative strategies serve this positive-science ideal by providing rigorous, reliable, and verifiably large aggregates of data and the statistical testing of empirical hypotheses.

In the case of life-worlds, researchers focus on naturally emerging languages and the meanings individuals assign to experience. Life-worlds include emotions, motivations, symbols and their meanings, empathy, and other subjective aspects associated with naturally evolving lives of individuals and groups. These elements may also represent their behavioral routines, experiences, and various conditions affecting these usual routines or natural settings. As Schwartz and Jacobs (1979) suggest, many of these elements are directly observable and as such may be viewed as objective. Nonetheless, certain elements of symbolism, meaning, or understanding usually require consideration of the individual's own perceptions and subjective apprehensions.

A PLAN OF PRESENTATION

Having briefly outlined the basic assumptions and qualitative orientations of symbolic interaction, it is now possible to weave in various methodological strategies. Chapter 2 provides the basic information necessary for understanding the research enterprise. This chapter discusses the research process and proposes a spiraling model to follow when developing a research agenda. Chapter 2 also offers advice to the novice researcher about how to organize and conduct a literature review.

Chapter 3 considers a number of ethical concerns that are important for new investigators to understand before actually conducting research. Among the salient issues considered are covert versus overt research concerns, privacy rights, human subject institutional review boards, and informed consent in human subject research.

In addition to providing a general discussion of various forms and styles of traditional interviewing techniques, Chapter 4 uses a kind of symbolic interaction known as *dramaturgy* and suggests an effective research strategy for conducting in-depth interviews.

Chapter 5 also addresses the area of interviewing but moves toward a specialized style, namely, group interviews or focus groups. This chapter examines the early origins of focus-group interviews, their development during the past several decades, and their growing use in the social sciences.

Chapter 6 builds on the foundation constructed by Chapters 1 through 4 and extends the research process into the natural setting by examining ethnography. Along with interviewing, Chapter 6 discusses watching and listening, field notes, and a number of other field research concerns. This chapter examines ethnography both as a means of collecting data (what some call the *new ethnography)* and as an end in itself (narrative ethnographic accounts).

Chapter 7 considers a recent dynamic mode of research, namely, action research. Action research has a substantial history in educational and nursing research, but is moving rapidly into broader scientific endeavors, as well.

While Chapters 4,5, and 6 separately address the concept of interviewer reactivity, Chapter 8 offers several strategies that avoid reactivity entirely: It explores the use of unobtrusive measures.

As foreshadowed slightly in Chapter 8, the use of certain unobtrusive data has grown quite specialized. Chapter 9 examines a specialized and systematic use of certain kinds of running records, namely, historiography. In addition to the use of records, Chapter 9 considers oral histories and life histories as variations in historiography.

Chapter 10 examines a technique used to study individuals in their unique settings or situations. This technique is commonly called the *case study method.* This chapter also discusses how case studies may be undertaken on communities and organizations.

Chapter 11, An Introduction to Content Analysis, dovetails with each of the preceding chapters on research technique. Included in this chapter are recommendations for how novice researchers may organize their data and begin to make sense of what may be volumes of notes, transcripts, and trace documents and artifacts. Chapter 11 also briefly considers the use of computers to assist in this data-management scheme.

Chapter 12, the final chapter, offers recommendations for how novice qualitative researchers can disseminate their research findings.

Trying It Out, a section at the conclusion of each of the data-collection technique chapters, offers suggestions for practicing each of the seven strategies.

REFERENCES

Becker, H. S. (1970). *Sociological Work: Method and Substance.* Chicago: Aldine.

Berg, B. L. (1989). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Berg, B. L., & Berg, J. (1993). A reexamination of triangulation and objectivity in qualitative nursing research. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 21(1), 65-72.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bogdan, R. (1972). *Participant Observation in Organizational Settings.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative Research for Education.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. J. (1975). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods.* New York: Wiley.

Borman, K. M., LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1986). Ethnographic and qualitative research design and why it doesn't work. *American Behavioral Scientist* 30(1), 42-57.

Bredo, E., & Feinberg, W. (1982). *Knowledge and Values in Social and Educational Research.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Campbell, D. T. (1956). *Leadership and Its Effects Upon the Group.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Campbell, T. T., & Fiske, D. W. (1959). Convergent and discriminant validation by the multivariate-multimethod matrix. *Psychological Bulletin 56,* 81-105.

Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human Nature and the Social Order.* New York: Scribner.

Dabbs, J. M, Jr. (1982). Making things visible. In J. Van Maanen (Ed.), *Varieties of Qualitative Research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (1970). *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook.* Chicago: Aldine.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The Research Act.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interactive Interactionism.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dewey, J. (1930). *Human Nature and Conduct.* New York: Modern Library.

Dobbert, M. (1982). *Ethnographic Research: Theory and Application for Modern Schools and Societies.* New York: Praeger.

Douglas, J. D. (1976). *Investigative Social Research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Fetterman, D. M. (1989). *Ethnography Step by Step.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fielding, N. G., & Fielding, J. L. (1986). *Linking Data.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Filstead, W. (1970). *Qualitative Methodology: Firsthand Involvement and the Social World.* Chicago: Markham.

Frankfort-Nachmias, C, & Nachmias, D. (1996). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (5th ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Gecas, V. (1981). Contexts of socialization. In M. Rosenberg & R. H. Turner (Eds.), *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives* (pp. 165-199). New York: Basic Books.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research.* New York: Academic Press.

Hammersley, M. (1984). The researcher exposed. In R. Burgess (Ed.), *The Research Process in Educational Settings: Ten Case Studies.* New York: Taylor & Francis, Palmer Press.

Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in Classrooms.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jick, T. D. (1983). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action. In J. Van Maanen (Ed.), *Qualitative Methodology* (pp. 135-148). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Jorgensen, D. L. (1989). *Participant Observation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kaplan, A. (1964). *The Conduct of Inquiry.* Scranton, PA: Chandler Publishing.

Kirby, S., & McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins.* Toronto: Garamond Press.

Knafl, K. A., & Breitmayer, B. J. (1989). Triangulation in qualitative research: Issues of conception, clarity, and purpose. In J. M. Morse (Ed.), *Qualitative Nursing Research: A Contemporary Dialogue.* Rockville, MD: Aspen.

Leedy, P. D. (1993). *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (5th ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1984). *Analyzing Social Settings* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishers.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mead, G. H. (1938). *The Philosophy of the Act.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1983). *Qualitative Data Analysis.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *Qualitative Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mills, C. W. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mitchell, E. S. (1986). Multiple triangulation: A methodology for nursing science. *Advances in Nursing Science* 8(3), 18-25.

Parks, R. (1915). *Principles of Human Behavior.* Chicago: Zalaz.

Schwartz, H., & Jacobs, J. (1979). *Qualitative Sociology: A Method to the Madness.* New York: Free Press.

Sohier, R. (1988). Multiple triangulation and contemporary nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research 10(6),* 732-742.

Spindler, G. (1982). *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Spradley, J. p. (1979). *The Ethnographic Interview.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1989). *Qualitative Research Methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Thomas, W. I., & Swaine, D. (1928). *The Child in America.* New York: Knopf.
Turner, V. (1978). Foreword. In B. Myerhoff, *Number Our Days.* New York: Simon and Schuster.
Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Webb, E., Campbell, D. T., Schwartz, R. D., & Sechrest, L. (1966). *Unobtrusive Measures: Nonreactive Research in the Social Sciences.* Chicago: Rand McNally.
Webb, E. J., Campbell, D. T., Schwartz, R. D., Sechrest, L., & Grove, J. B. (1981). *Nonreactive Measures in the Social Sciences.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Weitzman, E. A., & Miles, M. B. (1995). *Computer Programs for Qualitative Data Analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

CHAPTER 2

DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This chapter considers various ways of thinking about and designing research. It includes discussion of the relationships among ideas and theory, concepts—and what I have long believed is the most difficult facet of research—namely, *operationalization.* This chapter further offers a strategy for conducting literature reviews and explains the importance of carefully designing and planning research in advance. Let's begin with some thoughts about ideas, concepts, and theory.

THEORY AND CONCEPTS

In the natural sciences, there are certain patterns of relationships between things that occur with such regularity that they are deemed *laws:* occurrences of universal certainty. There are no such laws found in the social sciences. This does not, however, mean that social life operates in a totally chaotic or completely irrational manner. Rather, social life operates within fairly regular patterns and, when carefully examined, these patterns make considerable sense. One primary purpose of social scientific research is to make sense from these various patterns. This is accomplished by creating, examining and testing, and refining *theory.* What then is theory? *Theory* can be defined as a general and, more or less, comprehensive set of statements or propositions that describe different aspects of some phenomenon (Babbie, 1998; Hagan, 1993; Senese, 1997). In an applied context, theories can be understood as interrelated ideas about various patterns, concepts, processes, relationships, or events. In a formal sense, social scientists usually define theory as a system of logical statements or propositions that explain the relationship between two or more objects, concepts, phenomena, or characteristics of humans—what are sometimes called variables (Babbie, 1992; Denzin, 1978; Polit & Hungler, 1993). Theory might also represent attempts to develop explanations about reality or Ways to classify and organize events, describe events, or even to predict future occurrences of events (Hagan, 1993).

In order to construct theories, one needs some smaller components or what Jonathan Turner (1989, p. 5) calls the "basic building blocks of theory," namely, concepts. *Concepts,* then, are symbolic or abstract elements representing objects, properties, or features of objects, processes, or phenomenon. Concepts may communicate ideas or introduce particular perspectives, or they may be a means for casting a broad generalization. In terms of ideas, concepts are important because they are the foundation of communication and thought. Concepts provide a means for people to let others know what they are thinking, and allow information to be shared. Thus, instead of describing a youth who is involved with drugs and/or crime, truancy, or problems with parents and other adults, I might simply use the concept of *delinquent* to communicate these same elements (ideas).

An important part of developing social scientific theory is first to define relevant concepts that will be used in a given research project. As will be discussed later in this chapter, one of the most important reasons researchers turn to previous studies and relevant literature about a topic to be studied is to identify relevant concepts and their definitions. Whenever a concept is used, it is important that the researcher makes clear what meaning is being attached to that term; in other words, what ideas are being attached. For example, a researcher may undertake a research project that intends to examine alcoholism. But what exactly does this researcher mean by the concept *alcoholism?* Without further specification, some readers may interpret this concept to mean someone who drinks until blacking out. Others might understand the term to convey an image of someone who drinks to a point where he or she cannot hold a job. Still other people might interpret alcoholism as referring to people who cannot maintain regular relationships with other people. In effect, without specification concepts may represent a number of diverse meanings. (Later this will be discussed as operationalization.)

IDEAS AND THEORY

Every research project has to start somewhere; typically, the starting point is an idea. Sometimes this idea originates because of a particular problem or situation one actually experiences. For example, a nurse might observe a coworker coming to work under the influence of alcohol and begin to think about how alcohol would influence nursing care. From this thought, the idea for researching impaired nurses could arise. A counselor at a delinquency detention center might notice that many of her clients have been battered or abused prior to their run-ins with the law. From this observation, she might wonder how abuse might be linked with delinquency and how she could investigate this linkage. Or an elementary school teacher might notice that the most disruptive children in the class eat large amounts of sugary junk food during lunch. The teacher might think about the possibility that junk food is

in some way related to children's behavior and might wonder how he could test such an idea.

In some situations, ideas move from information you hear but may not actually experience yourself. For instance, you're sitting at home listening to the news, and you hear a report about three youths from wealthy families who have been caught burglarizing houses. You wonder: Why on earth did they do something like that? What motivates people who don't need money to steal from others? Or, you read in the newspaper that a man living around the corner from you has been arrested for growing marijuana in his garage. You think back to the times you passed this man's house and smiled a greeting at him. And, you wonder: Why didn't I realize what he was up to? Who was he going to sell the marijuana to anyhow? From these broad curiosities, you might begin to think about how these questions could be explored or answered and how you might research these phenomena.

The preceding examples serve two important purposes. First, they point out how ideas promote potential research endeavors. But second, and perhaps more important, they suggest a central research orientation that permeates this book. This orientation is the attitude that the world is a research laboratory, and that you merely need to open your eyes and ears to the sensory reality that surrounds all of us to find numerous ideas for research. In fact, once you become familiar with this orientation, the biggest problem will be to filter out all the many possible researchable ideas and actually investigate one!

Most experienced qualitative researchers will agree that if you drop a qualitative investigator into any neighborhood, he or she will manage to identify a research idea, develop a research plan, and project potential research findings. This notion is likely to contrast dramatically with the inexperienced researcher's fear that he or she cannot even think of anything worthwhile to research. There may be considerable truth to the optimistic view of experienced researchers. This does not mean, however, that all research ideas will be equally easy or interesting to research.

Some ideas will be more difficult to investigate than others. This is because those who control access to a given location—what the literature calls gatekeepers—or the subjects themselves may be reluctant or resistant to cooperate. Gatekeepers are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. Also, some ideas may initially seem extremely interesting, but become rather plain or uninspiring upon further investigation.

So, you begin with an idea. But how is this related to theory? There are some who argue that ideas and theory must come before empirical research. This has been called the *theory-before-research* model (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992, p. 46). This orientation has been nicely described by Karl Popper (1968), who suggests that one begins with ideas (conjectures) and then attempts to disprove or refute them through tests of empirical research (refutation).

In contrast to the theory-before-research proponents, there are some who ^gue that research must occur before theory can be developed. This orientation,

research-before-theory, can be illustrated by a statement from Robert Merton (1968, p. 103):

> It is my central thesis that empirical research goes far beyond the passive role of verifying and testing theory; it does more than confirm or refute hypotheses. Research plays an active role: it performs at least four major functions, which help shape the development of theory. It initiates, it reformulates, it deflects, and it clarifies theory.

In other words, research may suggest new problems for theory, require theoretical innovation, refine existing theories, or serve to vary past theoretical assumptions.

The approach offered in this book views theory-before-research and research-before-theory as highly compatible. Often, methods texts and courses describe the research enterprise as a linear progression. In this progression, you begin with an idea, gather theoretical information, design a research plan, identify a means for data collection, analyze the data, and report findings. This may be diagramed as follows:

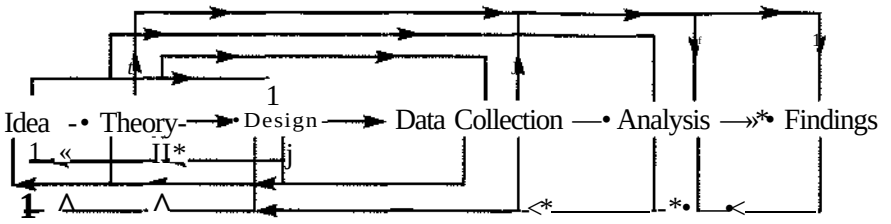
Idea -> Theory -> Design -> Data Collection -> Analysis -> Findings

For the most part, this orientation resembles the theory-before-research model. But it could also be drawn as the research-before-theory model:

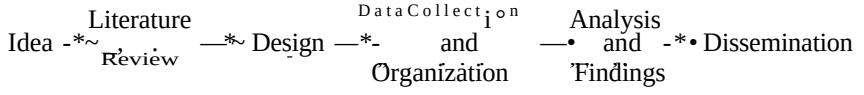
Idea -> Design -» Data Collection -» Theory ->Analysis -» Findings

In either case, you have the feeling that each of these components is a distinct and separate successive stage, that you first derive an idea and then move on to either theory or design and so forth. In essence, it seems that you complete various necessary tasks of each stage and then move forward, leaving the completed state behind.

In this chapter, I argue for a different model for the research enterprise, a model that encompasses both the research-before-theory and theory-before-research models. This is possible because the proposed approach is conceived as spiraling rather than linear in its progression. In the proposed approach, you begin with an idea, gather theoretical information, reconsider and refine your idea, begin to examine possible designs, reexamine theoretical assumptions, and refine these theoretical assumptions and perhaps even your original or refined idea. Thus, with every two steps forward, you take a step or two backward before proceeding any further. What results is no longer a linear progression in a single, forward direction. Rather, you are spiraling forward, never actually leaving any stage behind completely. This spiraling approach may be drawn as follows:



To simplify following individual elements of this model as they are discussed, let's redefine the stages slightly, as follows:



As shown here, you begin with some rough *idea* for a research study. The next stage in this process is to begin thinking and reading about this topical idea. This is accomplished as you begin the literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

After developing a rough idea for research, you begin to examine how others have already thought about and researched the topic. Let's say an idea for some research begins with an interest in alcohol use by male college students. You might formulate a rough question for research, such as: What is the relationship between college and drinking among American males? This rough statement already shows elements of refinement. It has been limited to consideration of only American males. The next step is to visit the library to get started on a literature review. To begin, you can consult any of a number of available cumulative indexes. These indexes contain many thousands of journal and monograph references, indexed by both authors' names and subject topics. In some cases, you will find these as bound texts in the reference section of the library. In other cases, these indexes may be computer based and require both some assistance and a small charge to use.

In many larger public libraries and in a growing number of colleges and universities, these cumulative indexes have been placed in CD-ROM format. K you have never used one of these indexes or are unfamiliar with the use of computers, you might want to consult the reference librarian at your library.

The next task is to begin to think creatively about cryptic subject topics related to your rough research idea or question and to search for these topics in

the indexes. For the example above, you might make a list that includes "alcohol use," "collegiate alcohol use," "alcohol on campus," "drinking," "males and alcohol," "Americans and alcohol," "social drinking," "substance abuse in college," "campus problems," and so forth. It is important to develop a number of different subject areas to search. Some will be more fruitful than others, and perhaps some will yield little information. This is because both the print versions and computer-based versions of indexes are created by humans. Because of this, indexes unavoidably suffer from the problem of terminological classification bias. In other words, even though these indexes are cross-referenced, if you do not use the same term or phrase used by the original indexer, you may not locate entries he or she has referenced.

For instance, several years ago, I became interested in the idea of doing research about women in policing. More directly, I was interested in the effect of policing on female officers. I asked my graduate student to see if she could locate some material about female police officers. When she returned the next day, she reported that there was virtually nothing in any of the index databases on the topic "female police officers." I asked if she had tried "women in policing," or "women police officers," or even "minorities in policing." Sheepishly, she explained she had not thought to do that and returned to the library. The next time she returned to my office, she carried a list of literally dozens of references for me to consider. The lesson to be learned from this is that you must not be too restrictive in your topics when searching for reference materials in indexes. In fact, most CD-ROM-based indexes provide users with a thesaurus to assist them in locating subject terms used to index material on the CD-ROM.

Avoid becoming too computer dependent during your literature search. Again, since computer listings are limited by the way they have been indexed, not all the information that is relevant for a study may be recognized in a computer-based search. While revising this book, I asked another graduate assistant, a bright, first-year doctoral student, to locate some recent material on "active informed consent." This ethical concern is discussed in Chapter 3. My graduate assistant is very well versed in computers and surfing the Internet. Naturally, he sought an answer to my request by diving right into the Internet.

I waited several days before asking him if he had located any recent articles or chapters on this subject. He informed me that there were none. I asked if he had gone to the library and looked up "informed consent," "passive consent," "active consent," or any similar topics. With a note of anger in his tone he informed me that he had done better. He had checked with various Internet information sources. I then asked if he had gone to the library and physically looked through the last several years of such journals as *Journal of Ethics,* or *Social Problems,* or any educational, nursing, or medical journals. With even more anger, because I was questioning his work, he informed me he had not. He also naively insisted that if he couldn't find it through the computer, it wasn't there!

I suggested we take a trip to the library together. (In fact, I literally took him by the hand and walked him to the library.) Together we scoured the library, and within fifteen minutes had located about four potentially usable items. My graduate assistant admitted that these items had not shown up in any of his computer searches.

The moral to this story is simple. Computer searches and the vast information available via the Internet are wonderful places to begin. They can provide enormous amounts of information. Frequently, however, there is no absolute replacement for simply physically thumbing through journal indexes.

You have now presumably located the relevant reference indexes for the research idea and have used cryptic subject terms to locate a list of references. The next task is to locate several of these pieces of literature and begin reading about the topic. You also will need to continue trying to expand this literature search. You can do this by locating several fairly recent articles and consulting their reference pages. Frequently, this search will yield additional pieces of information that were not generated by the original index search.

As you are doing this literature searching, keep records on which pieces of literature you have obtained and notes about what each one says. There are numerous ways you can keep records and notes during a literature review. What follows is the *two-card method,* a long-standing albeit very time-consuming strategy. Inexperienced writers and researchers may want to try using it fairly precisely. More experienced investigators may decide to make variations on it. In any event, it provides a means for developing an extremely systematic literature review.

The Two-Card Method

As indicated by the name, this strategy requires you to create two types of 4 x 6-inch index cards. The first is the *author card.* Annotate each with the reference information for every article of literary material you locate and examine. Whenever possible, you should also include the library call numbers. Several of my students in recent years have preferred to use electronic index cards, as provided in some computer software packages. Although any entry format on the card or electronic card can be used, I recommend that you use a consistent entry style (see Figure 2.1).

