Designing Qualitative Research

SIXTH EDITION

CATHERINE MARSHALL • GRETCHEN B. ROSSMAN

Designing Qualitative Research

Sixth

Dedication

In this sixth edition we once again dedicate the book to all our many students—those we have worked with in the past, those we are working with now, and those we will work with in the future, either directly and face-to-face or through this new edition.

Our intent with this book is to guide readers to carry on the many qualitative traditions with keen insights and deep commitments to their participants and with the belief that they will strive to build bridges across traditions as they take up multidisciplinary, hybrid forms of qualitative inquiry. Collectively, our quantitative report of past students adds up to almost 90 doctoral dissertations, more than 40 master's theses, and close to 900 class or workshop participants. Our qualitative report of past students fits into three categories: the puzzled and skeptical, the deeply thoughtful, and the "Well, I hate statistics so I might as well try this."

We look forward to the work of our future students, and readers, no matter what their stance toward qualitative inquiry. We hope this new edition challenges preconceptions and moves forward our variegated forms of inquiry.

Designing Qualitative Research

Sixth Edition

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University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area

Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044

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SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.

3 Church Street

#10-04 Samsung Hub

Singapore 049483

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Marshall, Catherine, 1946–

Designing qualitative research / Catherine Marshall, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gretchen B. Rossman, University of Massachusetts Amherst. — Sixth edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4522-7100-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Social sciences—Research—Methodology. 2. Qualitative research. I. Rossman, Gretchen B. II. Title.

H62.M277 2016

001.4’2—dc23 2014040901

14 15 16 17 18 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Acquisitions Editor: Helen Salmon

Editorial Assistant: Anna Villaruel

Digital Content Editor: Katie Bierach

Production Editor: Tracy Buyan

Copy Editor: Megan Granger

Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.

Proofreader: Alison Syring

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Detailed Contents

Detailed Contents

- List of Tables
- List of Figures
- List of Vignettes
- Preface to the Sixth Edition
- About the Authors
- 1. Introduction
  - Considerations
    - “Do-Ability”: Considerations of Feasibility
    - “Should-Do-Ability”: Considerations of Potential Significance and Ethics
    - “Want-to-Do Ability”: Considerations of Sustained and Sustaining Interest
  - The Challenges
    - Conceptual Framework
    - Design and Methods
    - Researcher Competence
  - Developing an Argument
  - Overview of the Book
  - Dialogue Between Authors
  - Further Reading
  - Key Concepts
- 2. Qualitative Research Genres
  - Major Genres
    - A Focus on Society and Culture: Ethnographic Approaches
    - A Focus on Individual Lived Experience: Phenomenological Approaches
    - A Focus on Talk and Text: Sociolinguistic Approaches
    - Grounded Theory Approaches
    - Case Studies
    - Arts-Informed and Multimodal Inquiry
  - Critical Genres
    - Critical Ethnography
    - Autoethnography
    - Critical Discourse Analysis
    - Action Research and Participatory Action Research
    - Queer Theory and Analysis
    - Critical Race Theory and Analysis
    - Feminist Theories and Methodologies
    - Cultural Studies

        - Internet/Virtual Ethnography
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- 3. Trustworthiness and Ethics
    - Trustworthiness
        - Transactional, Catalytic, Transgressive, and Transformational
        - Validity, or Crystallization?
    - Bringing Ethics Into Trustworthiness
    - Ethics: Focusing on People
        - Institutional Review Boards
        - Cultural Challenges to Informed Consent
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- 4. The What of the Study: Building the Conceptual Framework
    - Sections of the Proposal
    - Building the Conceptual Framework: Topic, Purpose, and Significance
        - The Overview Section
        - Introducing the Topic
            - Framing the Research Process
        - The Purpose of the Study
        - The Significance and Potential Contributions of the Study
            - Significance for Knowledge
            - Significance for Practical and Policy Problems
            - Significance for Action
        - The Conceptual Framework and Research Questions
        - Delineating the Limitations of the Study
    - Literature Review and Critique of Related Research
        - Theoretical Traditions for Framing the Questions
        - Related Research, Reviewed and Critiqued
        - Essays and Opinions of Experts
        - Summarizing the Literature Review in a Conceptual Framework
            - Model for Envisioning a Multiresearcher, Multifocal Study
            - Example of a Simple Conceptual Model
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts

- 5. The How of the Study: Building the Research Design
  - Meeting the Challenge
  - Justifying Qualitative Research
  - The Qualitative Genre and Overall Approach
    - Overall Strategies
      - Qualitative Genre and Overall Strategy
    - Demonstrating the Traditions
    - Piloting
  - Getting Concrete: The Setting, Site, Population, or Phenomenon
    - Site-Specific Research
    - Research in Your Own Setting
    - Entry Letters and Scripts
    - Entry: Into Which Sites and How Many Sites?
      - Sampling Affects Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Transferability
  - Selecting a Sample of People, Actions, Events, and/or Processes
    - Sampling Within a Population and Focusing Within a Site
    - Logical and Systematic Sampling
      - Data Collection: Sampling Plan
  - The Researcher's Role: Issues of Personal Biography, Positionality, Entry, Rapport, Reciprocity, and Ethics
    - Researcher Identity, Voice, and Biases
      - Field Notes
    - Role Considerations
      - Situating the Self
      - Negotiating Entry, Easing Tensions, and Role Maintenance
      - Efficiency
    - Rapport and Interpersonal Considerations
    - Reciprocity
    - Ethics
    - Planning the Exit
  - Anticipating Reviewers' Concerns
  - Dialogue Between Authors
  - Dialogue Between Learners
  - Further Reading
  - Key Concepts
- 6. Basic Data Collection Methods
  - Observation
    - Participant Observation
      - Ethical Issues in Observation and Participant Observation
  - In-Depth Interviewing

        - Ethnographic Interviewing
        - Phenomenological Interviewing
        - Focus-Group Interviews
            - Ethical Issues in Focus-Group Interviews
    - Life Histories, Narrative Inquiry, and Digital Storytelling
        - Life Histories
        - Narrative Inquiry
        - Digital Storytelling
            - Ethical Issues in Life Histories, Narrative Inquiry, and Digital Storytelling
        - Interviewing Elites
        - Conducting Research With Children and Youth
            - Ethical Issues in Interviewing Children and Youth
        - Interviewing Across Differences in Social Identities
            - Ethical Issues in All Types of Interviewing
    - Documents and Historical Analysis
    - Objects and Artifacts of Material Cultures
        - Ethical Issues in Using Documents and Artifacts
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- 7. Specialized and Focused Data Collection Methods
    - Using the Internet and Digital Applications
        - Gathering Data Using Software Applications
            - Ethical Issues in Using Software Applications and Internet Sites
    - Multimodal Approaches
        - Multimedia Data in the Digital Age
        - Videos and Photographs
            - Ethical Issues With Videos and Photographs
        - Using the Arts for Data Collection
            - Ethical Issues in Arts-Based Data Collection
    - Interaction Analysis
        - Classroom Interaction Analysis
            - Ethical Issues in Interaction Analysis
        - Kinesics
        - Proxemics
            - Ethical Issues in Proxemics
    - Dilemma Analysis
        - Ethical Issues in Dilemma Analysis

    - Combining Data Collection Methods
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- 8. Managing, Analyzing, and Interpreting Data
    - Recording, Managing, Transcribing, and Translating Data
        - Issues With Transcribing and Translating
            - Transcribing
            - Translating
            - Ethical Issues in Transcribing and Translating
    - Data Analysis
    - Generic Data Analysis Strategies
    - Analytic Procedures
        - Organizing the Data
        - Immersion in the Data
        - Coding the Data
        - Writing Analytic Memos
        - Generating Case Summaries, Categories, Themes, Typologies, Matrices, and Clusters
            - From Open Coding to Focusing
            - Clustering
        - Computer-Assisted Analysis
        - Offering Interpretations
        - Searching for Alternative Understandings
            - Challenging One's Own Interpretations
            - Moving Toward Theoretical Sufficiency
        - Numbers Are Useful
        - Writing the Report or Representing the Inquiry
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- 9. Stressors: Time, Resources, and Politics
    - Planning Resources for a Large Study
        - Time
        - Personnel
        - Financial Resources
    - Topsy-Turvy Politics and Research
    - Planning Master's Thesis or Dissertation Research
        - Mentors and Peers

        - Time on a Small Scale
        - Financing
            - Materials
            - Services
            - Personal Costs
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Dialogue Between Learners
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- 10. Arguing the Merits of Your Proposal and Envisioning the Final Report
    - Criteria of Soundness
        - Explicit Details on Design and Methods
        - Explicit Details and Rigorous Arguments About Research Questions and Data Relevance
        - Firm Grounding in the Scholarly Context
        - Detailed Records
        - Clarity and Academic Credibility
    - The Essential Qualitativeness of the Research
    - The Value of the Qualitative Approach
    - Demonstrating Precedents
    - Envisioning the Final Report, the Dissertation, or the Book
        - Organization and Writing Styles
        - Methods of Representation
            - Narratives, Life Histories, Ethnographies, and Case Study Representation
            - Mixed-Methods Reporting
            - Action Research Representation
            - Artistic Forms or Presentation
            - Performance Ethnography as Representation
            - Representation in Autoethnography
    - A Final Word
    - Dialogue Between Authors
    - Further Reading
    - Key Concepts
- References
- Author Index
- Subject Index

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Research and Researchers 3
Table 2.1 Historical Typologies of Qualitative Research 16
Table 2.2 Critical Genres 22
Table 3.1 Continuum of Qualitative Studies' Goals and Criteria 45
Table 3.2 Assumptions About Validity Depending on Overarching Purposes 49
Table 4.1 Sections of a Qualitative Research Proposal 67
Table 4.2 Matching Research Questions and Purpose 78
Table 5.1 Qualitative Genre and Overall Strategy 102
Table 5.2 An Example of an E-Mail Entry Letter 108
Table 5.3 Example of a Sampling Plan 113
Table 5.4 Typology of Sampling Strategies in Qualitative Inquiry 115
Table 6.1 Dimensions of Assumptions in Qualitative Inquiry 142
Table 6.2 Data Collection Methods Related to Observation Role 146
Table 6.3 Strengths of Basic Data Collection Methods 169
Table 6.4 Challenges in Using Basic Data Collection Methods 170
Table 7.1 Medium by Qualitative Approach 184
Table 7.2 Strengths of Specialized Data Collection Methods 194
Table 7.3 Challenges in Using Specialized Data Collection Methods 195
Table 8.1 Log of Data-Gathering Activities 215
Table 8.2 Codes From *Activist Educators* 219
Table 8.3 Elements of Analytic Categories 223
Table 9.1 Schedule of Work 240
Table 9.2 Categories for Projecting Costs 244
Table 9.3 Functions of the Operative Principles of Assumptive Worlds 252
Table 10.1 Questions From Reviewers With Little Qualitative Experience 271
Table 10.2 Questions From Reviewers Attuned to Qualitative Methodology 271