Author cards should be kept in alphabetical order to ensure that you will always have complete information for citations and the ability to locate the document at a later time. Even fairly experienced writers have misplaced a document or returned it to the library, only to find they need it or the citation material later. Often, even with considerable effort, these writers are unable to locate the necessary information. Author cards provide a kind of insurance against not having the correct information when you need to write up references or check up on information. Also, should you continue researching in this area, you will have a head start on future literature reviews.

```
[Author's Name]

Berg, Bruce L.,

    [Date]      [Title of document and publication
     1992        information]

                Law Enforcement: An Introduction to
                Police in Society. Boston, Mass.:
                Allyn and Bacon

[Library Call #]
```

FIGURE 2.1 Author Card

The second type of card is called the *topic card.* Topic cards also should follow a consistent pattern and include the author's name, the date of the publication, a brief topical label, and a short verbatim excerpt (see Figure 2.2). Since the author cards contain the title and publication information, duplicating those details on the topic cards is not necessary.

Many students have either been taught or have developed similar note-taking strategies. In some cases, these other strategies call for the use of legal-length note pads. This technique, however, inhibits your ability to sort through or organize the excerpts, short of cutting sheets into pieces.

```
            [Topic Label]  Police Detective

  [Author's Name]

   Berg, Bruce (1992:p83)

         [Verbatim Quote]

Detective, as a noun, makes its first appearance in lay
parlance in the 1840s in order to identify the police
organizational position of an investigator (Klockars,
1985; Kuykendal, 1986, 175) . The central function of
early detective work in police organizations was
apprehension.
```

FIGURE 2.2 Topic Card

Additionally, these other strategies usually ask you to paraphrase the material you take down as notes. Certainly, paraphrasing is somewhat less tedious to accomplish than the verbatim annotation of excerpts, as promoted in my plan. However, there are several critical reasons why I recommend the use of verbatim quotes on these topic cards.

First, it reduces the physical amount of material you will ultimately use when you get down to writing reports about the research. Anyone who has undertaken a large writing project, even a term paper, should relate to the problem of having stacks of photocopies and piles of books cluttering the room. Trying to find some specific piece of information under such circumstances is quite burdensome.

Second, you can very quickly sort the topic cards into their categories (e.g., placing all the cards about police detectives together). In this manner, you can assemble the piles into an organized sequence that will reflect how you plan to write the report or paper. This allows you to read through the relevant materials for each section rather than repeatedly reading through all the material in order to write a single section.

Third, topic cards allow you to assess whether multiple authors actually have made similar statements about issues or situations. In turn, you are able to make strong synthesized statements regarding the work or arguments of others. For example, "According to Babbie (1992), Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), and Leedy (1993), design is a critically important element in the development of a research project."

If you, as an investigator, paraphrase material on the topic cards, it is possible that you might slant or alter meanings. Without intending to, you might have misread, misinterpreted, or poorly paraphrased material. When you go through the topic cards looking for agreement among authors, you might find paraphrased statements that *seem* to represent similar ideas but that actually do not accurately represent the sentiments of the original authors. Using verbatim excerpts ensures that this will not occur. Either the authors did say similar things or they did not.

The obvious question at this juncture is: How much should you annotate on the topic cards? While there are no hard and fast rules, I recommend only about two to four paragraphs. The purpose of these cards is to reduce the amount of material ultimately necessary for the writer-investigator. To completely transcribe works tends to defeat this purpose. Bear in mind that you might find three or four different topics in a short article, or you might find six or seven. Likewise, you might find 10 or 12 topics to excerpt from a book, or you might find only a single topic worthy of excerpting.

Usually the excerpt will fit on a single card (front and back). However, on occasion, you might find it necessary to use a second or even a third card. «is important to number or letter subsequent cards in order to keep them in correct sequence. In the event that you find an enormous cache of simply Wonderful material, you can make a note of this on the card. This is a better

strategy than copying 10 or 11 cards. Simply excerpt the usual three or four paragraphs and then write something like "more great material!" In this case, you will want to have the source nearby when you write the paper.

Excerpting on topic cards can be fairly tedious. You should not plan on spending many hours at a time writing topic cards. Instead, plan to spend only an hour or so at each topic card writing session. Even small amounts of time, such as 10- or 15-minute intervals, can be successfully used for this purpose. Remember, what this strategy loses in excitement, it gains tenfold in organization and effective writing later.

This strategy also is very portable. You can slip index cards into your pocket, bag, briefcase, or backpack along with a book or photocopy of some article. While waiting for a doctor's or dentist's appointment, you can easily be reading and excerpting material. Or you might do topic cards while riding a train or bus. The important thing to remember is that as you are reading and creating topic cards, you also should be thinking about the material.

As mentioned previously, the two-card method is especially effective for the inexperienced researcher. For those more experienced—at least at library based literature review endeavors—various alternatives are certainly available. Some of these involve *abstracting,* or *excerpting* material, or various paraphrasing techniques. However, even fairly systematic paraphrasing strategies move one further away from the verbatim excerpting of material. This, in turn, runs the serious risk of misinterpretation, misuse, or misapplication of the original author's intended meaning. I would encourage students to experiment with the two-card method, and to make various modifications, such as, perhaps, placing the material on a computer (creating electronic cards). Alternatively, one might create a systematic listing or a kind of index of the topics and abbreviated versions of the topic card contents.

The basic idea of the two-card method is to cut down on the physical volume of material necessary for writing a comprehensive or exhaustive literature review. In addition, while undertaking the review of literary materials, the researcher's thoughts should begin to turn toward refinement of the original research idea or question. What are some specific research questions that need to be considered in the eventual research? How have others theorized about the topic? How have others researched the topic? What have others found in previous research? Is there an interesting angle or approach that would set your research apart from that of others or refine findings offered by past research? You also should begin to consider exactly how you will frame your research questions or problems.

FRAMING RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Research problems direct or drive the research enterprise. How you will eventually conduct a research study depends largely upon what your

research questions are. It is important, therefore, to frame or formulate a clear research problem statement. Remember, the research process begins with an idea and only a rough notion of what is to be researched. As you read and collect information from the literature, these rough questions must become clearer and theoretically more refined.

Let us return to the original research idea: What is the relationship between college and drinking among American males? After reading through some of the literature, you might begin to refine and frame this idea as a problem statement with researchable questions:

Problem Statement. This research proposes to examine alcohol drinking behaviors in social settings among college-age American men.

Research Questions. A number of questions are addressed in this research including (although not limited to) the following:

1. What are some normative drinking behaviors of young adult American men during social gatherings where alcohol is present?
2. How do some young adult American men manage to abstain from drinking (e.g., avoidance rituals) while in social situations where alcohol is present?
3. How do young adult American men define appropriate drinking practices?
4. How do young adult American men define alcoholism?

These questions did not just happen spontaneously. They were influenced by the literature about drinking practices among Americans. They resulted after the investigator began thinking about what issues were important and how those issues might be measured. This required the researcher to consider various concepts and definitions and perhaps to develop operationalized definitions.

OPERATIONALIZATION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

When someone says, "That kid's a delinquent," most of us quickly draw some mental picture of what that is, and we are able to understand the meaning of the term *delinquent.* If, however, someone were to ask, "How would you define a delinquent?" we would probably find that some people think about this term differently from others. For some, it may involve a youth under the legal age of adult jurisdiction (usually between 16 and 18 years of age) who commits law violations (Bynum & Thompson, 1992). For others, a delinquent may be simply defined as a youthful law violator (Thornton &

Voigt, 1992). Still others may require in their definition some notion of a youth who not only breaks a law but who is also convicted in court of this law violation (Siegel & Senna, 1988). In other words, there are a number of possible definitions for the concept *delinquent.*

If you, as a researcher, are interested in studying the behavior of delinquent girls, you will first need to clearly define *delinquent.* Because humans cannot telepathically communicate their mental images of terms, there is no way to directly communicate which possible meaning for delinquent you have in mind. To ensure that everyone is working with the same definition and mental image, you will need to *conceptualize* and *operationalize* the term. This process is called *operationally defining* a concept.

Operational definitions concretize the intended meaning of a concept in relation to a particular study and provide some criteria for measuring the empirical existence of that concept (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Leedy, 1993).

In operatively defining a term or concept, you, as a researcher, begin by declaring the term to mean whatever you want it to mean throughout the research. While it is important for your readers to understand what you mean when, for example, you use the concept *delinquent,* they need not necessarily agree with that definition. As long as they understand what you mean by certain concepts, they can understand and appraise how effectively the concept works in your study

Once defined, the concept needs some way to be measured during the research process. In quantitative research, this means creating some index, scale, or similar measurement indicator intended to calculate how much of or to what degree the concept exists. Qualitative investigators also need agreement over what a concept means in a given study and how that concept is to be identified and examined. How will the researcher gather empirical information or data that will inform him or her about the concept?

Consider, for example, the concept *weight.* As a researcher, you might define the concept *weight* as the amount of mass an object possesses in terms of pounds and ounces. Now everyone holds the same concrete meaning and mental image for the concept weight. How shall this concept be measured? Operationally, weight can be determined by placing an object on a scale and rounding to the nearest ounce. This operational definition clearly tells others what the concept is designated to mean and how it will be measured.

Unfortunately, not all concepts are as easy to define as weight or as easy to measure. Polit and Hungler (1993), for example, suggest that many concepts relevant to research in nursing are not operationalized simply. For instance, in nursing research, the quality of life for chronically ill patients may be defined in terms of physiological, social, and psychological attributes. If the nurse researcher emphasizes the physiological aspects of quality of life for chronically ill patients in his or her definition, the operationalized component

may involve measuring white blood cell counts or oxygen output, assessing invasive surgical procedures or ventilation procedures, measuring blood pressure, and so forth.

If, on the other hand, quality of life for chronically ill patients is defined socially, the operationalized elements of the definition would need to measure family or social support, living arrangements, self-management skills, independence, and similar social attributes. Likewise, if the nurse researcher uses a more psychological conceptualization, the operationalized measures would be directed along the lines of the patients' emotional acceptance of chronic illness.

Let's try another illustration of defining and operationalizing. Say you are interested in studying to what degree or extent people are religious. To begin, you must define the concept *religious.* For this example, *religious* will be defined as how actively one is involved with his or her religion. Next, you must decide what kinds of information inform others about someone's active involvement in religion. After consulting the literature, you decide that you know how religious someone is by knowing whether that person believes in a divine being, attends organized religious services on some regular basis, prays at home, reads religious materials, celebrates certain religious holidays, readily declares membership in a particular religion, participates in religious social organizations, and contributes to religious charities.

In effect, you, the researcher, are saying, "I can't immediately apprehend a person's religiousness. But I can think about what elements seem to go into making up or representing observable behaviors I understand to mean *religious."* By obtaining information regarding the subset of observable attributes delineated earlier to represent religious, you can study religiousness. Again, as you are thinking about what observable attributes might make up some concept, you should be perusing the literature. By spiraling back into the literature stage, you can seek ways of how others have examined the concept of religious. You may borrow some of these previous attributes for religious, or you may create others.

In some forms of qualitative research, the investigator is not as rigorously concerned with defining concepts in operational terms as outlined here. This is because some forms of interpretative and phenomenological research seek to discover naturally arising meanings among members of study populations. However, in many cases of qualitative research, failure to define and operationalize concepts will spell disaster. If, as a researcher, you have not made clear what your concepts mean, your results may be meaningless in terms of explanatory power or applicability. If you have not thought about how data will be collected to represent attributes of the concept, it will be very difficult for you to determine answers to research questions. And if you have not worked with the literature in developing relevant meanings and measurable attributes, it will be impossible for you to see how eventual results fit into this extant body of knowledge.

Your next problem, then, is determining exactly how information about various attributes will be obtained. As you reach this point, you move one foot forward toward the design stage of the research enterprise. Naturally, your other foot will remain in the literature stage.

DESIGNING PROJECTS

The design for a research project is literally the plan for how the study will be conducted. It is a matter of thinking about, imagining, and visualizing how the research study will be undertaken (DeBakey & DeBakey, 1978; Leedy, 1993). Or, as Valerie Janesick (1994) metaphorically describes it, design is the *choreography* that establishes the *research dance.*

The design stage of research is concerned with a series of important decisions having to do with the research idea or question(s). What types of information or data will be gathered and through what forms of data-collection technologies? Where will the research be undertaken, and among what group or groups of people (questions of site, setting, and sample)? In doing research, you must decide whether to use one data-collection strategy alone or to combine several strategies (data triangulation). Will you undertake the study alone or with the assistance of others (multiple investigators triangulation)? You must consider whether the study will be framed by a single overarching theory or by several related theories (theoretical triangulation). How much will the project cost in time and money, and how much can you actually afford? Are the data-collection strategies appropriate for the research questions being asked? What will the data look like once they have been collected? How will the data be organized and analyzed?

In effect, during the design stage, you, the investigator, sketch out the entire research project in an effort to foresee any possible glitches that might arise. If you locate a problem now, while the project is still on the drafting board, there is no harm done. After the project has begun, if you find that concepts have been poorly conceived, that the wrong research questions have been asked, or that the data collected are inappropriate or from the wrong group of people, the project may be ruined.

Researchers in the social sciences typically conduct research on human subjects. The design stage is the time when you, the researcher, must consider whether ethical standards and safeguards for subject safety are adequate. You must make certain that subjects will be protected from any harm. Chapter 3 discusses issues of research ethics in detail. For now, regard the design stage as the time when ethical proprieties such as honesty; openness of intent; respect for subjects; issues of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality; the intent of the research; and the willingness of subjects to participate voluntarily in the research are appraised.

Setting and Population Appropriateness

During the research design phase of a project, the investigator needs to consider a rationale for identifying and using a particular setting as a data collection site (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Also, a decision must be made regarding who will serve as the researcher and the research study population. The study site or setting should be a location where:

1. Entry or access is possible.
2. The appropriate people (target population) are likely to be available.
3. There is a high probability that the study's focuses, processes, people, programs, interactions, and/or structures that are part of the research question(s) will be available to the investigator; and
4. The research can be conducted effectively by an individual or individuals during the data collection phase of the study (e.g., an African American researcher should not undertake research among members of the Ku Klux Man).

The research question is generally regarded as the primary guide to the appropriate site or setting selection (Flick, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Silverman, 1999). For example, if the researcher's question(s) has to do with why some battered women remain with their battering spouses, the data collection site will have to be some place related to battered women and some place that is safe. This might be a shelter for battered women and children. If the research question has to do with the formation of informal cliques in high schools (e.g., *jocks, nerds, druggies,* etc.), then, a different data collection location would be necessary. In this case, the setting would need to be one where high-school aged youths are likely to gather, and may actually involve several locations (e.g., a local park, skating rink, public pool, restaurant, etc.).

In many cases, the decision to use a particular research site is tied closely to obtaining access to an appropriate population of potential subjects. Poor study site selection and/or poor sample decisions may weaken or ruin eventual findings. One must be careful to identify an *appropriate* population, not merely an easily accessible one. For instance, let's say you wanted to conduct a study investigating the opinions or practices of Native Americans. One easy way of locating a site and population might be to turn to college students. After all, college students are easy to locate on college campuses. They are likely to be willing to take part in an interview—either out of curiosity or to help out another student. But, one must ask the question: What pertinent information will the average non-Native American college student have regarding how Native Americans think, perceive their social world, or practice their particular life styles? In other words, if you want to know about Native Americans, then you need to locate a setting where Native Americans can be accessed.

Sometimes, a researcher identifies what they believe to be an appropriate study population, but they cannot immediately see where an appropriate setting might be for data collection. For example, several years ago, I had a student interested in conducting a study about fear of crime among the blind. On the surface, this sounds like a pretty good research topic. The problem arose when I asked him how (and where) he planned to access such a population of potential subjects. He thought for a while and made a trip to the library before returning to me to announce that he wanted to conduct interviews. I agreed that that might be an acceptable way to collect data on peoples' perceptions of their fear of crime. I next asked the student: Where are you going to locate subjects? This question created a new problem for the student, who was so proud that he had determined a means for data collection that he had not thought about where he would locate subjects to interview.

Several days later the student returned with a plan and a story of his own. The student told me that he had discussed his need to access blind people to conduct a study of their perceptions of fear of crime with another faculty member. The faculty member—who was obviously not terribly versed in methods—suggested that the student simply go to one of the large introductory classes and divide the class in half. Then, he suggested that the student have half the class place blindfolds over their eyes, and spend a period of time walking around campus (ushered by one of the other non-blindfolded students). Following this experience, the students could switch off, so both groups experienced *blindness.* Next, the class could be administered a pencil and paper survey about their fear of crime, having now experienced the precariousness of not being able to see. The student immediately recognized that this would not be an appropriate setting or sample for his study. Wisely, however, he did not argue with the faulty member, but rather thanked him, and explained that he wanted to conduct a more qualitative study.

The student then explained his actual plan to me. He indicated that he intended to attend a summer camp for the blind sponsored by several nonprofit agencies. He had learned that the population of the camp came from the entire state, and that no one who wanted to attend was ever turned away (those who could not afford to pay were awarded camp scholarships). Thus, the camp contained a population from various socioeconomic strata, races, ages, and both men and women. The student spent the summer and was able both to conduct nearly 60 interviews and some limited participant observation (Rounds, 1994).

Sampling Strategies

The logic of using a sample of subjects is to make inferences about some larger population from a smaller one—the sample. In quantitative research, the investigator is keenly concerned with *probability sampling.* The concept of probability sampling is based on the notion that a sample can be selected that will mathematically represent subgroups of some larger population (Senese, 1998). The parameters required for creating these probability samples are quite restrictive but allow the investigator to make various inferential hypothesis tests (using various statistical techniques). The most commonly discussed probability sample is the *simple random* sample. The simple random sample most closely approximates the ideals in probability sampling. To accomplish a simple random sample, each element in the full population must have an equal and independent chance of inclusion in the eventual sample to be studied. Simple random sampling typically begins with a full listing of every element in the full population to be investigated. Once this list of all of the elements has been constructed, the size of the sample must be determined. Once this has been accomplished, a random numbers table, computer, or other procedure for randomly selecting elements from the list will be applied (see Figure 2.3).

The social sciences often examine research situations where one cannot select the kinds of probability samples used in large-scale surveys, and which conform to the restricted needs of a probability sample. In these situations, investigators rely upon *nonprobability samples.*

In nonprobability sampling, the investigator does not base his or her sample selection on probability theory. Rather, efforts are undertaken (1) to create a kind of quasi-random sample, and/or (2) to have a clear idea about what larger

FIGURE 2.3 Probability Sampling Strategies

SIMPLE RANDOM SAMPLING. Typically, this procedure is intended to produce a representative sample. The process draws subjects from an identified population in such a manner that every unit in that population has precisely the same chance (probability) of being included in the sample.

SYSTEMATIC RANDOM SAMPLING. The use of a systematic sample provides a convenient way to draw a sample from a large identified population when a printed list of that population is available. In systematic sampling, every *nth* name is selected from the list. Usually the interval between names on the list is determined by dividing the number of persons desired in the sample into the full population. For example, if a final sample of 80 was desired, and the population list contained 2,560 names, the researches would divide 2,560 by 80. The resulting 32 becomes the interval between names on the list. It is important, however, to begin the list at some random starting place. Frequently, researchers select a number between 1 and 20 (usually taken from a random numbers table) and begin at that location on the list and then stop at every nth name—in our example, at every thirty-second name on the list.

STRATIFIED RANDOM SAMPLING. A stratified sample is used whenever researchers need to ensure that a certain segment of the identified population under examination is represented in the sample. The population is divided into subgroups (strata), and independent samples of each stratum are selected. Within each stratum, a particular sampling fraction is applied in order to ensure representativeness of proportions in the full population. Thus, sampling fractions in some strata may differ from those of others in the same sample. Stratified samples can be used only when information is available to divide the population into strata.

group or groups the sample may reflect. Nonprobability samples offer the benefits of not requiring a list of all possible elements in a full population, and the ability to access otherwise highly sensitive or difficult to research study populations. For example, it would be very difficult to undertake a study of active prostitutes, since it would be virtually impossible to create a list of all of the prostitutes even in a given area. At best, one might create a listing of all the *known* prostitutes. Thus, frequently in the social sciences, a researcher is presented with interesting and potentially important research questions that cannot be answered by a probability sampling technique. From the perspective of qualitative research, nonprobability sampling tends to be the norm. The following sections describe the four most common types of nonprobability samples.

Convenience Samples. The convenience sample is sometimes referred to as an *accidental* or *availability* sample (Babbie, 1998; Mutchnick & Berg, 1996). This category of sample relies on available subjects—those who are close at hand or easily accessible. For example, it is fairly common for college and university professors to use their students as subjects in their research projects. This technique is used all too frequently and has some serious risks associated with it. Specifically, often a researcher is interested in studying characteristics or processes that college students simply are not equipped to offer information about. Consider again, for example, the suggested use of blindfolded students to study fear of crime among the blind.

Under certain circumstances this strategy is an excellent means of obtaining preliminary information about some research question quickly and inexpensively. For example, if an investigator were interested in examining how college students perceive drinking and drunkenness, he or she could easily make use of a convenience sample of college students. If, on the other hand, the researcher was interested in studying self-images among blue collar workers, he or she could not use this convenience sample of college students and simply ask them to pretend that they are blue collar workers when answering the researcher's questions. In other words convenience samples must be evaluated for appropriateness of fit for a given study.