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Informed Consent: Students 54
Figure 4.1 Shiva's Circle of Constructivist Inquiry 70
Figure 4.2 The Conceptual Funnel 73
Figure 4.3 Framing the Research Process 76
Figure 4.4 Model for Envisioning a Multiresearcher, Multifocal Study 89
Figure 4.5 Example of a Simple Conceptual Model 90
Figure 5.1 Complexities of Design and Interaction 103
Figure 5.2 Reflexive Questions: Triangulated Inquiry 118
Figure 6.1 Sample Field Notes 144
Figure 6.2 Sample Interview Field Notes 149
Figure 7.1 Heuristic for Making Informed Consent Decisions in Internet Research 183
Figure 8.1 A Continuum of Analysis Strategies 216
Figure 8.2 Themes and Categories on British Muslim Girls' Choices 224
Figure 8.3 An Empirical Typology of Teacher Roles in Dealing With High School Dropouts 227

List of Vignettes

Vignette 1 Justifying Fieldwork to Explore Organizational Culture 8
Vignette 2 Convincing Policymakers of the Utility of Qualitative Methods 9
Vignette 3 Talking Through Cultural Challenges 55
Vignette 4 Challenges in Anticipating Ethical Issues 57
Vignette 5 Intertwining My Research, My Self, and Real-World Significance 71
Vignette 6 An Initial Statement 83
Vignette 7 Building Significance Through the Literature 87
Vignette 8 Creative Review of the Literature 90
Vignette 9 Pan in (Academic) Wonderland: Discourse Review 92
Vignette 10 Focusing on People and Events 110
Vignette 11 Negotiating Site Selection 112
Vignette 12 Progressive Sampling to Explore a Puzzle 116
Vignette 13 Negotiating and Maintaining Access With a Transient, Vulnerable Population 121
Vignette 14 Role and Ethics in Sexual Harassment Research 122
Vignette 15 Building Trust 125
Vignette 16 Ethics and Ethnographic Fieldwork 127
Vignette 17 Ethics, Power, and Politics 128
Vignette 18 Moving On 130
Vignette 19 Anticipating the Initial Coding Categories 132
Vignette 20 Using Multiple Methods for Data Collection 168
Vignette 21 Choosing Data Collection Methods 196
Vignette 22 Design Flexibility 197
Vignette 23 Exquisite Care in Translating and Transcribing 212
Vignette 24 Moving From Literature Review to Data Collection and Management to Analysis and Findings 218
Vignette 25 Data Management Before Computers 225
Vignette 26 Projecting Resources for a Large-Scale Study 239
Vignette 27 Feasibility and Planning for Dissertation Research 247
Vignette 28 Walking the Reviewers Through Qualitative Analysis 251
Vignette 29 Justifying Time for Exploration 268
Vignette 30 Defending Flexibility 269
Vignette 31 Planning Reporting for Qualitative Participatory Evaluation 277
Vignette 32 Interspersing Reporting and Analysis 279
Vignette 33 Talking Taboo: Continuing the Research Relationship 280
Vignette 34 Finding "The Expressive Realm" With Johnny 282

Preface

Since the first edition of *Designing Qualitative Research*, the context for systematic inquiry has undergone seismic shifts. In this newest edition, we have brought in contemporary issues, methods, and considerations that have emerged since publication of the fifth edition in 2010. We have added extensive material on philosophy, history, and genres of qualitative inquiry, including discussions on arts-informed inquiry, multimodal inquiry, critical discourse analysis, case studies, grounded theory, autoethnography, and examples of the burgeoning use of social media and various computer and web-based applications. We have expanded our suggestions for data analysis at the proposal stage and for managing analysis in writing final reports. The guidance in our book may be startling to those who jump into qualitative research because they don't like statistics. By delineating specific ways to be systematic, we hope that our suggestions will help prevent the temptation to say, "Oh, data analysis will just happen" or "Don't worry, I'll just figure out what to do once I get out in the field."

We continue our attention to the ways research can be attuned to policy and practice —from problem identification to formatting the presentation of findings to the explicit focus on trustworthiness, credibility, and ethics woven into the text. We have also revised the work for reader-friendliness and to add fresh, updated references. Still, we keep some of the grandfathers and grandmothers who pioneered qualitative inquiry.

Our dialogues between learners continue but with new learners for this edition: Keren Dalyot and Karla Guiliano Sarr. We have also included short dialogues between the authors depicting how we have used our experiences teaching and advising to expand this sixth edition. Just after the Further Reading lists, we have also offered examples of some of our favorites, as we realized that these reading lists can be somewhat daunting. This suggestion came from some of Catherine's students; we thank them for this. We have also augmented the lists of key concepts at the end of each chapter.

Now that qualitative research methodology has matured, in this sixth edition we incorporate the advances and challenges presented by new technologies and provocative, creative modes of presentation. Further, considering the warmer climate for qualitative inquiry on many university campuses, we have placed less emphasis on defending and more on asserting the appropriateness of qualitative inquiry. We believe that the momentum supporting the "goodness" of qualitative inquiry for many kinds of research questions moves us past conservative trends stipulating that appropriate—and acceptable—inquiry can take only one form: the randomized, controlled experiment. Such stipulations are written into policy governing research and evaluation of federally funded programs. So this edition reflects these turns of events. We value and honor the university as *the* institution that continues the struggles against political waves and protects alternative inquiry. Universities are still reasonably gentle places to find support for qualitative research.

Our book originally met the need for advice on designing qualitative research, given the complexity, flexibility, and controversies of its many genres. That need persists, and doctoral students, research managers, policy analysts, and researchers anticipating multimethod team research will continue to find clear and direct guidance in this edition. Qualitative research designs are currently used in the fields of health behavior, education, urban planning, public relations and communications, sociology, international studies, psychology, management, social work, health policy, nursing, and more. Our focus tends to be on research in applied fields such as those listed here. While we acknowledge the many developments that have come from autoethnography, performance ethnography, and cultural studies, as examples, we focus on guiding those working in fields that demand practical answers to complex questions.