Purposive Sampling. This category of sampling is sometimes called *judgmental sampling.* When developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population. In some instances, purposive samples are selected after field investigations on some group, in order to ensure that certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study. Despite some serious limitations (for instance, the lack of wide generalizability), purposive samples are occasionally used by researchers. Delinquent youths, for example, who might not appear in sufficient numbers to be meaningful under more traditional random techniques, might be purposively sampled (Glassner et al., 1983).

Snowball Sampling. Another nonprobability sampling strategy, that some may see as similar to convenience sampling, is known as snowball sampling. Snowballing is sometimes the best way to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in a study. Snowball samples are particularly popular among researchers interested in studying various classes of deviance, sensitive topics, or difficult to reach populations (Lee, 1993).

The basic strategy of snowballing involves first identifying several people with relevant characteristics and interviewing them or having them answer a questionnaire. These subjects are then asked for the names of other people who possess the same attributes as they do.

If you wanted to learn about, say, drug use or theft by nurses, the use of some sort of probability sample would seem out of the question. But, through use of a few informants, field investigations, or other strategies, the researcher might identify a small number of nurses with these characteristics. By asking these first subjects for referrals of additional nurses, the sample eventually "snowballs" from a few subjects to many subjects (see for example, Dabney & Berg, 1994).

Quota Samples. A quota sample begins with a kind of matrix or table that creates cells or stratum. The quota sampling strategy then uses a nonprobability method to fill these cells. The researcher may wish to use gender, age, education, or any other attributes to create and label each stratum or cell in the table. Which attributes are selected will have to do with the research question and study focuses. Next, one needs to determine the proportion of each attribute in the full study population. For instance, let's say a researcher wants to study perceptions of violence among people in the United States, with a special interest in people over the age of 65. Census data would provide the researcher with reasonable estimates of people over the age of 65, as well as various categories under the age of 65. The research could create various age cohorts—people over 65, 45-65, *25-<±A*, and under 25. Next, the researcher could determine the proportion of people in each of these age groups. Following this, the investigator could select a region of the country and sample people in that area, identifying the same proportion of people for each age cohort as identified in the census data.

DATA COLLECTION AND ORGANIZATION

As you begin visualizing how the research project will "unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 210), you also must imagine what the data will look like. Will raw data be audiotape cassettes that result from long interviews? Will data comprise dozens of spiral notebooks filled with field notes? Will the data include photographs or video recordings? Will they entail systematic observational checklists or copies of files containing medical

or criminal histories? Could data actually be the smudges left on a polished counter or glass display case? Just what will the research data look like?

Furthermore, what will you do with the data to organize them and make them ready for analysis? That many students fall down at this stage of the research process and find themselves lost, even after taking several research courses, is interesting to note. While most research courses and textbooks are excellent at describing the basic structure of research, few move the student into the areas of data organization and analysis. Typically, the results are that students come up with excellent ideas for research, conduct solid literature reviews, produce what sound like viable research designs, and even collect massive amounts of data. The problem arises, however, at this point: What do they do with the collected data?

If you were doing quantitative research, there might be an easy answer to the question of organization and analysis. You would reduce the data to computerizable form and enter them into a database. Then using one form or another of packaged statistics for the social sciences, you would endeavor to analyze the data. Lamentably, qualitative data are not as quickly or easily handled. A common mistake made by many inexperienced or uninformed researchers is to reduce qualitative data to symbolic numeric representations and quantitatively computer analyze them. As Berg and Berg (1993) state, this ceases at once to be qualitative research and amounts to little more than a variation of quantitative data collection.

How qualitative data are organized depends in part upon what the data look like. If they are in textual form, such as field notes, or can be made into textual form, such as a transcription of a tape-recorded interview, they may be organized in one manner. If they are video, photographic, or drawn material, they will require a different form of organization and analysis. But regardless of the data form, you must consider this issue during the design stage of the process. Again, this points to the spiraling effect of research activities. If you wait until data have actually been collected to consider how they are to be organized for analysis, serious problems may arise. For example, you may not have planned for adequate time or financial resources. Or you might collect data in such a way that they should be systematically organized, coded, or indexed as they were collected and not after the fact. In any event, you must direct thought toward how data will be organized and analyzed long before you begin the data-collection process.

Typically, the immediately collected raw data are not *immediately* available for analysis. Rather, the raw data requires some sort of organizing and processing before it can actually be analyzed. Field notes, for example, may fill hundreds of pages of notebooks or take up thousands of megabytes of space on a computer disk. These notes need to be edited, corrected, and made more readable, even before they can be organized, indexed, or entered into a computer-generated text analysis program file. Recorded interviews must be transcribed (transformed into written text), corrected, and edited; also before being somehow indexed or entered into a text-based computer analysis program. The volume of pages of qualitative raw data can sometimes be quite daunting to the inexperienced researcher. Thus, understanding how data can be organized and managed is very important. This directs our attention to notions of data storage and retrieval.

DATA STORAGE, RETRIEVAL, AND ANALYSIS

As Huberman and Miles (1994) suggest, "How data are stored and retrieved is the heart of data management. . . ." A clear and working storage and retrieval system is critical if one expects to keep track of the reams of data that have been collected; to flexibly access and use the data; and to assure systematic analysis and documentation of the data. In this way the study can, in principle, be verified through replication.

Levine (1985), Wolfe (1992), and Huberman and Miles (1994) all argue that data management and data analysis are integrally related. There are, in fact, no rigid boundaries between them. The main concerns are as follows:

1. A system that ensures high-quality accessibility to the data.
2. Documentation of any analysis that is carried out; and
3. Retention and protection of data and related analysis of documents after the study has been completed.

From the perspective of this book, and in keeping with the preceding three issues, data analysis can be defined as consisting of three concurrent flows of action: data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification (see also Huberman & Miles, 1994, pp. 10-12).

Data Reduction. In qualitative research, data reduction does not necessarily refer to quantifying nominal data. Qualitative data needs to be reduced and transformed in order to make it more readily accessible, understandable, and to draw out various themes and patterns. Data reduction acknowledges the voluminous nature of qualitative data in the raw. It directs attention to the need for focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data into a more manageable form. Frequently, data reduction occurs throughout the research project's life. For example, as in-depth interviews are completed and hours of audiotapes are created, the interviews are also transcribed into print by word-processing programs and/or computer-based textual analysis formats. As the project continues, further elements of data reduction will occur (written summaries, coding, development of grounded themes, identification of analytic themes, consideration of relevant theoretical explanations, etc.). This data-reduction and transformation process occurs throughout the span of the research.

Data Display. The notion of data display is intended to convey the idea that data are presented as an organized, compressed assembly of information that

permits conclusions to be analytically drawn. Displays may involve tables of data; tally sheets of themes; summaries or proportions of various statements, phrases, or terms; and similarly *reduced* and *transformed* groupings of data. These displays assist the researcher in understanding and/or observing certain patterns in the data, or determining what additional analysis or actions must be taken. As with the activity of data reduction, the development of displays is not really a separate step, but rather a component of the analysis process.

Conclusions and Verification. The last analysis activity I will discuss is conclusion drawing and verification. Throughout the research process the investigator has been making various informed evaluations and decisions about the study and the data. Sometimes these have been made on the basis of material found in existing literature (as the researcher spirals back and forth to the literature). Sometimes these evaluations and decisions have arisen as a result of data as they are collected (based on observations in the field, statements made during interviews, observations of patterns in various documents, etc.). Yet, experienced researchers do not make definitive conclusions during these preliminary periods in the research process. Rather, they hold an open and perhaps even a skeptical point of view. In fact, some of the tentative outcomes have aided in data-reduction and data-display activities. Eventually, after the data has been collected, reduced, and displayed, analytic conclusions may begin to emerge and define themselves more clearly and definitively.

Verification is actually a two-fold consideration. First, conclusions drawn from the patterns apparent in the data must be confirmed (verified) to assure that they are real, and not merely wishful thinking on the part of the researcher. This may be accomplished by the researcher carefully checking the path to his conclusion (i.e., retracing the various analytic steps that led to the conclusion). Or, it may involve having another researcher independently examine the displays and data to see if he or she will draw comparable conclusions, a kind of inter-coder reliability check.

Second, verification involves assuring that all of the procedures used to arrive at the eventual conclusions have been clearly articulated. In this manner, another researcher could potentially replicate the study and the analysis procedures and draw comparable conclusions. The implication of this second verification strand implies that qualitative analysis needs to be very well documented as a process. In addition to its availability to other researchers, it permits evaluation of one's analysis strategies, self-reflection, and refinement of one's methods and procedures.

DISSEMINATION

Once the research project has been completed, it is not really over. That is, doing research for the sake of doing it offers no benefit to the scientific community or to the existing body of knowledge it might inform. Research, then, is not complete until it has been disseminated. This may be accomplished through reports submitted to appropriate public agencies or to funding sources. It may include informal presentations to colleagues at brown-bag lunches or formal presentations at professional association meetings. It may involve publishing reports in one of a variety of academic or professional journals. Regardless of how the information is spread, it must be disseminated if it is to be considered both worthwhile and complete. Chapter 12 explains how you may go about disseminating your research results. For the purposes of designing research projects, it is important to bear in mind that this stage of the research process is integral to the whole.

TRYING IT OUT

There are a number of ways you can practice aspects related to the planning of research. What follows are only a few suggestions that should provide an opportunity to gain some experience. While these are useful experiential activities, they should not be confused with actually conducting research.

Suggestion 1: Locate three or four different textbooks on juvenile delinquency. Look up the definition of *delinquent* either in the text or in the glossary. Remember, you might need to try looking under "juvenile delinquent," depending on how the term was indexed. Now consider the differences, if any, that exist between each text's definition, and write a single synthesized definition.

Suggestion 2. Locate the *Index to the Social Sciences* in a college or university library. Use this index to find 10 sources of reference material for a potential study on child abuse. Remember to be creative in developing topics to look up.

Suggestion 3. Identify six concepts and operationally define each. Be sure to consult relevant literature before terms are defined. Do not just make up definitions. When operatively defining how each concept will be measured, be certain these operations conform to both relevant literature and the qualitative paradigm.

REFERENCES

Babbie, E. (1998). *The Practice of Social Research* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
Babbie, E. (1992). *The Practice of Social Research* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
Berg, B. L., & Berg, J. (1993). A reexamination of triangulation and objectivity in qualitative nursing research. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 21(1), 65-72.

Bynum, J. E., & Thompson, W. E. (1992). *Juvenile Delinquency: A Sociological Approach.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Dabney, D. A$_v$ & Berg, B. L. (1994). Perceptions of drug and supply diversion among nurses. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 22(1), 13-22.
DeBakey, L., & DeBakey, S. (1978). The art of persuasion: Logic and language in proposal writing. *Grants Magazine 1,* 43-60.
Denzin, N. K. (1978). *Sociological Methods: A Source Book* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
Flick, U. (1998). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Frankfort-Nachmias, C, & Nachmias, D. (1996). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (5th ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
Glassner, B., Ksander, M., Johnson, B., & Berg, B. L. (1983). The deterrence effect of juvenile versus adult jurisdiction. *Social Problems* 32(2), 219-221.
Hagan, F. E. (1993). *Research Methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.
Huberman, M. A., & Miles, M. B. (1994). Data management and analysis methods. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design. In N. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Lee, R. M. (1993). *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Leedy, P. D. (1993). *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (5th ed.). New York: Macmillan.
Levine, H. G. (1985). Principles of data storage and retrieval for use in qualitative evaluation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* 7(2), 169-186.
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
Marshall, C, & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Rev. and Enlarged ed.). New York: Free Press.
Mutchnick, R. J., & Berg, B. L. (1996) *Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Practice and Applications.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Nachmias, C. K, & Nachmias, D. (1992). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
Polit, D. F, & Hungler, B. P. (1993). *Essentials of Nursing Research.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.
Popper, K. R. (1968). *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge.* New York: Harper and Row.
Rounds, D. (1993). Perceptions of crime and victimization among individuals with legal blindness and severe visual impairment: An exploratory study. Doctoral dissertation. Department of Criminology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.
Senese, J. D. (1997). *Applied Research Methods in Criminal Justice.* Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
Siegel, L. J., & Senna, J. J. (1988). *Juvenile Delinquency: Theory, Practice, and Law* (3rd ed.). St. Paul: West Publishing.
Silverman, D. (1999). *Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Thornton, W. E., Jr., & Voigt, L. (1992). *Delinquency and Justice* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
Turner, J. H. (1989). *Theory Building in Sociology: Assessing Theoretical Cumulation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Wolfe, R. (1992). Data management. In M. C. Alkin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Research. Vol. 1* (6th ed.), 293-299. New York: Macmillan.

CHAPTER 3

ETHICAL ISSUES

Social scientists, perhaps to a greater extent than the average citizen, have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population, and the larger society. The reason for this is that social scientists delve into the social lives of other human beings. From such excursions into private social lives, various policies, practices, and even laws may result. Thus, researchers must ensure the rights, privacy, and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies.

During the past several decades, methods of data collection, organization, and analysis have become more sophisticated and penetrating. As a consequence, the extent or scope of research has become greatly expanded. With this expansion has come increased awareness and concern over the ethics of research and researchers.

To a large extent concerns about research ethics revolve around various issues of harm, consent, privacy, and the confidentiality of data (Punch, 1994). This chapter considers these important ethical concerns as associated with research in general and with qualitative research in particular.

As Babbie (1983) accurately points out, "All of us consider ourselves ethical; not perfect perhaps, but more ethical than most of humanity." Unfortunately, one problem in social science is that ethical considerations are subjective. Researchers eager to gain access to some population that might otherwise be difficult to reach may really not see that their plans are unethical. Some overly zealous researchers, while realizing that certain of their practices may be unethical, nonetheless plunge forward, justifying their actions under the excuse that it isn't illegal!

Many experienced researchers can tell with regret war stories about having violated some tenet of ethics in their less experienced years. The transgression may have involved allowing some gatekeeper to manipulate subjects to take part in a study (under veiled threat of some loss of privilege), or it may have involved some covert investigation that resulted in subtle invasions of privacy. In any case, these now experienced researchers are still likely to feel somewhat embarrassed when they think about these instances—at least one hopes they do.

Often, glaring violations of ethical standards are recognized nearly as soon as the researchers have conceived them. Frequently, during planning stages, particularly when conducting research together with a colleague, ethical problems are identified and worked through. This is not to say that practices that might appear unethical to others outside the study are always eliminated. Rather, the process, like much of qualitative research, is a negotiation, a tradeoff for the amount of access to subjects the researchers are willing to accept in exchange for the amount of ethical risk they are willing to take.

It is not difficult to understand that injecting unknowing subjects with live HIV or AIDS virus is unethical. It may not be quite as easy to see that studying drug dealers and then turning over their addresses and field notes as evidence to the police is also unethical. This latter example is somewhat more difficult to see because a law-abiding attitude is probably so well ingrained in most researchers that the logical response seems obvious—namely, if citizens can assist the police, they have a moral obligation to do so. However, precisely because such tensions between logic and ethics exist, careful consideration of ethical issues is critical to the success or failure of any high-quality research involving humans.

The first portion of this chapter examines some of the historical background of research ethics, including some of the major events that influenced current ethical research practices. Ethical elements commonly considered important when researchers involve human subjects in their research are then addressed.

RESEARCH ETHICS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

There are almost as many historical explanations for the current interest in research ethics as there are research books on college library shelves. Some authors point to the Civil Rights movement during the late 1950s and 1960s as having raised researchers' awareness of ethical issues (Barber, 1973). Other writers suggest that current concerns result from attempts to control federally funded research as available funds grew in quantum leaps following World War II (Smith, 1967; Sykes, 1967). Still others point to particular studies with especially questionable ethics as "controversial" or "provocative," creating concern over the rights and welfare of human subjects (Babbie, 1998, p. 447ff).

There is, however, general agreement that current concerns about research ethics grew out of biomedical research, particularly the ghoulish torture and dismemberment perpetrated under the guise of medical research by Nazi scientists during World War II. For instance, in the name of science, Nazi physicians exposed subjects to freezing temperatures, live viruses, poisons, malaria, and an assortment of untested drugs and experimental operations (Berger, 1990; Burns & Grove, 1993). This wartime medical research led in

1949 to the Nuremberg Code, which established principles for research on human subjects, most notably that subjects must *voluntarily consent* to participate in a study (Wexler, 1990, p. 81).

This ethical canon became the foundation of the Declaration of Helsinki, adopted by the World Health Organization in 1964 and revised in 1975 (Levine, 1986). It was also the basis for the "Ethical Guidelines for Clinical Investigation" adopted by the American Medical Association in 1966 (Bower & de Gasparis, 1978). Yet, as Katz (1972) indicates, years later and thousands of miles away from the bloodstained walls of Nazi operating rooms, extremely risky—sometimes fatal—research was being carried out on unknowing patients here in the United States. Consider, for example, the case of two research physicians at the Brooklyn Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital, who during the mid-1960s injected a suspension containing live cancer cells into 22 unsuspecting elderly patients (Levine, 1986). Although media and public pressure brought an end to the experiment, neither physician was ever prosecuted on any sort of criminal charge (Hershey & Miller, 1976).

Interestingly, before the 1960s, few laws regulated the research process. As Bower and de Gasparis (1978) suggest, with the exception of medical malpractice laws, virtually no federal or state statutes regulated research. Consequently, no legal redress was available to subjects, even if they believed they had been wronged by a behavioral scientist. Highly questionable practices in research throughout the late 1950s and 1960s repeatedly demonstrated the need for regulation and control of studies involving human subjects.

For instance, among the more glaring violations of ethical practices was a study conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service known as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Brandt, 1978; Jones, 1993). This project, which spanned more than 40 years, was a longitudinal study whose purpose was to identify a population of syphilitic black men and to observe in these subjects, over a period of time, the consequences of untreated syphilis. One of the study's original creators is attributed as having made the following prophetic statement about the project: "It will either cover us with mud or glory when completed" Qones, 1993, p. 112).

Although the researchers on the study did not themselves infect the subjects, once the study had begun, the investigative team actively interfered with the lives and health of the subjects without their consent (Jones, 1993). The study began in 1932 when no cure for syphilis existed. After a cure (penicillin) was identified in the 1950s, the research team actively sought to keep the existence of the treatment from their subjects. This included offering free so-called treatment and health services to the sample of men, as well as contacting local African American physicians and instructing them not to treat (for syphilis) any of the 400 men involved in the study.

To ensure that an autopsy could be done on any subject who died dur-
ˆm8 the experiment, the team offered free burial services. Surviving family Members typically were unaware that free burial was conditional on

allowing an autopsy. The study ended in 1972 after it was exposed by the news media and public pressure forced officials to terminate the study. Estimates of the number of men who died directly from advanced syphilis range from 28 to 100 subjects (Brandt, 1978). Shortly after termination of the study, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (the parent agency of the U.S. Public Health Service) appointed a panel that concluded that the research had been "ethically unjustified."

On May 16,1997, 65 years after it had begun—and 23 years after it had ended—President Clinton publicly apologized to the families of the subjects, and the eight surviving subjects in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Clinton, 1997). In his remarks, President Clinton stated:

> The eight men who are survivors of the syphilis study at Tuskegee are a living link to a time not so very long ago that many Americans would prefer not to remember, but we dare not forget. It was a time when our nation failed to live up to its ideals, when our nation broke the trust with people that is the very foundation of our democracy. It is not only in remembering that shameful past that we can make amends and repair our nation, but it is in remembering that past that we can build a better present and better future. And without remembering it, we cannot make amends and we cannot go forward.
>
> So, today America does remember the hundreds of men used in research without their knowledge and consent. We remember them and their family members. Men who were poor and African American, without resources and with few alternatives, they believed they had found hope when they were offered free medical care by the United States Public Health Service. They were betrayed.
>
> The United States government did something wrong—deeply, profoundly, morally wrong. It was an outrage to our commitment to integrity and equality for all our citizens.
>
> To the survivors, to the wives and family members, the children and grandchildren, I say what you know: no power on Earth can give you back the lives lost, the pain suffered, the years of internal torment and anguish. What was done cannot be undone. But we can end the silence. We can stop turning our heads away. We can look at you in the eye and finally say on behalf of the American people, what the United States government did was shameful, and I am sorry.

While the president's remarks were a good beginning to restoring confidence in poor ethnic communities, the "negative legacy" of the Tuskegee study continues to impede researchers' efforts to conduct an assortment of research projects, particularly those involving minorities (Shalala, 1997).

Many other biomedical experiments conducted during the sixties were also "ethically unjustified" (Hershey & Miller, 1976), and during this same period, many behavioral scientists were involved in potentially ethically unjustified research as well—for example, Stanley Milgram's experiment on following orders and control. Milgram (1963) was interested in learning

about human tendencies to obey authority figures. To observe this phenomenon, he told voluntary subjects that they were to teach another person, supposedly another volunteer subject, a simple word-association task. The other volunteer, however, was actually another investigator on the study.

The subject/teacher was instructed by Milgram to administer an electric shock to the learner (the confederate in an adjacent room) whenever the learner made a mistake. The subject/teacher was told that this electric shock was intended to facilitate learning and should be increased in intensity progressively with each error. Many of the subjects obediently (in fact, gleefully) advanced the shock levels to potentially lethal levels.

In reality, the supposed learner received no shocks at all. Rather, each time the subject/teacher administered a shock, a signal indicated that the learner should react as if shocked. Nonetheless, the deception aroused considerable emotional anguish and guilt in the subjects.