Originally, *Designing Qualitative Research* was written because qualitative reports were intriguing but mystical. Earthy, evocative ethnographies seemed just to appear by magic. Thick texts extolled the philosophical stances and cultural premises of qualitative research. A few researchers provided chapters or appendices describing their procedures; however, researchers and students had no guidance on how to proceed. We originally wrote this book to fill the void, to provide specific advice on design. Then and now, in this sixth edition, we have benefited from the research experience of those who first systematically documented their designs and processes, and also from the probing questions of our doctoral students. Thus, we provide readers with connections to the classics of ethnography and other qualitative genres, as well as present the issues and design dilemmas of researchers with new questions for the new century—one now dominated by social networking. Furthermore, this edition extends and deepens the discussion in the previous edition about strategies for incorporating into qualitative methodology the challenges posed by postmodernists, feminists, critical race theorists, and those who demand that research be directly useful to the researched.

This sixth edition offers some new, timely vignettes to illustrate the methodological challenges posed by the intellectual, ethical, political, and technological advances affecting qualitative research design. Several of these were written by our current or recent graduate students, and they are given bylines to honor their contributions. Vignettes include, for example, researchers' challenges in designing research with refugee and immigrant populations; sensitivities in translating from a local language to the postcolonial language to English; and issues dealing with institutional review boards. Other vignettes include discussions of researchers' explicitly political stances toward promoting democracy while conducting evaluations of community development, and critical theorists' puzzling over reporting research without colonizing those who allowed them into their lives. Because qualitative design is not linear, different pedagogical strategies are required; the vignettes, we hope, assist readers in transferring suggestions about design to applications in their own research.

As we have revised this edition, we have been mindful of reviewers' comments about using pronouns. This has been tricky, as we have tried to maintain narrative flow while providing gender balance. Our decision for this edition is to alternate the use of *he* and *she* by chapter. We look forward to new reviewers' comments on how well this works.

The companion website, another new feature for this edition, offers support for instructors and students. Instructor resources include PowerPoint slides, course syllabi, and our own discussion questions and exercises. We also have SAGE journal articles and eFlashcards available on the open-access Student Study Site. Visit **http://study.sagepub.com/marshall6e** to access these materials.

We have between us a collective total of close to 60 years' experience teaching qualitative methodology to graduate students. At 10 to 20 students per class per year for each of us, just think how many qualitative researchers we have helped learn! Nothing keeps us attuned to qualitative research dilemmas more than the challenges our students present in classes and dissertations. We wish to thank the many hundreds who have continuously pressed for innovative approaches and posed research questions fresh from real-life problems; many have graciously allowed us to use their questions in vignettes. Finally, we, and our readers, benefit from the contributions of reviewers in scholarly journals and anonymous reviews, as well as from critical suggestions from our own students. We extend a huge thank you to our new interlocutors, Keren Dalyot and Karla Guiliano Sarr, for writing new, fresh dialogues between learners. As noted above, we deeply appreciate the writing contributions of several of our current and former students: Keren Dalyot, Paul St. John Frisoli, Mark Johnson, Aaron Kuntz, Rachael B. Lawrence, Gerardo Blanco Ramírez, Karla Guiliano Sarr, and Ariel Tichnor-Wagner. We acknowledge their wonderful contributions by listing them as the authors of various sections. And we extend our heartfelt thanks to our three incredibly diligent research assistants:

Keren Dalyot, Rachael B. Lawrence, and Mohammad Mahboob Morshed.

We also thank Helen Salmon at SAGE Publications for her ongoing guidance and wisdom in producing this edition, and we thank the following reviewers who contributed important insights, which we have incorporated: Ifeoma A. Amah, The University of Texas at Arlington; Mary Jean Ronan Herzog, Western Carolina University; Janet K. Isbell, Tennessee Technological University; Catherine McGregor, University of Victoria; LeAnn G. Putney, University of Nevada–Las Vegas; Jon Travis, Texas A&M University–Commerce; and Marc D. Weiner, Rutgers University. We hope our efforts will continue to provide a practical guide, assisting researchers as they craft sound, thoughtful, and sensitive proposals for qualitative inquiry that is robust and ethical.

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman

About the Authors

Catherine Marshall

is the William Eaves Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After completing her PhD, she served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania and at Vanderbilt University before settling as professor at North Carolina. The ongoing goal of her teaching and research has been to use an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the cultures of schools, state policy cultures, gender issues, and social justice issues. She has published extensively on the politics of education, qualitative methodology, women's access to careers, and socialization, language, and values in educational administration.

Marshall's honors include the Campbell Award for Lifetime Intellectual Contributions to the Field, given by the Politics of Education Association (2009); the University Council for Educational Administration's Campbell Award for Lifetime Achievement and Contributions to Educational Administration (2008); the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Willystine Goodsell Award for her scholarship, activism, and community building on behalf of women and education (2004); and a Ford Foundation grant for Social Justice Leadership (2002). In the American Educational Association, she was elected to head the Politics and Policy Division, and she also created an AERA Special Interest Group called Leadership for Social Justice.

Marshall is the author or editor of numerous other books. These include *Activist Educators: Breaking Past Limits; Culture and Education Policy in the American States; The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges; The New Politics of Gender and Race;* and *Feminist Critical Policy Analysis.* This book's origin came early in her scholarly career, while conducting qualitative research on policy and teaching literally hundreds of doctoral students how to adopt and adapt the qualitative approach into workable proposals. She recognized a need and began to develop this book.

Gretchen B. Rossman

is chair of the Department of Educational Policy, Research and Administration and professor of international education at the Center for International

Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She received her PhD in education from the University of Pennsylvania, with a specialization in higher-education administration. She has served as a visiting professor at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Prior to coming to the University of Massachusetts, she was senior research associate at Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia. With an international reputation as a qualitative methodologist, she has expertise in qualitative research design and methods, mixed-methods monitoring and evaluation, and inquiry in education. Over the past 30+ years, she has coauthored 12 books, 2 of which are editions of major qualitative research texts (*Learning in the Field*, third edition, with Sharon F. Rallis, and the present sixth edition of *Designing Qualitative Research*, with Catherine Marshall—both widely used guides for qualitative inquiry). She has published a book titled *The Research Journey: An Introduction to Inquiry* (with Sharon Rallis). She has also authored or coauthored more than 50 articles, book chapters, and technical reports focused on methodological issues in qualitative research synthesis, mixed-methods evaluation, and ethical research practice, as well as the analysis and evaluation of educational reform efforts both in the United States and internationally.

Professor Rossman has served as principal investigator (PI) or co-PI on several large U.S. Agency for International Development–funded projects (in Palestine, the Southern Sudan, Malawi, and India); as co-PI on a World Bank–funded multigrade schooling project (Senegal and Gambia); as lead trainer for a Save the Children–funded participatory monitoring and evaluation of professional training (Azerbaijan); and as external evaluator on several domestic projects, including a Department of Education–funded reform initiative, a National Science Foundation–funded middle-grades science initiative, and a number of projects implementing more inclusive practices for students with disabilities. She regularly presents papers at the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association and the Comparative and International Education Society.

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SAGE was founded in 1965 by Sara Miller McCune to support the dissemination of usable knowledge by publishing innovative and high-quality research and teaching content. Today, we publish more than 750 journals, including those of more than 300 learned societies, more than 800 new books per year, and a growing range of library products including archives, data, case studies, reports, conference highlights, and video. SAGE remains majority-owned by our founder, and after Sara's lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures our continued independence.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

> *There are limits to what the rationalizing knowledge epitomized by statistics can do. No matter how precise, quantification cannot inspire action, especially in a society whose bonds are forged by sympathy, not mere calculation.*
>
> —Mary Poovey (1995, p. 84)

Qualitative research methodologies are now well-established important modes of inquiry for the social sciences and applied fields, such as education, regional planning, health sciences, social work, community development, and management. Long dominated by research methods borrowed from the experimental sciences, the social sciences now present a sometimes confusing array of alternative genres. The various genres of ethnography, including autoethnography, virtual ethnography, compressed ethnography, and the more familiar generic ethnography, derive from anthropology. Phenomenological approaches grew directly from strands of Western philosophy, and interdisciplinary work has spawned sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, life histories, narrative analysis, arts-based inquiry, and visual methodologies.

The critical traditions, including postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial perspectives, contribute to critical discourse analysis, a variety of feminist research approaches, critical race theory and analysis, queer theory and analysis, cultural studies, critical ethnography, and autoethnography. An emerging and intriguing mode of representation is performance ethnography, and the explosion of computer-based technologies has spawned Internet ethnography and multimodal forms of inquiry. Action research and participatory research, often explicitly ideological and emancipatory, intend to critique and radically change fundamental social structures and processes and to reconceptualize the entire research enterprise. Many of these genres, derived from traditional and interdisciplinary scholarship, are now frequently used in policy studies and professional fields. Two decades ago, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) noted, “The extent to which the ‘qualitative revolution’ is taking over the social sciences and related professional fields is nothing short of amazing” (p. ix); this is still true today.

Each of these disciplinary traditions rests on somewhat different assumptions about what constitutes proper inquiry within the qualitative, or interpretive, paradigm. Throughout this text, we refer to *qualitative research* and *qualitative methodology* as if they were one agreed-on approach. If this were the case, it might be reassuring to the novice researcher, but unfortunately it is not. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) wrote, “qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround [*sic*] the term *qualitative research*” (p. 2).

Qualitative research genres exist in great variety, and many excellent texts serve as guides to their assumptions and approaches. However, many qualitative researchers, despite their various methodological stances, tend to espouse some common values and enact a family of procedures for the conduct of a study. They are intrigued by the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and by the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interactions. They are also exquisitely aware that they work in and through interpretations—their own and others’—layered in complex hermeneutic circles. These interests take qualitative researchers into natural settings, rather than laboratories, and foster pragmatism in using multiple methods—“a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4)—for exploring a topic. Thus, qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people. Below we offer five general hallmarks of qualitative research and five common stances of researchers who practice it (see Rossman & Rallis, 2012, pp. 8–11).

Qualitative research typically

- takes place in the natural world,
- draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study,
- focuses on context,
- is emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured, and
- is fundamentally interpretive.

Qualitative researchers, they maintain, tend to

- view social worlds as holistic and complex,
- engage in systematic reflection on who they are in the conduct of the research,
- remain sensitive to their own biographies/social identities and how these shape the study (i.e., they are reflexive),
- rely on complex reasoning that moves dialectically between deduction and induction, and
- conduct their inquiries systematically (see Table 1.1).