Another example of research with questionable ethical tactics is Humphreys's (1970) study of casual homosexual encounters called *Tearoom Trade.* Humphreys was interested in gaining understanding not only about practicing homosexuals but also about heterosexuals who briefly engaged in homosexual encounters. In addition to observing encounters in public restrooms in parks (tearooms), Humphreys developed a way to gain access to detailed information about the subjects he covertly observed.

While serving as a watch queen (a voyeuristic lookout), Humphreys was able to observe the encounters and to catch a glimpse of the participants' car license plates. Once Humphreys had their license plate numbers, he was able to locate their home addresses through the local department of motor vehicles. Next, he disguised himself and deceived these men into believing that he was conducting a survey in their neighborhood. The result was that Humphreys managed to collect considerable amounts of information about each of the subjects he had observed in the tearooms.

Shortly after the publication of Humphreys's work in 1970, there was a considerable outcry against the invasion of privacy, misrepresentation of researcher identities, and deception commonly being practiced during the course of research. Many of the controversies that revolve around Humphreys's research remain key ethical issues today. Paramount among these issues are the justifications that the subject matter was of critical importance to the scientific community and that it simply could not have been investigated in any other manner.

Naturally, this begs the question of considering the potential benefit of a research project weighed against the potential harm. This utilitarian argument essentially sets up a kind of scale where risk and harm are placed on °ne side and benefits are placed on the other side (see Figure 3.1). If the determination is that the amount of benefit outweighs the amount of potential risk Or harm, then the research may be seen from an ethical point of view as permissible (Taylor, 1994). This notion, of course, assumes that there is no potential serious risk of harm, injury, or death possible for any research subject.

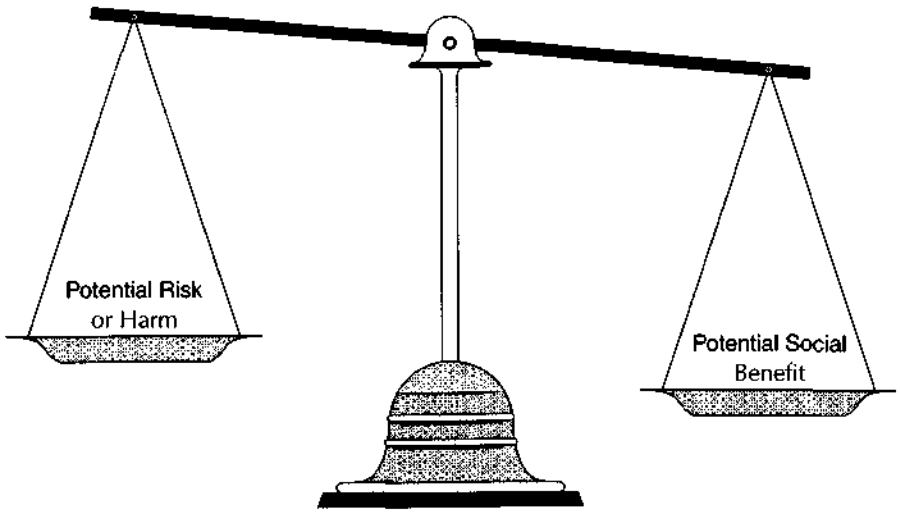


FIGURE 3.1 The Research Risk Benefit Scale

In the case of Humphreys's study, there are many researchers who maintain that the social, legal, and psychological policy changes that have resulted far outweigh any minor invasions of privacy. This is not to suggest that there are not other researchers who argue that the research was unethical no matter how great the benefits have been.

FROM GUIDELINES TO LAW: REGULATIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Early attempts to devise rigorous biomedical experimentation guidelines failed. One major reason was the inability to develop a single code of ethics that, as Bower and de Gasparis (1978, p. 5) put it, "could cover with equal adequacy and flexibility the entire range of biomedical experimentation." However, in 1966, the Surgeon General issued what may have been the first official rules concerning all Public Health Service research. This statement specified that any research financially supported by the Public Health Service was contingent on a review by an institutional committee. The committee was charged with the responsibility of ensuring that study procedures would not harm human subjects and that subjects were informed of any potential risks (and benefits) from their participation.

Several revisions of this general policy occurred during 1967-1969. Finally, in 1971, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (DHEW) published a booklet entitled "The Institutional Guide to DHEW Policy on Protection of Human Subjects," which extended the requirement of an institutional

review committee to all DHEW grant and contract activities involving human subjects. In addition, this booklet required researchers to obtain *informed consent* from subjects before including them in the research.

In 1974, the National Research Act was passed by Congress, and the National Commission on Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research was created by Title II of this law. The National Research Act directed all institutions that sponsored research to establish institutional review committees, today more commonly called *institutional review boards* (IRBs). Locally based in-house IRBs were now charged with the responsibility of carefully reviewing any proposed research that involved human subjects.

Among several other issues, IRBs were expected to ensure that research investigators had considered both potential risks and benefits to subjects, that important scientific knowledge could be derived from the project, that legally informed consent would be obtained from each subject, and that the rights and interests of subjects were protected (Liemohn, 1979).

Another important piece of research-related legislation is the education amendments of 1974. These laws, better known as the Buckley Amendments, were intended to protect the privacy of parents and students (Holden, 1975). In essence, these laws limited access to official records concerning (and identifying) an individual, and they prohibited release of such personal information (with some exceptions) to anyone else without written consent of the student (and the parent in the case of minors).

Finally, the Privacy Acts of 1974 offered additional legal assurances against invasive research on human subjects. This legislation was primarily designed to protect citizens from large private corporations and federal institutions and from the release of potentially erroneous information and records. In addition, however, it provided individuals with judicial machinery for redressing indiscriminate sharing of personal information and records without prior written consent—including when obtained by deceptive researchers. A fair number of these regulations are informally overseen by institutional review boards. Let us consider IRBs in greater detail.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS (IRBs)

Whenever someone brings up the topic of institutional review boards, he or she runs the risk of evoking strong feelings among social science researchers. Some researchers see IRBs as handcuffs impeding their search for scientific answers to social problems. Some researchers simply believe that contemporary IRBs have grown too big for their breeches and that they tend to overstep their perceived purpose and limits. Other researchers say IRBs are staffed with clinicians unable to understand the nuances of certain social scientific styles of research. Indeed, there are many who view IRBs as villains rather than as necessary—let alone virtuous—institutions. Ideally, IRBs could be seen as a group of individuals who selflessly give their time and

expertise to ensure that human subjects are neither physically nor emotionally injured by researchers. Ironically, while few researchers today really believe that IRBs are not necessary, these same individuals are likely to view IRBs in less than positive terms.

In the academic community of the 1990s, research continues to uphold its position as a critically important element. Fundamentally, and somewhat altruistically, research holds the promise of important revelations for collective thinking and changes for the better in society. At a more pragmatic level, social science research, especially federally funded studies, offers the academician opportunities for publication that, in turn, form the rungs in academic promotion and tenure ladders. In contrast to this altruistic and practical research optimism, however, are the previously mentioned research studies of the recent past that exploited human subjects in deplorable ways. The question that remains unanswered, however, is: Exactly what are the institutional review boards' duties?

IRBs and Their Duties

Among the important elements considered by IRB panels is the assurance of informed consent. Usually, this involves requirements for obtaining written informed consent from potential subjects. This requirement has drawn heavy critical fire from social scientists (Fields, 1978; Gray, 1977; Meyer, 1977). Qualitative researchers, especially those involved in ethnographic research, have been particularly vocal. Their concerns often pertain to the way that formal requirements for institutional review and written informed consent damage their special field-worker/informant relationships (Berg et al., 1992; Cassell, 1978; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Wax, 1977).

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, created by the National Research Act of 1974, has reviewed its own guidelines (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978a) and offered revisions (Federal Register, 1978). These revisions are more specific about the role the IRB should play than previous documents were. For example, the Federal Register states that board members may be liable for legal action if they exceed their authority and interfere with the investigator's right to conduct research. These revised guidelines also recommend that the requirement for written informed consent could be waived for certain types of low-risk styles of research.

Because their research procedures are more formalized and require contacts with subjects, the more limited and predictable characteristics of quantitative methodologies are generally simpler to define. As a result, the specific exemptions for styles of research that can be expedited through IRBs largely are quantitative survey types, observation in public places, research involving educational tests (diagnostic, aptitude, or achievement), and archival research (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978b).

The temporary (usually single visit) and formal nature of most quantitative data-gathering strategies makes them easier to fit into federal regulations. In quantitative research, confidentiality is also rather easy to ensure. Written consent slips can be separated out from surveys and secured in innovative ways. It becomes a simple task to ensure that names or other identifiers will not be connected in any way with the survey response sheets.

Qualitative research, especially ethnographic strategies, present greater challenges to IRBs. To be sure, most qualitative researchers will make every effort to comply with federal regulations for the protection of human subjects. However, compliance is not always easy. In order to ensure consistency, lists of names are sometimes maintained even when pseudonyms are used in field notes. Furthermore, the very nature of ethnographic research makes it ideal for studying secret, deviant, or difficult-to-study populations. Consider, for example, drug smugglers (Adler, 1985) or crack dealing (Jacobs, 1998). It would be almost impossible to locate sufficient numbers of drug smugglers or crack dealers to create a probability sampling or to administer a meaningful number of survey questionnaires. Imagine, now, that you also needed to secure written informed-consent slips. It is not likely that anyone could manage these restrictions. In fact, the researcher's personal safety might be jeopardized even by announcing his or her presence (overt observation). It is similarly unlikely that you would have much success trying to locate a sufficient number of patrons of pornographic bookstores to administer questionnaires. **Yet** observational and ethnographic techniques might work very well (see, for example, Tewksbury, 1990).

Many qualitative researchers have arrived at the same conclusion about **the** relationship between researcher and subjects in qualitative research; namely, that the qualitative relationship is so different from quantitative approaches that most conventional procedures for informed consent and protection of human subjects amount to little more than ritual (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For example, Tewksbury (1995) located voluntary participants for a study of sex and danger in men's same-sex in public, encounters, by posting notices on social service agency bulletin boards, college campuses, and through personal contacts (a variation of snowballing discussed in Chapter 2).

In the kind of research for which these guidelines have been written, subjects and researchers have very circumscribed relationships. The researcher presents some survey or questionnaire to the subject who, in turn, fills it out. Or, the researcher describes the requirements of participation in some experiment, and the subject participates. In these quantitative modes of research, it is [a] fairly easy task to predict and describe to the subject the content of the study and the possible risks from participation. As Janice Morse suggests, at some institutions, the IRB requires distribution of a "Bill of Rights," whenever a subject is included in an experiment (Morse, 1994, p. 338).

With qualitative research, on the other hand, the relationship between ^searcher and subject is frequently an ongoing and evolving one. Doing qualitative research with subjects is more like being permitted to observe or **take** part in the lives of these subjects. At best, it may be seen as a social **contract.** But as in all contracts, both parties have some say about the contents of

the agreement and in regulating the relationship. While it is not difficult to predict possible risks in quantitative survey studies, this task can be quite a problem in some qualitative research projects.

Consider, for example, a study where a researcher seeks to observe the gambling behavior of people while drinking alcohol at taverns (McSkimming, 1996). Can the researcher actually determine whether people who are drinking alcohol and gambling as part of their social worlds will be at risk because the researcher is present in the same tavern watching them? Certainly, any time people consume alcohol and engage in something as volatile as gambling there is the potential for violence. From the standpoint of the IRB, a declaration from the researcher that there is no greater risk to subjects because the researcher is present observing their behaviors is likely to be sufficient; in short, the research project itself does not increase or cause risk. Of course, this does nothing to diminish the usual risk of these behaviors.

Some researchers may have thrown in the towel, and, in order to avoid confrontations with IRBs, simply never research certain controversial topics. That is, these researchers may have taken the moral position that not all topics are appropriate for academic study. This, however, could lead to a serious problem.

Clarifying the Role of IRBs

Initially, IRBs were charged with the responsibility to review the adequacy of consent procedures for the protection of human subjects in research funded by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. This mandate was soon broadened to include a review of all research conducted in an institution receiving any funds from DHEW—even when the study itself did not (Burstein, 1987; Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1989).

Part of the institutional review boards' duties, was to ensure that subjects in research studies were advised of both the potential risks from participation and the possible benefits. This task seems to have evolved among some IRBs to become an assessment of risk-to-benefit ratios of proposed studies. In some cases, this is based upon the IRB's impression of the worth of the study. In other cases, this may be based upon the IRB's presumed greater knowledge of the subject and methodological strategies than potential subjects are likely to possess (Bailey, 1996; Burstein, 1987). Thus, in many cases, IRBs, and not subjects, determine whether the subject will even have the option of participating or declining to participate in a study.

According to the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR, 1993, Article 45, Part 46,101-110) there are a number of research situations that do not require a full-blown institutional review. These projects are subject to what may be termed an *expedited review*. Expedited reviews may involve a read-through and determination by the chair or a designated IRB committee member rather than review by the full committee. Usually, studies entitled to an expedited review are evaluations of educational institutions that examine normal educational practices, organizational effectiveness, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management strategies.

Other types of research subject areas may receive an expedited review or no review, depending on the specific institutional rules of a given university or research organization. These areas include certain survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior. The CFR provisions that exclude research areas from review state:

1. The information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the participants cannot be identified.
2. Any disclosure of the participants' response outside the research cannot reasonably identify the subject.
3. The study and its results do not place the participant at risk of criminal or civil liability, nor will it be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation. Thus, for example, an observational study where subjects are not identified.
4. The research will be conducted on preexisting data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, provided these items are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified.

In effect, the governmental regulations as established by the CFR allow certain types of research to be undertaken without any review by an IRB, and rather depend upon the professional codes or ethics of the researcher, or on the various more restrictive rules of a particular university or research organization.

Today, many IRBs have further extended their reach to include evaluation of methodological strategies, not, as one might expect, as these methods pertain to human subject risks but in terms of the project's methodological adequacy. The justification for this, apparently, is that even where minimum risks exist, if a study is designed poorly, it will not yield any scientific benefit (Berg et al., 1992).

During the past several years IRBs seem to have begun to moralize rather than assess the potential harm to subjects. As an example, consider the following situation that arose recently during an IRB review of a proposal at a mid-sized university on the East Coast. The project was designed to examine ethnographically the initiation of cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption among middle- and high-school aged youths. The design called for identified field researchers to spend time in public places observing youths. The idea was to observe how smoking and alcohol fit into the social worlds of these youths.

Several IRB committee members were extremely concerned that ethnographers would be watching children smoking and drinking without notifying their parents of these behaviors. During a review of this proposal with the investigator, these committee members argued that it was unthinkable that no intervention would be taken on the part of the fieldworkers. They recommended that the researchers tell the youths' parents that they were engaging in

these serious behaviors. The investigator explained that this would actually be a breach of confidentiality and potentially expose the subjects to serious risk of corporal punishment.

One committee member asked, What if the youth was observed smoking crack; wouldn't the fieldworker tell his or her parents then? The investigator reminded the committee that these observations were to be in public places. The fieldworkers did not have a responsibility to report to the parents what their children were doing—no matter how potentially unhealthy it may be. The investigator further explained that there was no legal requirement to inform on these subjects, and, in fact, to do so would make the research virtually impossible to conduct. The committee member agreed that there may be no legal requirement, but went on to argue that there certainly was a moral one!

Eventually, a compromise was struck. The researcher agreed to include a statement in the proposal indicating that if the fieldworkers observed what they believed were children engaging in behavior that would likely result in immediate and serious personal injury or imminent death, they would intervene. Of course, such a statement seemed unnecessary for the researcher, since it was already agreed upon by the research team. It did, however, appease the committee members who continued to grumble that the parents should be informed about their children's behavior.

Active versus Passive Consent

Another type of moralizing has recently arisen over the controversy surrounding active versus passive informed consent by parents of children involved in research. Active consent may be defined as the "formal written permission by an informed parent or legal guardian that allows a child to participate in a research project" (Deschenes & Vogel, 1995). Passive consent is usually based on the assumption that parental permission is granted if parents do not return a refusal form after being informed about the study's purpose (Deschenes & Vogel, 1995; Ellickson & Hawes, 1989).

Even the federal government has gotten into the picture. In 1995, they began considering a bill that would require active consent for research involving children. If this legislation had passed, it would have put a considerable damper on the research undertaken by many educational researchers.

In the past, researchers who have employed an active consent style have reported that it yields unacceptably low response rates. This translates into the underrepresentation of relevant study subjects, often the very ones involved in or at risk from the study behaviors (Kearney et al., 1983; Severson & Ary, 1983; Thompson, 1984).

To avoid excluding relevant study subjects, many researchers have turned to the passive consent method (Ellickson & Hawes, 1989). The moral questions here rests on the argument that passive procedures do not fully inform parents about the research or give them sufficient opportunities to refuse participation.

Some researchers question whether parents have actually intentionally decided to allow their child to participate and have consciously not sent in the refusal notice. In this case, one might interpret non-response as more of an indicator of sloppy or lackadaisical parental attitudes—but not necessarily consent.

Active consent requires informed consent rigor that may be too stringent for many qualitative research endeavors. This is especially true since most qualitative projects implement a series of diligent data safeguards such as removal of identifiers to ensure confidentiality. Carefully designed passive consent procedures can avoid various negative consequences of active consent, while still ensuring parents are being informed.

The use of active consent begs the question of how extensive it must be, and how it should be implemented in qualitative research. For example, if an investigator is interested in observing the interactions between children at play and during their studies, how extensive would the active consent need to be? Certainly, if observations are being made in a classroom, all of the parents would need to be notified, but would all have to actively agree before the researcher could enter the room? If one parent said no, would that mean that the child could not be included in the researcher's notes, or that the research could not be undertaken? If the researcher wanted to observe this class of children on the playground, would he or she need the active consent of the parents of every child in the school?

Again, these concerns seem to direct themselves more to quantitative than qualitative studies. In most quantitative projects, a researcher can easily avoid giving a survey to any child or exclude the child from inclusion in some experiment, if he or she has not obtained a parental consent. Similarly, a researcher could exclude youths from an interview study if they fail to provide written permission from their parents. It is not as easy, however, to exclude youths from school-based observational studies. Thus, if a researcher desires to undertake this type of research, under the guidelines of active consent, he or she might not be able to. Naturally, this suggests, once more, the push toward what could be called "research of the sterile and mundane."

IRBs in today's research community are quite complicated groups of people dealing with a myriad of difficult technological, ethical, and recently moralistic problems. A reasonable question to ask is, Who in his or her right mind would want to serve on such a panel? This, however, brings us to the question of exactly who serves on the review boards?

Membership Criteria for IRBs

The federal regulations specify that "each IRB shall have at least five members With varying backgrounds to promote complete and adequate review of research activities commonly conducted by the institution" *(Code of Federal Regulations,* 1993, p. 7). There are also provisions that IRBs should not be composed entirely of women, men, single racial groups, or one profession. Furthermore,

each IRB should contain at least one member whose primary work does not include the sciences or social sciences (e.g., lawyers, ethicists, or members of the clergy). However, federal guidelines do not articulate how to select or locate IRB members, what research qualifications members should have, what lengths members' terms should be, or how to establish an IRB chairperson. The federal regulations do require that "assurances" be submitted to the Office for Protection from Research Risks, National Institutes of Health.

Among these assurances must be a list of IRB members' names, their "earned degrees; representative capacity; indications of experience such as board certifications, licenses, etc." *(Code of Federal Regulations,* 1993, p. 6). While no suggestion is given about what types of degrees people should have in order to sit on the IRB, the allusion to board certification and/or licenses does convey the notion of clinicians rather than social scientists. While many social scientists may believe that their institution's IRB is composed of clinicians, it is likely that it is not. The possibility may exist, however, that members of IRBs themselves have never conducted research on human subjects or, for that matter, conducted any research. The federal regulations do not require that IRB members have a research history; hence, the situation that some do not is quite conceivable.

Institutional review boards are really still in their infancy. They are certainly a necessary element in maintaining safe and ethical research in the social sciences. Exactly what their role should be, who should hold board positions, and what scientific role they should play in the research community remain to be worked out.

There are no quick fixes for establishing IRBs that are able to ensure both safety to human subjects and unhampered research opportunities for investigators. As the serious ethical infractions that occurred before the advance of IRBs demonstrate, social scientists left to their own designs sometimes go astray. On the other hand, researchers may be correct in their stance that IRBs left to their own devices may grow too restrictive. Nonetheless, IRBs should be able to operate in concert with researchers rather than in opposition to them. Social scientists need to become more involved in the IRB process and seek ways to implement board goals and membership policies that are responsive to changing times, social values, and research technologies.

ETHICAL CODES

During the past several decades, changing social attitudes about research as well as changing legislation have led professional associations to create codes of ethical conduct. For example, the American Nurses' Association developed *Human Rights Guidelines for Nurses in Clinical and Other Research* (1975). The American Sociological Association produced its code of ethics during the early 1980s (American Sociological Association, 1984, 1992). Ethical guidelines for psychologists emerged in the American Psychological Association (American

psychological Association, 1981) in a document entitled "Ethical Principles of psychologists" and again in 1984 in a document entitled "Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants" (American Psychological Association, 1984). The American Society of Criminology has not formally adopted a code of ethics. Hagan (1993), however, suggests that most criminologists and criminal justice researchers tend to borrow from connate disciplines. Certainly, paramount among these borrowed elements is the avoidance of harm to human subjects.

SOME COMMON ETHICAL CONCERNS IN BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

Among the most serious ethical concerns that have received attention during the past two decades is the assurance that subjects are voluntarily involved and informed of all potential risks. Yet even here there is some controversy.

In general, the concept of voluntary participation in social science research is an important ideal, but ideals are not always attainable. In some instances—such as the one illustrated by Humphreys's (1970) study—violating the tenet of voluntary participation may appear justified to certain researchers. Typically, such justifications are made on the basis of an imaginary scale described as tipped toward the ultimate social good as measured against the possible harm to subjects.

Another argument against arbitrary application of this notion of voluntary participation concerns the nature of volunteering in general. First, if all social research included only those persons who eagerly volunteered to participate, little meaningful understanding would result. There would be no way of determining if these types of persons were similar to others who lacked this eagerness to volunteer. In other words, both qualitative and aggregated statistical data would become questionable.

Second, in many cases, volunteer subjects may in reality be coerced or manipulated into volunteering. For instance, one popular style of sample identification is the college classroom. If the teacher asks the entire class to voluntarily take part in a research project, there may be penalties for not submitting even if the teacher suggests otherwise. Even if no punishments are intentionally planned, if students believe that not taking part will be noticed and might somehow be held against them, they have been manipulated. Under such circumstances, as in the case of the over-eager volunteers, confidence in the data is undermined.

Babbie (1992) similarly notes that offering reduced sentences to inmates *n exchange for their participation in research—or other types of incentives to Potential subjects—represents yet another kind of manipulated voluntary consent. As Martin et al. (1968) suggest, voluntary participation in studies

among prisoners results from a strange mix of altruism, monetary gain, and hope for a potential way of enhancing their personal prestige and/or status.

A third justification for not gaining the voluntary consent of subjects is suggested by Rainwater and Pittman (1967). They believe that social science research enhances accountability in public officials. Consequently, research in many public institutions must be conducted covertly (thus, without voluntary participation on the part of subjects) if it is to be meaningful—and in some instances if it is to be conducted at all.

In contrast to these justifications for not obtaining voluntary participation, Kelman (1972) outlines how various invasions of privacy and manipulations of research subjects occur in fairly powerless segments of society and organizations. On the one hand, researchers might justify this invasion as the conduct of do-gooders who focus on such disadvantaged groups as drug abusers, the unemployed, and the poor because social service agencies are interested in helping people with social problems. On the other hand, researchers can create as strong a case for social agencies' desires to get a firmer grip on these disadvantaged groups, and certainly government agencies use social science research to formulate their policies (Lakoff, 1971).

Regardless of the justification, because of their lack of political, social, and financial power, these disadvantaged groups are more accessible to researchers than many more powerful groups are. In consequence, researchers must be responsive to these conditions and clearly explain to subjects the rights and responsibilities of both the researchers and the participants.

No hard and fast answers exist for resolving the dilemma of voluntary participation. Researchers must balance how voluntary subjects' participation will be against their perceptions of personal integrity; their responsibilities to themselves, their profession, and their discipline; and the ultimate effects for their subjects. In other words, in the end, researchers must define for themselves what is ethical in research.

PHYSICAL AND ETHICAL DANGERS IN COVERT RESEARCH

A similar ethical concern centers on the decision about whether to enter the field as an overt (announced) or covert (secret) investigator. The highly illegal nature of certain deviant careers and activities—the very thing that may make them sociologically interesting—may preclude overtly investigating them. The adoption of a covert research role, however, must be carefully considered, for in addition to potentially violating the rights of the subjects, there is a real possibility that the researchers themselves might come to some harm or legal complication. Patricia Adler, for example, explains her attempt to strike a balance between overt and covert researcher roles (Adler, 1985, pp. 17,27):

> In discussing this issue [whether to overtly or covertly investigate drug trafficking] with our key informants, they all agreed that we should be extremely discreet (for both our sakes and theirs). We carefully approached new individuals before we admitted that we were studying them. With many of these people, then, we took a covert posture in the research setting. . . . Confronted with secrecy, danger, hidden alliances, misrepresentations and unpredictable changes of intent, I had to use a delicate combination of overt and covert roles.

There is also the problem, particularly when conducting covert field research on deviants, that one will necessarily break the law (Adler, 1985; Becker, 1963; Carey, 1972; Polsky, 1969; Tunnell, 1998). Again, Patricia Adler (Adler, 1985, p. 23) provides an excellent illustration of the various levels of illegality one might become guilty of:

> This [law violation] occurs in its most innocuous form from having "guilty knowledge": information about crimes that are committed. Being aware of major dealing and smuggling operations made us an accessory to their commission, since we failed to notify the police. We broke the law, secondly, through our "guilty observations," by being present at the scene of a crime and witnessing its occurrence.... Lastly, we broke the law through our "guilty actions," by taking part in illegal behavior ourselves. Although we never dealt drugs (we were too scared to be seriously tempted) we consumed drugs and possessed them in small quantities.

Kenneth Tunnell (1998, p. 208) makes a similar observation:

> Whenever we as researchers gain entry into the world of deviants and personally learn the activities of hustlers, thieves, and drug peddlers, for example, we become privy to information normally accessible only to occupants of such trades. A resultant problem, and one described by other ethnographers, is that legal authorities may learn of the research and exact damning information from researchers.

Although deception may be seen as a minor ethical violation by some investigators, it remains a serious breach of ethical conduct for others (Kelman, 1967). The decision about whether to assume an overt or a covert researcher role, then, involves a negotiated and, I will hope, a balanced weighing of the potential gains against the potential losses.

Some social scientists, such as Kai Erikson (1967; 1995), argue that covert research and its associated deception jeopardizes the ability of future researchers to undertake investigations by violating the trust and goodwill of similar subjects and/or the public. Other social scientists such as Jay Mitch Miller (1998, p. 50) counter this argument by maintaining that many of the kinds of settings that would interest researchers, and that require covert investigations, tend to be restricted areas occupied by people who are already

suspicious of strangers because of the potential threat of legal sanctions associated with their behaviors. In effect, researchers interested in various aspects of deviance, drugs, or other criminal behaviors, already deal with resistant and distrustful populations.

As regards research ethics, researchers must counterbalance their various social responsibilities. These include responsibilities to themselves, their discipline or profession, to the pursuit of knowledge, the society, and their subjects.

The orientation supported in this text is that there are situations where covert research is both necessary and ethically justified. The determination depends on what you are studying, how you plan to conduct the study, and what you plan to do with the results. For example, powerful and elite groups in society are difficult to access, and consequently, social scientists tend to avoid them and concentrate their research efforts on more powerless groups (Hertz & Imber, 1993; Miller, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). To be sure, there are far more studies of poor people than there are of politicians; nurses than doctors, employees of corporations than CEOs of corporations, the working class than celebrities, and so forth. Researchers reveal the faults and frailties of these *undergroups*, while the powerful and elite go unscathed. Covert strategies of research, then, may be the only means by which to investigate the powerful and elite. Such research, then, may well be morally and ethically justified. Nonetheless, the orientation supported here is to be cautious about the use of deception. I am especially cautious about outright deception of anyone merely for the sake of conducting a study that is only adding another *research notch* to an investigator's metaphoric gun handle, or simply to expedite the research, or because the research study will allow one to complete a degree requirement.

Other concerns related to decisions about ethical research practices can more easily be detailed and considered. Elaboration of each of these elements may assist researchers (particularly the inexperienced) in determining how to deal with ethical concerns in research. These elements include informed consent and implied consent, confidentiality and anonymity, securing the data, and objectivity and careful research design.

INFORMED CONSENT AND IMPLIED CONSENT

Issues surrounding informed consent grow out of the concern to avoid—or at least identify and articulate—potential risk to human subjects. Risks associated with participation in social scientific research include exposure to physical, psychological, or social injury.

Informed consent means the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation. In the case of minors or mentally impaired persons, whose exercise of choice is legally governed,

consent must be obtained from the person or agency legally authorized to represent the interests of the individual.

In most institutionally sponsored research, consent must be ensured in writing. Typically, *informed consent slips* contain a written statement of potential risk and benefit and some phrase to the effect that these risks and benefits have been explained. As a rule, these slips are dated and signed by both the potential subject and the researchers or their designated representative.

There are chiefly two rationales behind the requirement to obtain signed informed consent slips. First, they systematically ensure that potential subjects are *knowingly* participating in a study and are doing so of their own choice. Second, signed consent slips provide IRBs a means by which to monitor (by examining signed slips) the voluntary participation of subjects.

Obtaining a signed informed consent slip, as may be obvious, presents in itself a slight ethical dilemma. A written record of the subjects' names (and frequently their addresses as well) means that a formal record of participants exists. In order to preserve privacy, these slips are usually kept under very careful guard by the principal investigator(s) and are revealed to IRBs only if questions arise concerning ethical practices in a given study.

Sometimes in large-scale survey questionnaire studies, separate signed informed consent slips are eliminated and replaced with implied consent. *Implied consent* is indicated by the subject taking the time to complete the lengthy questionnaire. In these circumstances, explanations of the study's purpose and potential risks and benefits are explained at the beginning of the survey.

A similar kind of implied consent can replace a signed consent slip when researchers conduct tape-recorded in-depth interviews. In this instance, the interviewers fully explain the nature of the project and the potential risks and benefits at the beginning of each interview. Next, the interviewers ask the subjects if they understand the information and are still willing to take part in the interview. Affirmative responses and completed interviews serve the purpose of implying consent in the absence of a signed consent slip. The benefit of this particular style of informed consent is the elimination of any record of the subjects' names. This procedure is particularly helpful when interviewing people who might otherwise refuse to take part in a study. To a large measure, this type of implied consent is related to the next topic—namely, confidentiality and anonymity.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Although *confidentiality* and *anonymity* are sometimes mistakenly used as synonyms, they have quite distinct meanings. *Confidentiality* is an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects' identities. In a literal sense, *anonymity* means that the subjects remain nameless. In some instances, such as self-administered survey questionnaires,

it may be possible to provide anonymity. Although investigators may know to whom surveys were distributed, if no identifying marks have been placed on the returned questionnaires, the respondents remain anonymous.

In most qualitative research, however, because subjects are known to the investigators (even if only by sight and a street name), anonymity is virtually nonexistent. Thus, it is important to provide subjects with a high degree of confidentiality.

Researchers commonly assure subjects that anything discussed between them will be kept in strict confidence, but what exactly does this mean? Naturally, this requires that the researchers systematically change each subject's real name to a pseudonym or case number when reporting data. But what about the names of locations? Names of places, in association with a description of certain characteristics about an individual, may make it possible to discover a subject's identity (Gibbons, 1975). Even if people are incorrect about their determination of who is being identified, the results may nonetheless make people wary of cooperating in future research. Researchers, therefore, must always be extremely careful about how they discuss their subjects and the settings as well (Hagan 1993; Hessler, 1992).

Keeping Identifying Records

It is not unusual for researchers, particularly ethnographers, to maintain systematically developed listings of real names and pseudonyms for people and places. As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6, the use of such systematic lists ensures consistency during later analysis stages of the data. However, the existence of such lists creates a potential risk to subjects. Although court battles may eventually alter the situation, social scientists are presently unable to invoke professional privilege as a defense against being forced to reveal names of informants and sources during criminal proceedings. John Van Maanen (1983) once refused to turn over subpoenaed materials in a case of alleged police brutality on the questionable grounds of *research confidentiality;* he does not indicate that his efforts were successful. In other words, under normal conditions, lists of names and places can be subpoenaed along with other relevant research notes and data.

Strategies for Safeguarding Confidentiality

In effect, researchers may be placed in an ethical Catch-22. On one hand, they have a professional obligation to honor assurances of confidentiality made to subjects. On the other hand, researchers, in most cases, can be held in contempt of court if they fail to produce the subpoenaed materials. Still, investigators can take several possible steps to safeguard their reputations for being reliable concerning confidentiality.

First, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, researchers may obtain a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality. Under provisions set forth as conditions of award, investigators cannot be forced to reveal notes, names, or pertinent information in court. Unfortunately, few of the many thousands of researchers who apply are awarded a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality.

A second tack, which is more effective, is to avoid keeping identifying records and lists any longer than is absolutely necessary. Although this may not prevent the courts from issuing a subpoena and verbally questioning investigators, the likelihood of this occurring is reduced in the absence of written records. In the mid-1980s, a court case resulted in a federal judge ruling in favor of a sociologist's right to protect subjects by refusing to release his field notes to a grand jury investigating a suspicious fire at a restaurant where he worked and conducted covert research (Fried, 1984; see discussion of the Brajuha case in Chapter 6). This case, however, has yet to result in significant changes in judicial attitudes about the nature of research and field notes. Certainly, the potential for legal problems is likely to persist for some time.

Because of the various precedents and differing state statutes, speculating or generalizing about how a particular case may be resolved is impossible (see Boruch & Cecil, 1979; Carroll & Knerr, 1977). Even if researchers choose to risk imprisonment for contempt, the fact that there exists a moral obligation to maintain their promise of confidentiality to the best of their ability should be apparent.

SECURING THE DATA

Although court-related disclosures provide particularly difficult problems, they are rare cases. A more likely—as well as more controllable—form of disclosure comes from careless or clumsy handling of records and data. In other words, researchers must take intentional precautions to ensure that information does not accidentally fall into the wrong hands or become public.

Researchers frequently invent what they believe are unique strategies to secure pieces of research information. More often than not, though, these innovations simply represent attempts to separate names or other identifiers from the data. Regardless of whether you store data in multiple locations or place them in metal boxes inside locked closets or a locked desk drawer, precautions against accidental disclosure must be taken.

Precautions should also be taken to ensure that research-related information is not carelessly discussed. Toward this end, signing a *statement of confidentiality* is common for each member of a research team. This is sometimes referred to as a *personnel agreement for maintaining confidentiality* (see Figure 3-2). These statements typically indicate the sensitive nature of the research and offer a promise not to talk to anybody about information obtained during the study.

This form is intended to further ensure confidentiality of data obtained during the course of the study entitled "Drinking by American College Students During Social Gatherings." All parties employed in this research will be asked to read the following statement and sign their names indicating they agree to comply.

I hereby affirm that I will not reveal or in any manner disclose information obtained during the course of this study. I agree to discuss material directly related to this study only with other members of the research team. In any reports, papers, or published materials I write, I agree to remove obvious identifiers.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Project Director's Signature: _____

FIGURE 3.2 Personnel Agreement for Maintaining Confidentiality

Although a signed statement of confidentiality may not stand up in court if an investigator is subpoenaed, it does provide at least some assurance that personnel on the research team will not indiscriminately discuss the study.

OBJECTIVITY AND CAREFUL RESEARCH DESIGN

Although you may take an assortment of complicated measures to ensure confidentiality, perhaps the most effective strategy is to think through the project carefully during the design stage. Slovak (1983, pp. 458^159), for example, details how a student once approached him about conducting a study of the effects of television violence on children. As Slovak reports, this is an interesting and potentially important research topic. The student was encouraged to develop a research design, which she did. Her plan was to select a sample of children and then randomly assign them to either an experimental or control group. Next, the experimental group was to be given the treatment of watching a selection of violent cartoons, while the control group would watch nonviolent cartoons. Following this treatment, the children were to be observed during play and assessed on the basis of whether they played aggressively or passively. The hypothetical premise was that the experimental group would play more aggressively than the control group.

Slovak (1983, p. 459) points out that although the student's design was essentially feasible technically, it was ethically unacceptable. His explanation follows:

> Let's presume, for the sake of argument, that my student's hypothesis was correct—that watching violence did lead to aggressive behavior among children. Were that the case generally, it should also hold among the particular children she planned to study. In that event, the latent function of her project would have been nothing less than to "cause" an experimental group of children to be aggressive.

One might speculate that even if aggression were aroused in the experimental group of children, its effects might be short-lived. However, even the short-lived aggressive behavior might have some lasting harmful effects on some of these children. As previously discussed, although researchers certainly do have a professional responsibility to search for knowledge, they also have an ethical responsibility to avoid exposing subjects to potential harm. Assessing long-range consequences of social research participation, although highly problematic, is nonetheless necessary.

Nurse researchers may have additional ethical problems because some of their research overlaps into the biomedical realm. Polit and Hungler (1993, pp. 354-345), for example, outline a number of research problems and potential ethical dilemmas that each may involve. Two of these sample problems are shown below (Polit & Hungler, 1993, p. 354):

> **Research Problem:** How empathic are nurses in their treatment of patients in intensive care units?
>
> **Ethical Dilemma:** Ethical research generally involves having subjects be fully cognizant of their participation in a study. Yet if the researcher informs the nurses serving as subjects that their treatment of patients will be observed, will their behavior be "normal"? If the nurses' behavior is distorted because of the known presence of observers, the value of the study would be undermined.

> **Research Problem:** Does a new medication prolong life in cancer patients?
>
> **Ethical Dilemma:** The best way to test the effectiveness of interventions is to administer the intervention to some subjects but withhold it from others to see if differences between groups emerge. If the intervention is untested (e.g., a new drug), however, the group receiving the intervention may be exposed to potentially hazardous side effects. On the other hand, the group not receiving the drug may be denied a beneficial treatment.

As these examples suggest, some research situations place the researcher in an ethical bind. On the one hand, researchers want to advance scientific knowledge and understanding in the most rigorous manner possible. On the

other hand, they must be careful not to violate the rights of subjects or to place them in harm's way.

Even if researchers can protect subjects from harm during the course of research, they must also consider what happens thereafter as a direct result of the research. Particularly when conducting policy-laden research on various drug or crime-involved subjects, what investigators learn from these subjects may change the subjects' lives—and not necessarily for the better. Disseminating results that provide law enforcement agencies with improved techniques for interception could be construed as causing harm to the subjects (Lakoff, 1971).

In addition to deciding against a given project during the design stage, researchers may consider possible ways of protecting the interests of subjects both during and following the actual study. By carefully considering possible harm to subjects in advance, researchers can sometimes avoid personal embarrassment and breaches of confidentiality.

The practice of researchers ensuring confidentiality in order to obtain the cooperation of subjects is likely to continue. It is quite important, therefore, that novice researchers recognize the potential tension between what might be called *academic freedom* and enforcement of the laws of the land. As Hofmann (1972) points out, social scientists must be responsible—and accountable—for their actions. With this firmly in mind, researchers ultimately may continue to question whether their ethical practices are justified by their ends. The ethical justification of research must be considered situationally, case by case.

TRYING IT OUT

You have been asked to sit on an institutional review board to consider a professor's planned research project. The summary for this project follows:

> My proposed research will involve an ethnographic study of interactions among workers and inhabitants in a shelter for the homeless. I propose to enter the setting under the cover of being a homeless person myself. I will covertly take notes and systematically alter all names and identifying titles. I plan to examine interactions among the shelter workers as well as among the residents of the shelter. Naturally, I will augment my observations with numerous informal interviews with subjects.

After reading the preceding summary proposal, answer the following questions:

1. What are some of the important ethical concerns to consider regarding this proposed research project?

2. If you were the researcher, how might you justify conducting a covert project of this sort?
3. How might a project be proposed that would likely provide similar information but would not require covert entry?
4. What safeguards should the researcher take to protect the subjects in the proposed project?

REFERENCES

Adler, P. A. (1985). *Wheeling and Dealing.* New York: Columbia University Press.

American Nurses' Association. (1975). *Human Rights Guidelines for Nurses in Clinical and Other Research.* Kansas City, MO: American Nursing Association.

American Psychological Association. (1981). Ethical principles of psychologists. *American Psychologist 36,* 633-638.

American Psychological Association. (1984). *Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

American Sociological Association. (1984). *Code of Ethics.* Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

American Sociological Association. (March 1992). Code of ethics. *Footnotes 10,* 9-10.

Babbie, E. (1983). *The Practice of Social Research* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Babbie, E. (1992). *The Practice of Social Research* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Babbie, E. (1998). *The Practice of Social Research* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Bailey, C. A. (1996). *A Guide to Field Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Barber, B. (1973). Prepared statement to the House Subcommittee on Health Hearing, Protection of Human Subjects Act. U.S. Congress, Washington, DC.

Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.* New York: Free Press.

Berg, B. L., Austin, W. T., & Zuern, G. A. (1992, March). Institutional review boards: Who, what, where, and why? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Pittsburgh.

Berger, R. L. (1990). Nazi science: The Dachau hypothermia experiments. *New England journal of Medicine* 322(20), 1435-1440.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Boruch, R. F., & Cecil, J. (1979). *Assuring the Confidentiality of Social Research Data.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bower, R. T., & de Gasparis, P. (1978). *Ethics in Social Research.* New York: Praeger.

Brajuha, M., & Hallowell, L. (1986). Legal intrusion and the politics of fieldwork. *Urban Life* 24(4), 454-478.

Brandt, A. M. (December 1978). Racism and research: The case of the Tuskegee syphilis study. *Hasting Center Report,* 21-29.

Burns, N, & Grove, S. (1993). *The Practice of Nursing Research* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.

Burstein, A. G. (February 1987). The virtue machine. *American Psychologist,* 199-202.