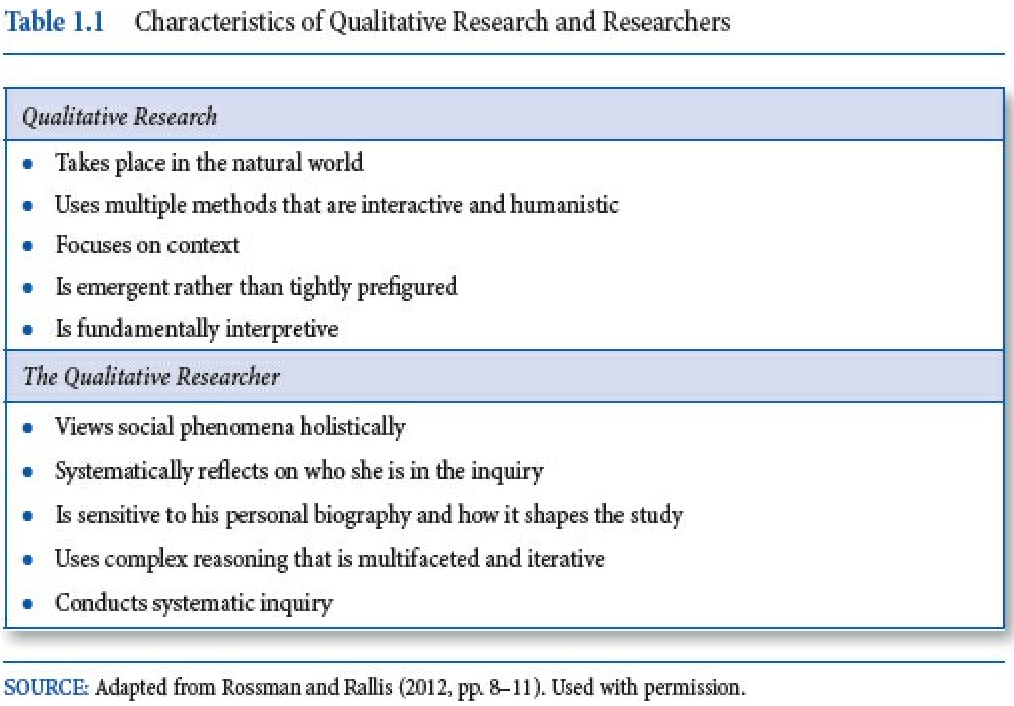

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Research and Researchers

Qualitative Research
• Takes place in the natural world • Uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic • Focuses on context • Is emergent rather than tightly prefigured • Is fundamentally interpretive
The Qualitative Researcher
• Views social phenomena holistically • Systematically reflects on who she is in the inquiry • Is sensitive to his personal biography and how it shapes the study • Uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted and iterative • Conducts systematic inquiry

SOURCE: Adapted from Rossman and Rallis (2012, pp. 8–11). Used with permission.

SOURCE: Adapted from Rossman and Rallis (2012, pp. 8–11). Used with permission.

Qualitative research, then, is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. The various genres are naturalistic, interpretive, and increasingly critical, and they typically draw on multiple methods of inquiry. This book is intended to be a guide for researchers who have chosen some genre of qualitative methods in their effort to understand—and perhaps change—a complex social phenomenon, and who seek to develop solid proposals for **ethical research practice** as they plan their inquiry.

The insightful case study, the rich description of ethnography, the narratives of complex personal journeys—all are the products of systematic inquiry. In their beginnings, however, they were modest research proposals. Three decades ago, qualitative researchers had to search hard to find useful guidelines for writing thorough, convincing research proposals. Since then, many useful texts have been published (we cite several at the end of this chapter); these texts provide guidance in learning how to craft a solid research proposal. They help fill the gap created, for example, by policy analyses that offer findings and recommendations with few details on how the research led to them and by published reports of qualitative research that lack sufficient detail to provide strong examples of how they were designed. All too often, beginning qualitative researchers have difficulty learning how to design a useful and generative study from such reports. Other reports are written as if the process unfolded smoothly, with none of the messiness inherent in any research. These versions are also difficult to learn from. This book provides specific guidance for writing strong and convincing proposals for ethical research grounded in the assumptions and practice of qualitative methodology.

Although qualitative research has an accepted place in formal research arenas—the “amazing takeover” described above—dissertation committees and reviewers for funding agencies still need to see proposals that are well developed, sound, rigorous, and ethical. This has become especially salient in the era of “the gold standard” promulgated by the U.S. government, which holds that randomized controlled trials are the preferred approach to producing generalizable and useful findings. This book, organized as a guide through the process of writing a qualitative research proposal, shows how to write a proposal that may well convince reviewers by defining explicit steps to follow, principles to adhere to, and rationales for the strengths of qualitative research.

Sociologists, clinical psychologists, community health workers, criminologists, anthropologists, political scientists, regional planners, and others from a range of the social sciences and applied fields will find this guide useful. Although many of the examples come from education (because of our own backgrounds), the principles, challenges, and opportunities are transferable across disciplines and into other applied fields.

This book does not replace the numerous texts, readers, journal articles, and websites that are important for learning about various qualitative genres and the nuances of their preferred methods. It is meant to complement those resources that explicate the philosophical bases, historical development, principles and methods of practice, and findings of qualitative studies. Its purpose is to give practical, useful guidance for writing proposals that fit within the qualitative paradigm and that are successful.

We should mention, as a cautionary note, that many of the examples presented here—indeed, the entire structure and organization of the book—suggest that the processes of proposal development are linear and transparent. As we note throughout the text, this is not the case. The vignettes are written in well-polished prose, often because they are the final versions of sections in successful proposals. The structure of the book may suggest that one proceeds from Point A to Point B in a seamless and quite logical manner. Such are the challenges of presenting an iterative, recursive process in formal academic writing. The looping back and forth, the frustrations—such things are masked. We trust that the reader will keep this in mind.

■ Considerations

When considering writing a proposal for a research study that will use qualitative methods, the researcher will find it valuable to weigh three interrelated concerns that capture key questions of feasibility, competence and ethics, and interest; we refer to these as the **do-ability**, the **should-do-ability**, and the **want-to-do-ability**.