Carey, J. T. (1972). Problems of access and risk in observing drug scenes. In J. D. Douglas (Ed.), *Research on Deviance.* New York: Random House.

Carroll, J. D., & Knerr, C. (1977). *The Confidentiality of Research Sources and Data.* Testimony presented to the Privacy Protection Study Commission. Washington, DC.

Cassell, J. (1978). Risk and benefit to subjects of fieldwork. *American Sociologist 13,*134-143.

Chadwick, B. A., Bahr, H. M., & Albrecht, S. L. (1984). *Social Science Research Methods.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Clinton, W. (1997). Remarks by the President in apology for study done in Tuskegee. Press release. Washington, DC: Office of the Press Secretary, The White House.
Code of Federal Regulations. (1993). Protection of Human Subjects. Article 45, Part 46, Sections 101-110. Washington, DC: Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.
Department of Health and Human Services. (1989). *Code of Federal Regulations* (45 CFR 46). Protection of Human Subjects. Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health, Office for Protection from Research Risks.
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (1978a). *Report and Recommendations on Institutional Review Boards,* Pub. no. (05) 78-008. Washington, DC.
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (1978b). *Belmont Report.* Pub. no. (05) 78-0012. Washington, DC.
Deschenes, L. P., & Vogel, R. E. (1995). Ethical and practical issues in school-based research: A case study of active consent. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Boston.
Ellickson, P. L., & Hawes, J. A. (1989). An assessment of active versus passive methods for obtaining parental consent. *Evaluation Review 13(1),* 45-55.
Erikson, K. T. (1967). A comment on disguised observation in sociology. *Social Problems 14,* 366-373.
Erikson, K. T. (1995). Commentary. *The American Sociologist,* 26(2), 4-11.
Federal Register. (November 30, 1978). Protection of human subjects: Institutional review boards, 943 FR 56174.
Federal Register. (June 18,1991). Federal policy for the protection of human subjects: Notices and rules (part II), FR Doc. 91-14257.
Fields, C. M. (March 12, 1978). Universities fear impact of rules to protect research subjects. *Chronicle of Higher Education,* 5-6.
Fried, J. P. (April 8,1984). Judge protects waiter's notes on fire inquiry. *New York Times,* p. A47.
Gibbons, D. C. (1975). Unidentified research sites and fictitious names. *American Sociologist 10,* 32-36.
Gray, B. G. (1977). The functions of human subjects review committees. *American Journal of Psychiatry 134,* 907-909.
Hagan, F. E. (1993). *Research Methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology.* New York: Macmillan.
Hershey, N., & Miller, R. (1976). *Human Experimentation and the Law.* Germantown, MD: Aspen.
Hertz, R., & Imber, J. B. (1993). Fieldwork in elite settings: Introduction, *journal of Contemporary Ethnography 22,* 3-6.
Hessler, R. M. (1992). *Social Research Methods.* New York: West Publishing.
Hofmann, G. (1972). The quest for relevance: Some implications for social research. *ET AL. 3,* 50-57.
Holden, C. (1975). Privacy: Congressional efforts are coming to fruition. *Science 188,* 713-715.
Humphreys, L. (1970). *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places.* Chicago: Aldine.
Jacobs, B. A. (1998). Researching crack dealers: Dilemmas and contradictions. In J. Ferrell & M. S. Hamm (Eds.), *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime Deviance and Field Research* (pp. 160-177). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
Jones, J. H. (1993). *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment.* New York: Free Press.
Katz, J. (1972). *Experimentation with Human Beings.* New York: Russell Sage.
Kearney, K., et al. (1983). Sample bias resulting from a requirement for written parental consent. *Public Opinion Quarterly 47,* 96-102.
Kelman, H. C. (1967). The human use of human subjects: The problem of deception in social psychological experiments. *Psychological Bulletin* 67,1-11.
Kelman, H. C. (1972). The rights of the subjects in social research: An analysis in terms of relative power and legitimacy. *American Psychologist 27,* 989-1015.
Lakoff, S. A. (1971). Knowledge, power, and democratic theory. *Annals 394,* 5-12.

Levine, R. J. (1986). Declaration of Helsinki. *Ethics and Regulations of Clinical Research* (2nd ed.). Baltimore: Urban and Schwarzenberg.
Liemohn, W. (1979). Research involving human subjects. *Research Quarterly* 50(2), 157-163.
Martin, D. C, Arnold, J. D., Zimmerman, T. R, & Richard, R. H. (1968). Human subjects in clinical research—A report on three studies. New; *England journal of Medicine 279,*1426-1431.
McSkimming, M. J. (1996). *Gaming and Gambling in Tavern Life.* Doctoral dissertation. Department of Criminology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.
Meyer, R. E. (August 1977). Subjects' rights, freedom of inquiry, and the future of research in the addictions. *American Journal of Psychiatry 134(8),* 899-903.
Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67(37), 1-378.
Miller, J. M. (1998). Covert participant observation: Reconsidering the least used method. In P. Tontodonato & F. E. Hagan (Eds.), *The Language of Research in Criminal Justice.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Morse, J. M. (1994). *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Polit, D. R, & Hungler, B. P. (1993). *Essentials of Nursing Research* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.
Polsky, N. (1969). *Hustlers, Beats, and Others.* New York: Doubleday.
Punch, M. (1994). Politics and ethics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 83-98). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Rainwater, L., & Pittman, D. J. (1967). Ethical problems in studying a politically sensitive and deviant community. *Social Problems 14,* 357-365.
Severson, H., & Ary, D. (1983). Sampling bias due to consent procedures with adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors 8,* 433-437.
Shalala, D. E. (June 17,1997) Ethics in human subjects research—Action." Memorandum from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.
Slovak, J. S. (1983). Ethical issues in studying TV violence. In E. Babbie (Ed.), *The Practice of Social Research* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
Smith, M. B. (1967). Conflicting values affecting behavioral research with children. *Children 14,* 53-58.
Sykes, G. M. (1967). Feeling our way: A report on a conference on ethical issues in the social sciences. *American Behavioral Scientist 10,* 8-11.
Taylor, R. B. (1994). *Research Methods in Criminal Justice.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook & Resource.* New York: Wiley.
Tewksbury, R. (1990). Patrons of porn: Research notes on the clientele of adult bookstores. *Deviant Behavior 11(3),* 259-272.
Tewksbury, R. (1995). Adventures in the erotic oasis: Sex and danger in men's same-sex, public, sexual encounters. *The Journal of Men's Studies,* 4(1), 9-24.
Thompson, T. (1984). A comparison of methods of increasing parental consent rates in social research. *Public Opinion Quarterly 48,* 779-787.
Tunnell, K. D. (1998). Honesty, secrecy, and deception in the sociology of crime: Confessions and reflections from the backstage. In J. Ferrell & M. S. Hamm (Eds.), *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime Deviance and Field Research* (pp. 206—220). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
Van Maanen, J. (1983). The moral fix: On the ethics of fieldwork. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary Field Research* (pp. 269-287). Boston: Little, Brown.
Wax, M. L. (1977). On fieldworkers and those exposed to fieldwork: Federal regulations and moral issues. *Human Organizations* 36(3), 321-327.
Wexler, S. (1990). Ethical obligations and social research. In K. L. Kempf (Ed.), *Measurement Issues in Criminology* (pp. 78-107). New York: Springer-Verlag.

CHAPTER 4

A DRAMATURGICAL LOOK AT INTERVIEWING

Usually, interviewing is defined simply as a conversation with a purpose. Specifically, the purpose is to gather information. This standard definition of interviewing has been discussed in this manner by Denzin (1978), Spradley (1979), Patton (1980), De Santis (1980), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Salkind (1991), Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), Babbie (1992; 1998), Leedy (1993), and Marshall and Rossman (1999).

Unfortunately, the consensus on how to conduct an interview is not nearly as high. Interviewing and training manuals vary from long lists of specific *do's* and *don'ts* to lengthy, abstract, pseudotheoretical discussions on empathy, intuition, and motivation. The extensive literature on interviewing contains numerous descriptions of the interviewing process. In some cases, being a good interviewer is described as an innate ability or quality possessed by only some people (and not by others). Interviewing, from this perspective, has been described as an art rather than a skill or a science. In other cases, interviewing has been described as a game in which the respondents receive intrinsic rewards (Holmstrom, cited in Manning, 1967). In still other instances, interviewing has been described as a technical skill you can learn in the same way you might learn to change a flat tire. In this case, the interviewer is like a laborer or a hired hand (Roth, 1966). In many sources, interviewing is described as some sort of face-to-face interaction, although exactly what distinguishes this type of interaction from others is often left to the imagination (Leedy, 1993; Salkind, 1991).

To be sure, there is some element of truth to each of the preceding characterizations. Certainly, anybody can be instructed in the basic orientations, strategies, procedures, and repertoire (to be discussed later in this chapter) of interviewing. Gorden (1992), for example, offers a clear, step-by-step description of how to go about the process of interviewing. To a large extent, Gorden (1992) and others offer the basic rules of the game. Furthermore, there is assuredly something extraordinary (if not unnatural) about a conversation in which one participant has an explicitly or implicitly scripted set of lines and

the other participant does not. To judge any of these characterizations exclusively, however, seems somewhat inadequate. Just as some artists and actors are perceived by their peers to be exceptional while others in the field are viewed as mediocre, so can this assessment be made about interviewers. The previous characterizations have served little more than to circumscribe what might be termed the possible range of an interviewer's ability; they have not added appreciably to the depth of understanding about the process of interviewing or how you might go about mastering this process.

This chapter is devoted to the latter effort and draws upon the symbolic interactionist paradigm, the stream of symbolic interaction more commonly referred to as *dramaturgy*.

DRAMATURGY AND INTERVIEWING

This chapter attempts to illustrate dramaturgy's beneficial effects on interviewing beyond the interviewer training stage. Discussions will include types of interview structures, survey construction, the interviewer role, the roles of the interviewer (social roles played by the investigator), rapport, reactivity, and accessing difficult or sensitive material.[1]

Research, particularly field research, is sometimes divided into two separate phases—namely, getting in and analysis (Shaffir et al., 1980). *Getting in* is typically defined as various techniques and procedures intended to secure access to a setting, its participants, and knowledge about phenomena and activities being observed. *Analysis* makes sense of the information accessed during the getting-in phase. As a consequence, any literal boundaries between these two phases may well be blurred—if they really exist—during the actual process of research.

Nonetheless, this chapter will reclarify the two phases and consider each phase as distinct. In the case of the former, getting in means learning the ropes of various skills and techniques necessary for effective interviewing (Geer et al., 1968; Gorden, 1987; Lofland, 1976; Shaffir et al., 1980; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Regarding the latter, as this chapter will show, there are a number of ways you may go about making sense out of accessed information.

Let us look at the process of interviewing, specifically the notion of interviewing, as an "encounter" (Goffman, 1967) or as a "face-to-face interactionary performance" (Babbie, 1992,1998). All discussions of interviewing are guided by some model or image of the interview situation, and here interviewing is perceived as a "social performance" (Goffman, 1959), organized around the premise that interviewing is best accomplished if guided by a dramaturgical model (Burke, 1957,1966).

Dramaturgy, as a theoretical perspective, involves the elements and language of theater, stagecraft, and stage management. This theoretical perspective is derived in part from the symbolic interactionists' general assumption

that humans perceive and interact in reality through the use of symbols. Drama, then, is a mode of symbolic action in which some individuals act symbolically for others who watch symbolically. In the case of the former, the term used to describe acting individuals is usually simply *actor*. In the case of the latter, the reference typically is *social audience* or simply *audience*.

The symbolic action that passes between actor and audience is called a *social performance* or a *performance*. In this chapter, the language of dramaturgy is applied metaphorically to a concrete situation—namely, the interview. More theoretical and detailed discussions of dramaturgy may be found in Burke, 1957,1966; Goffman, 1959; Messenger et al., 1962; and more recently, Douglas, 1985; and Peshkin, 1988.

The dramaturgical orientation offered in this chapter is similar in some ways to what Douglas (1985) terms creative interviewing. Creative interviewing involves using a set of techniques to move past the mere words and sentences exchanged during the interview process. It includes creating an appropriate climate for informational exchanges and for mutual disclosures. This means that the interviewer will display his or her own feelings during the interview, as well as elicit those of the subject. However, the dramaturgical orientation presented here is also similar in many ways to what Holstein and Gubrium (1995) call active interviewing. From their perspective, the interview is not arbitrary or one-sided. Instead, the interview is viewed as a dynamic, meaning-making occasion where the actual circumstance of the meaning construction is important (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Where the proposed dramaturgical model differs most from the active interview is its emphasis on the interviewer *using* the constructed relationship of the interviewer and subject to draw out information from the subject. The various devices used by the dramaturgical interviewer, therefore, moves this orientation slightly closer to the creative interviewing model.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

No consideration of interviewing would be complete without at least some acknowledgment of the major interview structures. These are sometimes referred to as "the family of qualitative interviews" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Some sources mention only two—namely, formal and informal (Fitzgerald & Cox, 1987, pp. 101-102). Other sources refer to this research process as either structured or unstructured (Fontana & Frey 1994; Leedy, 1993). However, at least three major categories may be identified (Babbie, 1995; Denzin, 1978; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Gorden, 1987; Nieswiadomy 1993): the standardized (formal or structured) interview, the unstandardized (informal or non-directive) interview, and the semistandardized (guided-semistructured or focused) interview.

The Standardized Interview

The *standardized interview* uses a formally structured schedule of interview questions. The interviewers are required to ask subjects to respond to each question. The rationale here, of course, is to offer each subject approximately the same stimulus so that responses to the questions, ideally, will be comparable (Babbie, 1995). Researchers using this technique have fairly solid ideas about the things they want to uncover during the interview (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). In other words, researchers assume that the questions scheduled in their interview instruments are sufficiently comprehensive to elicit from subjects all (or nearly all) information relevant to the study's topic(s). They further assume that all the questions have been worded in a manner that allows subjects to understand clearly what they are being asked. Stated in slightly different terms, the wording of each question is equally meaningful to every subject. Finally, they assume that the meaning of each question is identical for every subject. These assumptions, however, remain chiefly "untested articles of faith" (Denzin, 1978, p. 114).

In sum, standardized interviews are designed to elicit information using a set of predetermined questions that are expected to elicit the subjects' thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about study-related issues. Standardized interviews thus operate from the perspective that one's thoughts are intricately related to one's actions. A typical standardized interview might look like this diet history Q. Berg, 1986):

1. When is the first time you eat or drink on a typical day?
2. What is the first thing you eat?
3. When is the next time you eat or drink?
4. What do you eat or drink?
5. When is the next time you eat or drink?
6. What do you eat or drink?
7. What else do you eat or drink on a typical day?
8. How many times a week do you eat eggs? Cheese? Milk? Fish? Beef? Pork? Beans? Corn? Grits? Bread? Cereal? Ice Cream? Fruits? Vegetables?
9. Which protein foods do you like best?
10. Which protein foods do you not eat?

U. What foods do you like to eat between meals?

The Unstandardized Interview

In contrast to the rigidity of standardized interviews, *unstandardized interviews* do not utilize schedules of questions. Naturally, unstandardized interviews operate from a different set of assumptions. First, interviewers begin

with the assumption that they do not know in advance what all the necessary questions are. Consequently, they cannot predetermine fully a list of questions to ask. They also assume that not all subjects will necessarily find equal meaning in like-worded questions—in short, that subjects may possess different vocabularies.

In an unstandardized interview, interviewers must develop, adapt, and generate questions and follow-up probes appropriate to the given situation and the central purpose of the investigation. Schwartz and Jacobs (1979, p. 40) note that this results in appropriate and relevant questions arising from interactions during the interview itself.

Unstandardized interviews are sometimes used during the course of field research to augment field observations. Such unstructured interviews allow researchers to gain additional information about various phenomena they observe by asking questions of participants. This type of interview may also be useful for establishing rapport or what Douglas (1985) calls "chit chat." In some other instances, unstandardized interviews are useful when researchers are unfamiliar with respondents' life styles, religious or ethnic cultures or customs, and similar attributes.

The Semistandardized Interview

Located somewhere between the extremes of completely standardized and completely unstandardized interviewing structures is the *semistandardized interview*. This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and/or special topics. These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions.

Again, certain assumptions underlie this strategy. First, if questions are to be standardized, they must be formulated in words familiar to the people being interviewed (in the vocabularies of the subjects). Police officers, for example, do not speak about all categories of persons in a like manner. Special terms they use include "scrots" (derived from the word *scrotum),* used as a derogatory slur when describing an assortment of bad guys; "skinners," used to describe rapists; and "clouters," used to describe persons who break into automobiles to steal things. Questions used in a semistandardized interview can reflect an awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways. Researchers thus approach the world from the subject's perspective. Researchers can accomplish this through unscheduled probes (described in greater detail in the following interview excerpt) that arise from the interview process itself.

One study of adolescents' involvement in alcohol, drugs, and crime (Carpenter et al., 1988) used, in part, a semistandardized interview schedule.

Although many of the primary questions asked each of 100 subjects derived from the predetermined schedule, the youths' perceptions were often more fully elaborated after being asked an unscheduled probe. For example, while the schedule asked a number of questions about various drugs the subjects might have tried, following the subjects' lead in order to uncover fully their substance-use patterns, their beliefs about drugs, and the value they placed on using certain drugs was frequently necessary. An example of scheduled and unscheduled questions and probes from interview transcript number 116 illustrates this (Berg, 1982).[2]

SCHEDULED QUESTIONS

Interviewer: Have you ever tried angel dust?

Subject: Yes. Once.

SCHEDULED PROBE

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Subject: Oh, I was working at the Adam's Field Days [a local fair]. And, um, the way it was set up was, like we'd go in at 9 in the morning, and work till 5 p.m. And we would take an hour break. And then, set up again for the night. And when we took an hour break, two of the guys that I was working with, one's name was Bill and the other one's name was Tom, asked me if I wanted to go get high. And I said "yeh, sure." So we walked back to Tom's trailer and we rolled a couple of joints, and we smoked. And nothing happened. I didn't feel anything at all for a long time. And then we went back to work, and I was working in the booth, um, and all of the sudden, like, everything was going in and out of focus. And I thought, okay, this is creepy. I'm just, you know, super buzzed. But then people's faces started, started turning into prisms, um, and stuffed animals that we were giving away were like huge lions and tigers and 20-foot stuffed snakes, and they started coming real. They'd come toward me, and like the snake was slithering down on the walls and comin' toward me. And, um, ... [Response continues for another half page] [The next morning] I found out I had smoked Arizona weed laced with angel dust. So I never smoked with them [Bill and Tom] again. That was a really bad experience for me. ...

UNSCHEDULED PROBE

Interviewer: Did you ever try angel dust intentionally?

Subject: No.

UNSCHEDULED PROBE

Interviewer: Would you have smoked the pot, if you had known it was laced?

Subject: No.

UNSCHEDULED PROBE

Interviewer: How come?

Subject: Too scared to. I'd be afraid, you know, like, something that happened would happen. And, you know, I've heard about people who've had bad trips off it. And I just, I was not up for a bad trip. So, you know, that's why I never done acid, any acid or anything. I don't think I'm ready to. I would like to, you know, do a hallucinogenic drug. I would like to do acid at least once, just to see what it's like, but, I'm too scared for it, right now. And I think with my mental state, that it would affect the high. And, you know, I could freak myself out really bad. So until I get myself into a state [of mind] where I'm sure that I want to do it, and I'm with somebody that I trust, you know at the time, 'cause I won't do it alone.... [response continues half page further],

UNSCHEDULED PROBE

Interviewer: How about if someone was to offer you some, say, acid, free acid right now? Would you try it?

Subject: It has happened to me, and no, I did not try it.

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Traditionally, the term *survey* refers to both interviews and pencil-and-paper questionnaires. In this text, the term *survey,* unless otherwise indicated, is exclusively used in the context of interviewing. Typically, the choice to use an interviewing technique rather than a survey questionnaire technique is based on the selected procedure's ability to provide maximum opportunity for complete and accurate communication of ideas between the researcher and the respondent (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, p. 554). Among other things, this notion of accurate communication of ideas implies that researchers have clear ideas about the type of information they want to access and about the purpose and aims of their research.

The interview is an especially effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions and, as noted earlier in this chapter, for addressing certain types of assumptions. Particularly when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events, interviewing provides a useful means of access (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 98).

However, interviewing is only one of a number of ways researchers can obtain answers to questions. The determination of which data-gathering technique to use is necessarily linked to the type of research question being asked.

For instance, Becker (1963) suggests that if you are interested in knowing how frequently a subject smokes marijuana (how many times daily, weekly, monthly, and so on), then you may effectively use a questionnaire survey. If, however, you are interested in the sensation of marijuana smoking (the emotion-laden sensory experience as perceived by the subject), a more effective means of obtaining this information might be an open-ended interview question (Mutchnick & Berg, 1996).

A similar consideration is necessary when you determine what sort of structure an interview should have. For example, Rossman (1992) used semi-structured interviews in his examination of the development of Superfund community relations plans (Superfunds are federal funds offered to assist communities in environmental clean-up activities). Rossman (1992, p. 107) explains:

> Because of the nature of the information collected, applied researchers who develop community relations plans are best advised to use interviews and interviewers. Questionnaires lack the flexibility that is required to capture the subtle character of risk definition, especially a risk that is often defined ambiguously within a community. Risks such as those associated with Superfund sites are a major part of the community's social structure, but are less crystallized than risk associated with crime, or even natural environmental risk.

Conversely, Miller (1986) found that in her study of female street hustlers, an unstructured interview served her purposes best. Miller (1986, p. 26) writes:

> Seventy women agreed to taped interviews with me during which they shared with me the details of their lives. Special attention was paid to the initiation of these women into street hustling and the development of a career as a street hustler. Although the same broad topics were introduced during each interview, many of my questions changed over time.

Ellis, Kiesinger, and Tillmann-Healy (1997, p. 121) wanted to gain a more reflexive and intimate understanding of women's emotional experiences, and decided to use an interactive approach and a more or less unstructured interviewing style:

> [We] view interviewing as a collaborative communication process occurring between researchers and respondents, although we do not focus on validity and bias. For us, interactive interviewing involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers, who tell (and sometimes write) their stories in the context of a developing relationship.

Thus, when determining what type of interview format to use, you *nust consider the kinds of questions you want to ask and the sorts of answers

you expect to receive. This line of thought naturally leads to consideration of how to create questions and an interview schedule.

SCHEDULE DEVELOPMENT

The first step to interview construction has already been implied: Specifically, researchers must determine the nature of their investigation and the objectives of their research. This determination provides the researchers with a starting point from which to begin developing a schedule of questions.

Selltiz et al. (1959), Spradley (1979), Patton (1980), and Polit and Hungler (1993) suggest that researchers begin with a kind of *outline,* listing all the broad categories they feel may be relevant to their study. This preliminary listing allows them to visualize the general format of the schedule. Next, researchers should develop sets of questions relevant to each of the outlined categories. The interview schedule for a study of volunteer police officers (Berg & Doerner, 1987) was developed by first listing general relevant areas gleaned from a reading of the literature. (See Chapter 2 on the spiraling nature of the research process.) These included:

1. Demographics
2. Police-related questions
3. Organizational memberships
4. Friends and family involved in police work
5. Personality style (passive, aggressive, authoritative, and so on)
6. Leisure activities

Following this, separate lists of questions for each of the six major thematic categories were developed. For instance, under demographics, we listed questions about birth date, level of education, marital status, and so forth. Under police-related questions we asked, "What would you say are the reasons you joined the reserve officers unit?" "How long have you been a reserve officer?" "Have you ever served as a regular police officer anywhere?" and so on. The purpose of these questions was to elicit information about how the subjects' relationships corresponded to various attitudes and behaviors described elsewhere in the interviews.

Question Order, Content, and Style

The specific ordering (sequencing), phrasing, level of language, adherence to subject matter, and general style of questions depend on the educational and social level of the subjects as well as their ethnic or cultural traits, age, and so forth. Additionally, researchers must take into consideration the central aims and focuses of their studies.

In order to draw out the most complete story about various subjects or situations under investigation, four types or styles of questions must be included in the survey instrument: essential questions, extra questions, throw-away questions, and probing questions.

Essential Questions. *Essential questions* exclusively concern the central focus of the study. They may be placed together or scattered throughout the survey, but they are geared toward eliciting specific desired information. For example, Glassner and Berg (1980,1984) sought to study drinking patterns in the Jewish community. Consequently, essential questions addressing this specific theme were sprinkled throughout our 144-structured-question survey instrument. For instance, among a series of questions about friends and people the family feels proud of, the following question was introduced: "Has anyone in the family ever thought anyone else drank too much?" Later during the interview, among general questions about ceremonial participation in the Jewish holiday of Passover, the interviewer systematically asked:

> There is a question that we are a little curious about, because there seems to be some confusion on it. During the Passover story, there are seven or eight places it speaks about lifting a glass of wine. And there are three or four places which speak directly of drinking the wine. In some people's homes they drink a cup each time, and in some people's homes they count a sip as a cup. How is it done in your home?

Another regularly scheduled question during this segment of the interview asked: "Another question that interests us is, what becomes of the cup of wine for Elijah [ceremonially poured for the Angel Elijah]?" Later, during a series of questions centering on Chanukkah observance styles, the interviewer asked: "What drinks are usually served during this time?"

Separating these essential questions, however, were numerous other essential questions addressing such other research concerns as ritual knowledge and involvement, religious organization membership, leisure activities, and so on. In addition, there were three other types of questions intended for other purposes.

Extra Questions. *Extra questions* are those questions roughly equivalent to certain essential ones but worded slightly differently. These are included in order to check on the reliability of responses (through examination of consistency in response sets) or to measure the possible influence a change of wording might have.

Throw-Away Questions. Frequently, you find throw-away questions toward the beginning of an interview schedule. *Throw-away questions* may be essential demographic questions or general questions used to develop rapport

between interviewers and subjects. You may also find certain throw-aways sprinkled throughout a survey to set the interviewing pace or to allow a change in focus in the interview. Throw-away questions, as the term implies, are incidental or unnecessary for gathering the important information being examined in the study. Nonetheless, these throw-away questions may be invaluable for drawing out a complete story from a respondent.

On occasion, throw-away questions may serve the additional purpose of cooling out the subject (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1967). On these occasions, a throw-away question (or a series of them) may be tossed into an interview whenever subjects indicate to the interviewers that a sensitive area has been entered. The interviewer offhandedly says something to the effect of, "Oh, by the way, before we go any further, I forgot to ask you . . ." By changing the line of questions, even for only a few moments, the interviewer moves away from the sensitive area and gives the interviewee a moment to cool out.

Probing Questions. *Probing questions,* or simply *probes,* provide interviewers with a way to draw out more complete stories from subjects. Probes frequently ask subjects to elaborate on what they have already answered in response to a given question—for example, "Could you tell me more about that?" "How long did you have that?" "What happened next?" "Who else has ever said that about you?" or simply, "How come?" Along similar lines, Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 56) write:

> In interview [s] . . . the emphasis is on obtaining narratives or accounts in the person's own terms. You want the character and contour of such accounts to be set by the interviewees or informants. You might have a general idea of the kinds of things that will compose the account but still be interested in what the interviewees provide on their own and the terms in which they do it. As the informants speak, you should be attentive to what is mentioned and also to what is not mentioned but which you feel might be important. If something has been mentioned about which you want to know more, you can ask, "You mentioned_____; could you tell me more about that?" For things not mentioned, you might ask, "Did_____?" or "Was_____a consequence?"

Often, interviewers incorporate a structured series of probes triggered by one or another type of response to some essential question. Probes, then, are intended to be largely neutral. Their central purpose is to elicit more information about whatever the respondent has already said in response to a question.

Wording of Questions. In order to acquire information while interviewing, researchers must word questions so that they will provide the necessary data. Thus, you must ask questions in such a manner as to motivate respondents to answer as completely and honestly as possible. As in the saying about computers, "garbage in, garbage out," so it is in interviewing. If the wrong questions are asked or if questions are asked in a manner that inhibits or prevents a respondent from answering fully, the interview will not be fruitful—garbage will come out. Denzin offers the following guidelines for formulating interview questions (Denzin, 1970, p. 129):

> Questions should accurately convey meaning to the respondent; they should motivate him to become involved and to communicate clearly his attitudes and opinions; they should be clear enough so that the interviewer can easily convey meaning to the respondent; they should be precise enough to exactly convey what is expected of the respondent...; any specific question should have as a goal the discerning of a response pattern that clearly fits the broad contents of the investigation . . .; if questions raise the possibility of the respondent's lying or fabricating (which is always a possibility), care should be taken to include questions that catch him up, or reveal to him and the interviewer that his previous answers have been incorrect.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Perhaps the most serious problem with asking questions is how to be certain the intentions of the questions have been adequately communicated. Researchers must always be sure they have clearly communicated to the subjects what they want to know. The interviewers' language must be understandable to the subject; ideally, interviews must be conducted at the level or language of the respondents.

Becker and Geer (1957, pp. 28-29) note the seriousness of knowing the language of the interviewee both in order to ask understandable questions and to interpret correctly what the interviewee says in response. They state:

> Although we speak one language and share in many ways in one culture, we cannot assume that we understand precisely what another person, speaking as a member of such a group, means by any particular word. In interviewing members of groups other than our own, then, we are in somewhat the same position as the anthropologist who must learn a primitive language, with the important difference that, as Icheiser has put it, we often do not understand that we do not understand and are thus likely to make errors in interpreting what is said to us.

When developing surveys that will be applied to a large and diverse general population, many researchers choose what may be termed the *zero order level of communications.* In such instances, the words and ideas conveyed by survey questions are simplified to the level of the least sophisticated of all potential respondents. Although this should tend to minimize potential communication problems with a range of respondents, it may also create some problems: The more sophisticated respondents may react negatively to questions asked in too simplistic a manner.

When you are investigating a homogeneous subculture, this problem becomes somewhat less critical. However, when interviewing a cross section of subjects on the same topic, you may need to consider varying levels of language.

Similarly, you must allow for special languages (both real and symbolic) that certain groups may use. For example, in the Glassner and Berg (1980,1984) study, the interviewer needed to be moderately versed in Yiddish idioms in order both to conduct many of the interviews and to assist transcribers in accurately reproducing interview transcripts. In another instance, when Berg and Doerner (1987) conducted a study of volunteer police officers, the interviewer needed a general understanding of "cop speak," the jargonized symbolic language frequently used by police officers, illustrated earlier in this chapter.

More recently, Murray (1991) points out that serious problems may arise if researchers ignore dialect differences, sometimes termed *language codes* in linguistics. For example, the phrases used in Black English or Chicano Spanish are genuine modes of communication that may be lost on interviewers not versed in these dialects.

A FEW COMMON PROBLEMS IN QUESTION FORMULATION

Several other problems arise when constructing interview questions. Among the more serious ones are affectively worded questions, double-barreled questions, and overly complex questions.

Affectively Worded Questions

Affective words arouse in most people some emotional response, usually negative. Although these questions may not be intended as antagonistic, they nonetheless can close down or inhibit interview subjects. For instance, the word *why,* in American culture, tends to produce in most people a negative response. One possible explanation has to do with the punitive connotation of this question, as in "Why did you do that wrong thing?" Consequently, when subjects mention some form of conduct or an attitude and are then asked by the interviewers, "Why?" they may not respond accurately or completely. On the other hand, if asked in response to these same statements, "How come?" they may offer complete responses in a relaxed manner.

Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) similarly found that when affective topics were considered, neutralizing the sense of the questions (reducing their affects) improved the likelihood of a full answer. They cite, as an example, asking subjects in a study of human sexuality, "Do you masturbate?" Virtually all the initial respondents answered immediately, "I never masturbate." Yet, when the question was reworded—"About how many times a week would you say you masturbate?"—suddenly many respondents were willing to offer responses. The second version of the question tends to neutralize or normalize the affect (sensitivity) of the question. Asking how often one masturbates implies that others do so as well, thereby reducing the affect of the word and concept *masturbate.*

The Double-Barreled Question

Among the more common problems that arise in constructing survey items is the double-barreled question. This type of question asks a subject to respond simultaneously to two issues in a single question. For instance, one might ask, "How many times have you smoked marijuana, or have you only tried cocaine?" It should be noticed that the two issues in this single question are slightly unrelated. In the first clause, the question asks the frequency of marijuana usage. The second clause confuses the issue and asks whether marijuana or cocaine have ever been used by the subject.

The logical solution to the double-barreled question, of course, is to separate the two issues and ask separate questions. Failure to separate the two issues may yield some answers, because people tend to be obliging during interviews and may answer almost anything they are asked, but analysis of a response to a double-barreled question is virtually impossible.

Complex Questions

The pattern of exchange that constitutes verbal communication in Western society involves more than listening. When one person is speaking, the other is listening, anticipating, and planning how to respond. Consequently, when researchers ask a long, involved question, the subjects may not really hear the question in its entirety. Their response, then, may be only to some small portion of a greater concern woven into the complex question. Thus, keeping questions brief and concise allows clear responses and more effective analysis of the answers.

Question Sequencing

The arrangement or ordering of questions in an interview may significantly affect the results. Interviews typically begin with mild, nonthreatening questions concerning demographic matters. These questions tend to be easy for the subjects to answer and allow interviewers to develop rapport through eye contact and general demeanor. As the interview conversation proceeds, more complex and sensitive questions may be introduced.

PRETESTING THE SCHEDULE

Once researchers have developed the instrument and are satisfied with the general wording and sequencing of questions, they must pretest the schedule. Ideally, this involves at least two steps. First, the schedule should be critically examined by people familiar with the study's subject matter—technical experts, other researchers, or persons fitting the type to be studied. This first step facilitates the identification of poorly worded questions, questions with offensive or emotion-laden wording, or questions revealing the researchers' own biases, personal values, or blind spots.

The second step in pretesting before the instrument can be used in a real study involves several practice interviews to assess how effectively the interview will work and whether the type of information being sought will actually be obtained. Chadwick et al. (1984, p. 120) suggest five questions for assessing an instrument:

1. Has the researcher included all of the questions necessary to test the research hypothesis?
2. Do the questions elicit the types of response that were anticipated?
3. Is the language of the research instrument meaningful to the respondents?
4. Are there other problems with the questions, such as double meaning or multiple issues embedded in a single question?
5. Finally, does the interview guide, as developed, help to motivate respondents to participate in the study?

A careful pretest of the instrument, although time consuming in itself, usually saves enormous time and cost in the long run.

LONG VERSUS SHORT INTERVIEWS

Interviewing can be a very time-consuming, albeit valuable, data-gathering technique. It is also one that many uninitiated researchers do not fully understand. This is particularly true when considering the length of an interview. Many quantitative researchers who dabble at interviewing are convinced that interviews must be short, direct, and businesslike. Some who use interviews over the telephone even recommend keeping them to no more than about five minutes (Hagan, 1995). As a result, one issue surrounding interviews is exactly how long or short they should be.

There are several ways to answer this question, but all will immediately direct your attention back to the basic research question(s). If potential answers to research questions can be obtained by asking only a few questions, then the interview may be quite brief. If, on the other hand, the research question(s) are involved, or multi-layered, it may require a hundred or more

questions. Length also depends upon the type of answers constructed between the interviewer and the subject. In some cases, where the conversation is flowing, a subject may provide rich, detailed, and lengthy answers to the question. In another situation, the subject may respond to the same question with a rather matter-of-fact, short, cryptic answer.

Obviously, the number of questions on the interview schedule is at least partially related to how long an interview is likely to take. On the average, an interview schedule with 165 questions is likely to take longer than one with only 50 questions. Yet, there are several misconceptions about long interviews that sometimes creep into research methods class lectures. For instance, some researchers believe that most subjects will refuse to engage in an interview once they know it may last for two or more hours. Others maintain that subjects may not remain interested during a long interview, and it will end in a withdrawal. Or, conversely, some researchers believe that short interviews do not provide any useful information. In fact, I am certain that such conditions do occasionally occur. However, they do not represent binding rules or even terribly viable guidelines.

Interviews, unlike written surveys, can be extremely rewarding and interesting situations for both the interviewer and the subject. Believing that subjects would quickly weary with a written survey containing 175 questions may be true. I for one believe such a situation is boring. However, talking with an interviewer about things that matter to the interviewee and doing so in a way that provides him or her with appropriate feedback often provides subjects with a kind of intangible yet intrinsic reward. For subjects to comment after a long interview that they did not actually realize so much time had already passed is common. I will liken this to reading a good book. At some time or another, most of us have begun reading some exciting or engaging novel, and not realized that hours had actually passed. So it is with a well-run long interview. Even after several hours, there is often a feeling that only minutes have passed.

Certain types of research lend themselves to longer interviews than others. For example, when one conducts a *life history,* the researcher is interested in the life events of those being interviewed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In this case, the interview may go on for a very long time, perhaps carrying over to several separate sessions on different days. On the other hand, the interview may involve a single topic and require only a brief interview situation.

To suggest that all interviews must be lengthy if they are to yield useful information is not accurate. In 1989, Cal Larson and I conducted interviews in a maximum security prison among an assortment of inmates (Berg & Larson, 1989). Our research question involved an interest in the ways inmates perceived predetermined or fixed sentences—a flat length of time such as 5 years or 10 years—compared to their view of indeterminate sentences—a time range such as 5 to 10 years or 10 to 20 years. We were not interested in the family backgrounds or social experiences of inmates who committed particular categories

of crime. We were not interested in determining explanations for why or how inmates committed their particular crimes nor whether inmates had received deals or plea bargains, or any of an assortment of other interesting but unconnected issues. We simply wanted to know about their views of determinate and indeterminate sentences and a number of related questions. As a result, we focused directly on these issues, and the interviews lasted an average of about 45 minutes.

What we learned, however, was very interesting and important information. First, inmates reported they seldom think about getting caught when they commit a crime. As a result, the idea of a particular crime carrying a long fixed sentence did not offer any deterrence to their committing the crime (Berg & Larson, 1989). Second, several armed robbers indicated that if they did become concerned about lengthy fixed sentences, they would likely leave no witnesses, whereas their previous criminal style was to avoid harming bystanders. In short, we learned that fixed sentences might have the unintended effect of increasing the level of violence associated with some crimes.

You should understand that length is a relative concept when conducting interviews. Some topics and subjects will produce long interviews while others will create short ones. Further, different styles of interviewing, such as interactive or interpretive orientations, that require the development of a *relationship* between researcher and subject, may last not only long durations, but multiple sessions (Hertz, 1995; Kvale, 1996; Miller, 1996). What is important to remember is that simply because an interview contains many questions or only a few, does not in itself immediately translate into a long or short interview.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Related to the question of interview length is the role of telephone interviews in qualitative research. Telephone interviews are not a major way of collecting qualitative data. To be sure, telephone interviews lack face-to-face nonverbal cues that researchers use to pace their interviews and to determine the direction to move in. Yet, researchers have found that, under certain circumstances, telephone interviews may provide not only an effective means for gathering data, but in some instances—owing to geographic locations—the only viable method. In fact, the primary reason that one might conduct a qualitative telephone interview is to reach a sample population that is in geographically diverse locations. For example, if an investigator is interested in studying how nursing home directors define elder abuse, one might consider conducting in-person interviews with some sample of nursing home directors. However, given that nursing home facilities may be at some distance from one another, as well as from the location of the interviewer, conducting interviews by telephone may be a logical resolution.

Qualitative telephone interviews are likely to be best when the researcher has fairly specific questions in mind (a formal or semistructured interview schedule). Qualitative interviews are also quite productive when they are conducted among people with whom the researcher has already conducted face-to-face interviews, or with whom they may have developed a rapport during fieldwork (Rubin & Rubin, 1997). There are several important, necessary steps to accomplish a qualitative telephone interview. First, the investigator must establish legitimacy; next, the researcher must convince the potential subject that it is important for them to take part in the research; and finally, the researcher must carefully assure that the information he obtains is sufficiently detailed to contribute meaningfully to the study.

This first step can be accomplished in several ways. For example, the interviewer might mail a letter to the prospective subject explaining the nature of the research and that they will be called to set an appointment for the actual interview. The letter should be on official letterhead, and may contain supportive documentation (e.g., letters of support from relevant or significant people in the community, newspaper stories about the researcher or the study, etc.).

The second step will arise when the investigator initially contacts potential subjects and attempts to convince them to take part. This call will actually accomplish several things. It will allow the subjects to ask questions and raise any concerns they might have about the study or their participation. It will also provide an opportunity for the investigator to gain some sense of the individual and to begin developing a kind of relationship and rapport as well as an opportunity to convince the individual to participate in the study if the individual is resistant.

These calls should be made during normal working hours and researchers should *break the ice* by introducing themselves, and ascertaining whether the individual has received the letter and accompanying materials. Calls should be made approximately one week to ten days following the mailing of the letters of introduction. After the initial introduction, the researcher might ask if the individual has any questions. Next, using a polite and friendly but firm affirmative statement, the researcher should ask, "When would it be convenient for me to call you back to conduct the interview?" Recognize that not all subjects will immediately agree to take part, and the researcher may need to do a little convincing. This may offer the additional benefit of forging a rapport with the subject.

The final step in this process is actually conducting the telephone interview. It is important that the researcher be mindful about general issues of rapport and deference ceremonies, but not to allow this concern to become fear. The researcher will be unable to read visual cues and must, therefore, rely entirely on verbal messages and cues. If the researcher has managed to craft some sort of fledgling relationship and rapport, then the interview should flow fairly well.

CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW: A NATURAL OR AN UNNATURAL COMMUNICATION?

Everyone actually has received some training and has experience in interviewing. Children, for example, commonly ask mom or dad questions whenever they see or experience something different, unusual, or unknown. In school, students ask their teachers questions and respond to questions put to them by teachers. People regularly observe exchanges of questions and answers between teachers and other students, siblings and parents, employers and employees, and among friends. Thus, one might assume that since everyone has received tacit training in both asking questions (sending messages) and answering questions (receiving messages), the research interview is just another natural communication situation. But the research interview is not a natural communication exchange.