“Do-Ability”: Considerations of Feasibility

One set of considerations captures the feasibility, the “do-ability,” of the study. Is the study I am considering possible and realistic? Judgments about resources (time, money), access to the site or population of interest or both, and the researcher’s knowledge and skills come into play here. Proposals seeking external funding and those for dissertation research must include a discussion of resources. Strategies to gain access to a site or identify participants for the study should also be discussed. Throughout the proposal, the researcher should demonstrate her competence to conduct a thorough, ethical, qualitative research study. In citing the methodological literature and discussing pilot studies or previous research, she demonstrates her experience in conducting qualitative research and familiarity with the ongoing discourse on methodology, thereby situating her own work within the evolving context of research.

Thus, this set of questions focuses on considerations of feasibility. Are there sufficient resources to support the conduct of the study? Are access and willing participation likely in the setting? Is the study focused enough so it can be completed? Does the researcher provide evidence of methodological competence?

“Should-Do-Ability”: Considerations of Potential Significance and Ethics

Another set of considerations in building a solid proposal addresses whether the study has the potential to contribute to theorizing and research—to the ongoing discourse in a social science discipline or an applied field, to policy issues and policymaking, and/or to issues of practice. Is this study likely to be useful to other researchers, policymakers, practitioners? Are there major ethical pitfalls to be considered? The researcher should argue that the study will likely contribute to scholarship, policy, and/or practice, and address the familiar question, “So what?” She should respond cogently and knowledgeably when asked why the study should be conducted. Thus, this set of considerations centers on the following questions: Should the study be conducted? How will it contribute to scholarship? Policy deliberations? Practice?

However, another crucial facet of these “should” considerations is the critically important area of ethics and ethical practice: What ethical concerns or issues may arise? What resources can the researcher draw on to respond sensitively to these issues? Because ethical concerns are so important in any inquiry involving human beings, we return to this topic in Chapter 3 and highlight it throughout the book.

“Want-to-Do-Ability”: Considerations of Sustained and Sustaining Interest

This set of questions captures the researcher’s engagement with the topic. Far removed from the days of assertions of the dispassionate scientist, the qualitative researcher (and all researchers, we claim) cares deeply about the topic that she inquires about. Am I sufficiently committed to learning about this topic to sustain the energy to complete it? Qualitative research, however, is neither naively subjectivist nor biased (all-too-common criticisms). Rather, qualitative methodologies acknowledge that *all* research in the social science disciplines and applied fields may well be subjective (in the sense of a subjective caring), and shift the discourse to a discussion of epistemology and to strategies for ensuring trustworthy and credible studies (which we discuss more fully in Chapter 3). Thus, this third set of considerations captures the importance of commitment and compelling interest to sustain the study from design to implementation to analysis to writing up the final report.

The proposal, then, is an argument that makes the case and convinces reviewers that the study can be done and should be done, and that there is sufficient energy and interest to sustain it.

■ The Challenges

Research proposals consist of two major sections: (1) the **conceptual framework** and (2) the design and research methods. Roughly corresponding to the *what*—the substantive focus of the inquiry—and the *how*—the means for conducting it—these two sections describe in detail the specific topic or issue to be explored and the methods proposed for exploration. In a sound, well-developed, well-argued proposal, the sections are integrally related: They share common epistemological assumptions; research questions and methods chosen to explore the topic are congruent and relate to one another organically.

To achieve this goal, researchers who would conduct qualitative research face several challenges, for example, in

- developing a conceptual framework for the study that is thorough, concise, elegant, and generative;
- planning a design that is systematic and manageable, yet flexible; and
- integrating these into a coherent argument that convinces the proposal readers (a funding agency or dissertation committee) to approve the study.

They should also

- demonstrate their *competence* to conduct the study (introduced above in the “do-ability” considerations),
- depict how they will be mindful about issues of *ethical practice* (introduced above in the “should-do-ability” considerations), and
- provide details of strategies to ensure that the study is *trustworthy*.

Each of these topics is taken up throughout the book (see the overview at the end of this chapter), providing guidance at the proposal development stage to help meet these challenges. In the rest of this chapter, we provide an overview of the need to develop a coherent conceptual framework and a solid design. We then turn to the necessity for the researcher to demonstrate competence to conduct the study.

Conceptual Framework

The first major section of the proposal—the conceptual framework—demands a solid rationale. In examining a specific setting or set of individuals, the writer should show how she is studying instances of a larger phenomenon. By linking the specific research questions to larger theoretical constructs, to existing puzzles or contested positions in a field, or to important policy issues, the writer shows that the particulars of this study serve to illuminate larger issues and therefore hold potential significance for that field. The doctoral student in economics, for example, who demonstrates that his qualitative case studies of five families' financial decision making are relevant for understanding larger forces in the marketplace, has met this condition. The case studies are significant because they illuminate in detail larger economic forces while focusing on individuals. We develop the logic undergirding the conceptual framework in Chapter 4.

Design and Methods

The second major section of a proposal, also requiring a sound rationale, is devoted to the design of the study and the selection of specific methods. This section demonstrates that the study is feasible. The writer should show that the design and methods are the result of a series of decisions she has made based on knowledge gained from the methodological literature and previous work. Those decisions should not derive just from the methodological literature, however. Their justification should also flow logically from the research questions and from the conceptual framework.

Because qualitative research proposals are at times unfamiliar to reviewers, the logic supporting the choice of the proposed methods must be sound. Ensuring a clear, logical rationale in support of qualitative methods entails attention to six topics:

1. The *assumptions* of qualitative approaches in general and for the specific genre or hybrid approach of the study
2. The ***trustworthiness*** of the overall design
3. Consideration of the *ethical issues* that may arise
4. The *choice of the overall design*, with an accompanying rationale for selecting a site, a sample, the participants, or any combination of these
5. The rationale behind the selection of *specific data collection methods* and how these will help inform the research questions
6. A realistic projection of the *resource needs* to implement the study as planned

To anticipate the overview of the book at the end of this chapter, the first topic is discussed in Chapter 2, trustworthiness and ethics are elaborated in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 takes up the important task of building a conceptual framework, and Chapter 5 discusses design considerations—the *how* of the study. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss a variety of methods for gathering data. Chapter 8 presents ways to describe the researcher's intended approach to data analysis. Chapter 9 offers examples of projecting resource needs, and Chapter 10 focuses on the writing of the final report. In addition to these considerations, however, is the crucial need to argue that the researcher is competent to conduct the study (discussed in the next section).