Beyond acquiring the ability to send and receive messages while growing up in society, people also learn how to avoid certain types of messages. Goffman (1967) has termed this sort of avoidance evasion tactics. Such tactics may involve a word, phrase, or gesture that expresses to another participant that no further discussion of a specific issue (or in a particular area) is desired. Conversely, people also usually acquire the ability to recognize these evasion tactics and, in a natural conversational exchange, to respect them. This sort of deference ceremony (Goffman, 1967, p. *77)* expresses a kind of intrinsic respect for the other's avoidance rituals, hi return, there is the unspoken expectation that this respect will be reciprocated in some later exchange.

As anyone who has ever conducted an interview already knows, this sort of deference ceremony simply cannot be permitted during the course of a research interview. In fact, the emergence of evasion tactics during the course of an interview are among the most serious obstacles to overcome—but overcome them you must! At the same time, you do not want to jeopardize the evolving definition of the situation, the potential rapport with the subject, or the amount of falsification and gloss a subject may feel compelled to use during the interview. As Gorden (1987, p. 70) suggests, ""If all respondents said nothing, responded with truth, or said 'I won't tell you!' the task of the interviewer would be much simpler. Unfortunately, the respondent can avoid appearing uncooperative by responding voluminously with irrelevancies or misinformation, and this presents a challenge to the interviewer." In other words, the interviewer must maneuver around a subject's avoidance rituals in a manner that neither overtly violates social norms associated with communication exchanges nor causes the subject to lie.

Qualitative interviews may appear similar to ordinary conversations in some ways, but they differ in terms of how intensely the researcher listens to pick up on key words, phrases, and ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 1997). They differ also in terms of the kinds of nonverbal cues that the investigator will watch for in order to effectively identify the interviewee's emotional state, deference ceremonies, and even lies. One way these obstacles can be handled is through use of the dramaturgical interview.

THE DRAMATURGICAL INTERVIEW

There are a number of necessary terms and elements connected with understanding the dramaturgical interview and learning how to maneuver around communication-avoidance rituals. Central to these is the differentiation between the *interviewer's role* and the *roles an interviewer may perform.* As De Santis (1980, p. *77)* suggests, the interviewer may be seen as "playing an occupational role," and "society can be expected to have some knowledge, accurate or inaccurate, about the norms which govern the role performance of various occupations." For instance, in our society, one might expect a farmer to wear jeans, not a fine three-piece suit, while working in the field. Similarly, one can expect certain things about appearance, manner, style, and language connected with other occupational roles, including that of an interviewer. For example, Maccoby and Maccoby (1968, p. 462) state:

> What are some of the roles in which respondents may perceive an interviewer? Much depends, of course, on the auspices of the study and the setting of the interview. If the study has been sponsored by a prestigeful institution and covers topics on which the interviewer might be assumed to have expert knowledge, the interviewer may find himself placed in a role similar to that of the family doctor; he is consulted for advice on the respondent's problems.

The implication of the preceding description of the role of an interviewer is that preconceived notions do exist among interviewees, but these notions are malleable. Since a subject's preconceptions about interviewers may be based on both correct and incorrect information, the actual conception of the interviewer role rests on the definition of the situation established during the course of the interview itself.

In a number of sources on interviewing, the interviewer's role is discussed in terms of *biasing effects,* or *reactivity* (Babbie, 1995; Chadwick et al., 1984). But the role of the interviewer is not necessarily established in granite, nor do the interviewer and interviewees operate within a vacuum! As Kahn and Cannell (1957, p. 62) suggest, "The role of the interviewer . . . is determined in part by the expectations of others." It is, therefore, within the capacity of an interviewer to affect (without biasing results) the notions, even preconceived ones, subjects may have about the interviewer's role.

Many roles are available to an interviewer. Regardless of any preconceived notion and expectation about the interviewer's role as perceived by

the interviewee, it *s possible (within certain limits) for the interviewer to shape, alter, and even create desired role images. Gorden (1987, p. 213) describes this as *rol^eria^n S-* He explains that "role-taking is a conscious selection, from among one's actual role repertory, of the role thought most appropriate to display to a particular respondent at the moment."

As explained in the next section, by changing roles, the interviewer can also effectively cif^cumvent many of the avoidance tactics an interviewee might otherwise effectively use.

Interviewer Roles and Rapport

One dominant theme in the literature on interviewing centers on the interviewer's ability to develop *rapport* with an interview subject. Connected to the notion of rapport is the interviewee's expectations of the interviewer's role (in an occupational sense of the term *role).* It is often assumed that if the interviewer measures up to the interviewee's role expectations, the interviewer is awarded the prize of good rapport with the subject. If, on the other hand, the interviewer fails to measure up to these role expectations, the interviewer is turned av^^av from the door (either literally or figuratively).

However, thig simplistic assumption does not explain situations in which an intervieW^er did not entirely correspond to a subject's interviewer-role expectations but was nonetheless permitted to conduct an interview—for instance, when an interviewee says something to the effect of, "Oh, you're the interviewer; you're nothing like I thought you'd be!"

Much of the literature of interviewing, especially in relation to the concepts of reactivity afld rapport, suggests that the interviewee's conception of the interviewer centers around aspects of appearance and demeanor. Overt, observable characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, style of dress, age, hairstyle, manner of speech, and general demeanor provide information used by an interviewee to confirm or deny expectations about what an interviewer ought to be like. The negative, reactive effects of an interviewer's observable social characteristics and personal attributes are extensively discussed in the literature on interviewing (see Burns & Grove, 1993; De Santis, 1980; Gorden 1975, 1980,1987; Niesw^iad°my, 1993; Patton, 1980). In each source, however, the emphasis is on the effect an interviewer's characteristics have on obtaining the interviewee's consent to participate in an interview. Another theme emphasized in the literature is the potential bias arising from the effects of the interviewer's attributes.

There is little question that, as Stone (1962, p. 88) states, "Basic to the communication of the interview meaning is the problem of appearance and mood. Clothes often tell more about the person than his conversation." Is it really sufficient merely to look the part? If a man dons an ermine cape and robe, places a gold crown on his head, attaches a perfectly sculpted crepe beard to his face, a10* regally struts about, is this a guarantee that he will

perform *King Lear* in an adequate, let alone convincing fashion? To be sure, the interviewer's appearance, accreditation, sponsorship, and characteristics are important to interviewing (see, for example, Benny et al., 1956). All of these, of course, are within the absolute control of the interviewer. Attributes of appearance are in many ways analogous to the old door-to-door vacuum-cleaner salesman's trick of placing a foot between the open door and its jamb—a trick that neither ensured a sale nor prevented the injury of the salesman's foot as the door was slammed shut.

Similarly, there are no guarantees that the interviewer will, simply by looking the part, be granted or afforded good and relaxed rapport. Furthermore, if an interviewer relies passively on appearance, credentials, and general social characteristics, there is still the very real danger that the interviewer will be unable to deal adequately with the role expectations perceived by the interviewee.

Even if an interviewer is attentive to differences in class, gender, society, and race, it is impossible to know in advance whether all these differences have been accounted for. Nor, for that matter, is it possible to know in advance whether various strategies undertaken by the interviewer will be interpreted correctly (as intended) by the interviewee. Rapport, like interviewer role development, must be actively sought and worked out.

For example, in the course of conducting a door-to-door canvass of a variety of neighborhoods, an interviewer found an interesting response to his presence.[3] The neighborhood he had entered had recently been subjected to a rash of daytime burglaries. As a result, neighborhood watch groups had formed, and all strangers in the neighborhood were immediately considered suspect. The interviewer knew this neighborhood was chiefly composed of middle-class Italian and Irish Catholic families. Knowing this, and following all the good literature on reactivity to differences, he had dressed accordingly in a dark suit with his hair trimmed and combed. He was carrying a dark briefcase containing a letter of introduction written on a local university's stationery and a photo identification card issued by the school. Nonetheless, because of the way the community had defined the presence of strangers, this interviewer met with an unusual reception. In spite of all of his credentials and appearance, he could not, merely by looking the part, break through the preconceived notions that had emerged in this community. He was treated as a criminal suspect.

Throughout the entire day, the interviewer failed to arrange even a single interview. At the sixteen homes he approached, only three times had people even acknowledged his presence by answering the doorbell. However, in at least six other homes, people were at home: He saw eyes peering out from behind curtained windows and he heard hushed voices and barking dogs being quieted by whispering owners.

From the three persons who did answer their doorbells (but who were careful to stay behind the safety of their locked doors), the interviewer

learned what the problem was. Several evenings earlier, the neighborhood watch group had shown a film wherein criminals took on a variety of occupational roles in order to gain access to homes. The film included criminals impersonating door-to-door interviewers! Now things began to make sense, even if people recognized the interviewer's intended appearance as their expected image of a criminal impostor.

The interviewer realized he needed to assure the neighborhood that he was, in fact, who he claimed to be and posed no criminal threat. He sought a more acceptable stage than their front steps and recruited a convincing supporting cast to assist him.

Among the three people who were willing to speak with the interviewer was a man in his late fifties who the interviewer later learned was a family court judge. The judge suggested that the interviewer consider attending one of the neighborhood watch meetings "if you really are on the level." The interviewer took this cue as both a test of his legitimacy as a researcher/interviewer and an opportunity to present himself in a more acceptable setting. The judge informed the interviewer that a watch meeting was planned for that evening. He offered the name and telephone number of the watch committee's chairperson. The judge also indicated that the interviewer could mention to the chairperson that he (the judge) had actually seen the letter of introduction in the interviewer's briefcase.

After calling and explaining the situation—and also carefully mentioning the judge by name several times as someone who had seen his credentials—the interviewer convinced the chairperson to mention the study that night. He told the interviewer, "I might mention that a study is going on in the area provided that you are in attendance this evening, and only if I can check out the story with your department at the university." The interviewer had certainly gotten his foot in the door but still had to make the sale. It remained to convince the neighborhood residents that he was who he claimed and, moreover, that they should take part in the study.

At the meeting that evening, the interviewer used every conversation with other attendees to explain the project he was working on. He was also careful to speak very loudly when talking with people who appeared to be important to the meeting (in order to be seen speaking with these individuals). These central characters included the three police officers attending and lecturing at the evening's meeting, a local city councilman credited with having spearheaded this watch group, the watch chairperson, his co-chairperson, and several people who were simply seated near the interviewer in the audience. Additionally, the interviewer persuaded the chairperson to call on him during the evening so that he could explain the project and offer his department's telephone number so that people could call and confirm his story for themselves.

All the interviewer's actions were intentional, had been carefully planned earlier that day, and were, in effect, fully scripted. Dramaturgically, however, the actual script used when speaking with central characters was less important than the image of the interviewer speaking with these reputable people. Although they didn't know it, these central characters became the interviewer's supporting cast. Merely by patiently listening to the interviewer, these characters supplied him with sufficient moral legitimacy for the audience to accept the interviewer for what he was—a real research interviewer.

The next day, the interviewer went to ten homes and was received by eight occupants, all of whom were willing to participate in the study (although only three matched the necessary demographics for the sample). Several individuals mentioned that they had seen the interviewer at the neighborhood watch meeting the previous night. Some specifically mentioned having seen the interviewer speaking with one of the central characters; they said that since these people felt it was all right to speak with him, the interviewer must be for real. The interviewer's performance at the watch meeting had indeed been successful—he had sold his vacuum cleaner.

It should be clear from the preceding illustration that while looking the part of an interviewer (in the occupational sense) is certainly necessary, playing the part (in the dramaturgical sense) is as, or perhaps more, important. This illustration also demonstrates how, as Douglas (1985) implies, the interviewer can serve as a determinant of what goes on.

Peshkin (1988, p. 51), reflecting on his research on school and community in the Midwestern town of "Mansfield" (Peshkin, 1978) elaborates a similar use of a supporting cast:

> Mr. Tate, Mansfield's beloved and charismatic superintendent of schools, arranged our transition from the high school to the community. He would introduce me to the mayor, for example, or to Mansfield High School's oldest living graduate and venerable ex-newspaper editor. Such people couldn't refuse Tate's request that they meet me; moreover, they were very curious to learn who I was and what I was doing.

Interviewers clearly can make effective use of elements and actors in the natural environment in order to develop working relationships with their subjects.

The Interviewer as a Self-Conscious Performer

The performance of the interviewer, as illustrated in the preceding anecdotes, is not at all haphazard. Actions, lines, roles, and routines must be carefully prepared and rehearsed in advance and thus constitute a *self-conscious performance*.

The literature on interviewing techniques often describes interviewers who react spontaneously to responses offered by interviewees in areas not scheduled on the interview instrument. Interviewers are described as using their insight and /or intuition to formulate the next question or probe almost instinctively. However, even though following up subject areas initiated by interviewees is important (even when the areas may not have been seen as

relevant during the interview's design stage), the notion that interviewers respond spontaneously is faulty. The use of terms such as *intuition* likewise seems loose and inaccurate.

Goode and Hatt (1952, p. 186) voiced a similar concern more than 30 years ago. They stated: "This is an unfortunate term [intuition] since for many it possesses overtones of vagueness, subjectivity and even mysticism."

Perhaps a more accurate understanding of the meaning of interviewer's intuition is what Archer (1980) calls *social interpretations.* The process of social interpretation, although not fully understood, is nonetheless evidenced by convincing empirical research (see Archer & Akert, 1977,1980). Even when interviewers are presented with a unique response by an interviewee, it is highly unlikely that a similar (spontaneously created) action or statement is required from the interviewers. In the majority of interview situations, even novice interviewers will use some version of social interpretation and draw on a response taken from their repertoire of tactics (discussed in detail in a following section). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have similarly mentioned the effects of tacit knowledge with regard to nonverbal cues relevant to communications between senders and receivers—in other words, subtly and often implicitly learned pieces of knowledge that trigger associations between actions and meanings.

More recently, Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p. 7) indicate that interviewers often have some preconceived notion about their subjects:

> If only tacitly, there is always a model of the research *subject* lurking behind persons placed in the role of interview respondent. Considering the epistemological activity of the interview requires us to ask how interviewers relate to respondents, as imagined subjects, arid to the conversations they have with those subjects.

Social Interpretations and the Interviewer

Social interpretations are defined as the affected messages transferred from one acting individual to another through nonverbal channels. These nonverbal channels include body gestures, facial grimaces, signs, symbols, and even some phonemic sounds such as tongue clicks, grunts, sighs, and similar visible indicators of communication (e.g., physical proximity between participant actors, their blocking, and so forth). As Gorden (1987, p. 75) suggests, interviewers must hear not only *what* the subjects say, but also *how* they say it.

Nonverbal channels include a variety of diverse elements. Each of these elements, taken individually provides only a fragment of the information necessary for an accurate social interpretation. When rendered in combination, or as Archer and Akert (1980, p. 396) describe it, "in symphony," they provide sufficient cues and clues to convey clear messages and social meanings.

These nonverbal channels of communication, together with more obvious verbal channels, make up the conversational interaction situation or what has been called *full channel communication.*

Social interpretations are not instinctive but learned, and can be accurately made in a matter of seconds (Archer & Akert, 1977,1980; Rosenfeld & Civikly, 1976; Rosenthal et al., 1979). Social interpretations are formed by observing the complex presentation of clues in real-life situations, from filmed versions of these interactions, or from still photographs in which even the nonverbal channels have been frozen in motionlessness as well as silence.

Throughout the interview process, the interviewer and the interviewee simultaneously send and receive messages on both nonverbal and verbal channels of communication. This exchange is in part a conscious social performance. Each participant is aware of the other's presence and intentionally says something and/or acts in certain ways for the other's benefit. However, to some extent, the interactions in an interview are also *unconscious,* which does not necessarily mean *unintended.* Unconscious behaviors should be understood as second-nature behaviors. An illustration of this sort of second-nature (automatic) interaction can often be observed when someone answers the telephone. The telephone voice is frequently almost melodic, even when only moments before the same voice may have been raised in angry shrieks directed toward a spouse or child. The social performance, of course, is for the benefit of whoever has just telephoned. Following the call, this individual's voice may again be raised in tones of anger—just as quickly and unconsciously.

Whenever interviewers realize they have trespassed on some unpleasant area of a respondent's life, or an area the respondent does not want to talk about, it is not due to intuition or insight. This realization is derived from a social interpretation of the messages sent by the interviewee. The ways interviewers respond to these messages, however, will have a profound effect on the quality of the interview as a whole. For example, if interviewers ignore what they have interpreted as a very sensitive area and plunge ahead, they may force the respondent to lie, change the subject, not respond, or withdraw from the interview. If, on the other hand, interviewers do defer to the avoidance rituals used by the respondent, they may lose valuable information necessary to the study.

However, if an interviewer, in response to the clues, offers some demonstration that he or she has received the message and will at least, to some extent, respect the interviewee's desires, the interview will probably continue. It is also likely that the interviewer will be able to direct the respondent back to this unpleasant area at a later point in the interview.

The use of social interpretations as described above certainly resembles Goffman's (1967) deference ceremony. There are, however, several critical distinctions, perhaps the most significant being that the deference is only temporary.

It has been suggested previously that throughout the performance, you as an interviewer must be conscious and reflective. You must carefully watch and interpret the performance of the subject. Your interpretations must be based on the cues, clues, and encoded messages offered by the interviewee. Included in the information these interactions supply may be the communication of a

variety °f moods, sentiments, role portrayals, and stylized routines, which represent the interviewee's script, line cues, blocking, and stage directions. You, the intervi^ewer' then must play several other roles simultaneously with that of interviewed ^ou rnust participate as an actor but must serve as director and choreograph^ as well.

The Interviewer as Actor. As an actor, you must perform your lines, routines, ^nd movements appropriately. This means that in addition to reciting scripted lines (the interview questions), you must be aware of what the other actor (the interviewee) is doing throughout the interview. You must listen careful^ t° line cues in order to avoid stepping on the lines of the interviewee (interrupting before the subject has completely answered a question). In addition, as actor, you must remain nonjudgmental regardless of what the interviewed may say- ^ you want people to openly talk about their feelings and views/ you must refrain from making any negative judgments—either verbally or through visual cues. The best way to accomplish this is to accept people for who and what they are; avoid making judgments of their actions, beliefs/ or ^e styles, even in your mind.

The Interviewer as Director. At the same time as you are performing as actor, you m^t also serve as director. In this capacity, you must be conscious of how you *yetf* lines and move, as well as of the interviewee's performance. As an interviewer, you must reflect on each segment of the interview as if you were outside the performance as an observer. From this vantage point, you must assess the adequacy of your performance (for example, whether you are responding correctly to line cues from the interviewee and whether you are handling abidance messages appropriately). This may include demonstrating both verbally and visually that you are empathic to things the interviewee has said. An apfrovi^ng *n°d>a* brief comment such as "I understand what you mean," or "I see," may °ffer sufficient positive reinforcement.

The Interviewer as Choreographer. The various assessments made in the role of director involve a process similar to what Reik (1949) described as "listening w*th the third ear." By using what you have heard (in the broadest sense of this term) in a self-aware and reflective manner, you as interviewer manage to control the interview process. As a result, as choreographer, you can effectively block (choreograph) your own movements and gestures and script your own response lines.

pfom this dramaturgical perspective, you as interviewer do not respond to any communication, verbal or nonverbal, scheduled (on the interview) or initiate^ by the subject, by means of spontaneous intuition or innate insight. Instead' the entire interview performance is a self-conscious social performance ^ou and the interviewee are constantly in the process of performing and ev^uating your own and each other's performance. Using these assessments, both participants are able to adjust scripts and movements in response to messages sent and received throughout the interview.

THE INTERVIEWER'S REPERTOIRE

Interviewers make adjustments throughout the interview consisting largely of switching from one role to another or altering their style of speech, manner, or set of lines. These devices comprise the interviewer's *repertoire*. Interviewers seldom genuinely improvise a spontaneous technique or strategy during the course of an actual interview. Certainly, a new technique would hardly be tried unless the repertoire of standard strategies had already been exhausted.

Preparation is a major guideline in interviewing. This is not to say that you should not actively pursue a topic initiated by the interviewee. However, even when interviewers pursue unplanned leads, they still can do it in a consistently scripted, rather than novel, fashion. At the very least, interviewers should be prepared with a series of scripted questions that may be triggered by virtually any possible topic area. These questions, very simply, include "Who with?" "Where?" "How come?" "How often?" "How many?" and a variety of similar questions relevant to the specifics of the study. In other words, during the design stages of the research, one must think about the possibility that unanticipated subject areas might arise. Consequently, even the unanticipated can be planned for!

For example, although one of the major foci in the Jewish drinking study conducted by Glassner and Berg (1980,1984) was alcohol use, we were also interested in our subjects' possible involvement in other drugs. However, this interest was incidental, and we were thus only interested in drug use if the subjects raised the issue. For example, whenever a subject initiated a discussion connected with marijuana use, regardless of where in the structured interview it occurred, the interviewer pursued the topic through use of a series of systematically scripted questions. Following the completion of the question series, the interviewer returned to the place in the interview schedule from which he had digressed. The use of a consistent and systematic line of questions for even unanticipated areas is particularly important for reliability and for possible replication of a study. This is especially true when interviewing from a dramaturgical perspective. Since interviewers as actors, directors, and choreographers may not be able to provide future researchers with detailed descriptions of the various character portrayals, routines, and devices they used during individual interview performances, it is crucial that, at least, a comparable script exists.

The idea of interviewers possessing a repertoire of prepared lines, routines, and communication devices sometimes conjures up the image of a little black bag of dirty tricks. It should not. As suggested earlier in this chapter, the research interview is not a natural communication interaction. It is necessary