Researcher Competence

Another challenge facing the writer is to demonstrate **researcher competence** explicitly and implicitly. The exact standard of competence applied for evaluating the proposal depends on the purpose and scope of the research. Standards applied to a dissertation proposal will likely differ from those used to evaluate a multiyear-funded project written by established researchers. Paradoxically, even though dissertation research is intended to provide an opportunity for learning the craft, all portions of the dissertation proposal will be subjected to careful scrutiny. Writers will be expected to show their capability by thorough attention to every facet of the conceptual framework and **research design**. Established researchers, on the other hand, may not receive such careful scrutiny because their record of previous work engenders trust and the logic of good faith preserves standards for research. Although this may seem unfair, it nevertheless is the reality of proposal evaluation.

To demonstrate competence, then, proposal writers should refer to their previous work and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot study as well as their coursework and other relevant education. The high quality of the proposal's organization and its conceptual framework must be discussed, along with the relevant literature and design. All this entails building a well-supported argument that convinces reviewers of the study's importance and soundness.

■ Developing an Argument

Central to this book is the premise that developing a proposal is a process of building an *argument* that supports the proposal. Like the logic of formal debate or the reasoning in a position paper, a research proposal is intended to convince the reader that the research holds potential significance and relevance, that the design of the study is sound, and that the researcher is capable of conducting the study successfully. The proposal writer must, therefore, build a logical argument for the endeavor, amass evidence in support of each point, and show the entire enterprise to be conceptually integrated. Specifically, "a proposal is an argument *for* your study. It needs to explain the logic behind the proposed research, rather than simply describe or summarize the study, and to do so in a way that nonspecialists will understand" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 119).

To illuminate this process of building an argument to support qualitative research, we offer two fictitious vignettes. The first describes a doctoral student in sociology convincing her dissertation committee that qualitative methods are best suited for exploratory research on the culture of a hospital. She intends to uncover patterns in the work lives of participants that will lead to important improvements in the treatment of patients. Vignette 2 shows researchers building a rationale based on the strengths of qualitative methods for policy analysis. The researchers had to convince legislators that qualitative methods would yield useful, vivid analyses that could inform the policymaking process. As noted above, both vignettes are fictitious but are based on experiences of our graduate students. Following the vignettes, we develop the implications for building an argument in support of qualitative proposals and then provide an overview of the rest of the book.

A researcher's first task, even before formulating the proposal, is quite often to convince critics that the research has the potential to be useful (for theoretical development in the field, in currents of empirical research, in policy issues, and/or in concerns of practice). O'Brien faced this challenge and developed a rationale supporting her choice of qualitative research methods. In many cases, and especially in policy research, one can appeal to policymakers' frustration with previous research. The researcher should build an argument that may well convince them that qualitative research will lead to strong, detailed conclusions and recommendations. The next vignette, also fictitious, shows how two policy analysts convinced their superiors that they could answer pressing questions with qualitative methods.

In Vignette 2, we see researchers convincing others that a qualitative study is needed. This underscores the notion that researchers proposing qualitative inquiry do best by emphasizing the promise of quality, depth, and richness in the findings. They may, however, encounter puzzlement and resistance from those accustomed to surveys and quasi-experimental research, and may need to translate between qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Researchers who are convinced that a qualitative approach is best for the research question or problem at hand should make a case that "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) and systematic and detailed analysis will yield valuable explanations of processes. Think of the task of developing a convincing proposal as posing the questions asked by Luker (2008) in her delightful book *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*:

> The one question I *always* try to think about, as I make every single decision in my research, is what would my smartest, nastiest, most sceptical, and meanest colleague think of this particular decision? How can I persuade someone who does not share my taken-for-granted assumptions about the world that my research is valid? (p. 47; emphasis in original)

Vignette 1 Justifying Fieldwork to Explore Organizational Culture

As O'Brien reviewed the notes she had written to help with the proposal defense, she realized that her strongest argument rested on two aspects of the proposed study's significance: its exploratory purpose and its commitment to improving patient treatment in large urban hospitals. She realized that the latter aspect might be construed as biased, but if she kept the rationale grounded in the need to better understand complex interactions, tacit processes, and often hidden beliefs and values, she could demonstrate the study's clear potential to improve practice.

Her committee was composed of two quantitatively trained sociologists and a medical anthropologist. She knew she had the support of the anthropologist, whose advice had been crucial during the several proposal drafts she had written. The sociologists, however, were more likely to be critical of the design.

O'Brien decided to begin her presentation with an explication of the four purposes of research (exploration, explanation, description, and prediction) to link the purpose of her proposed study to general principles regarding the conduct of inquiry. She could then proceed quite logically to a discussion of the ways exploratory research serves to identify important variables for subsequent explanatory or predictive research. This logic could allay the concerns of the two quantitatively oriented sociologists, who would search the proposal for testable hypotheses, instrumentation and operationalization of variables, and tests of reliability.

The second major justification of the study would develop from its significance for practice. O'Brien recalled how she had reviewed empirical studies indicating that organizational conditions had a significant effect on wellness and hospital-leaving rates. What had not been identified in those studies were the specific interactions between hospital staff and patients, the widely shared beliefs about patients among the staff, and the organizational norms governing patient treatment. Her research, she would argue, would help identify those tacit, often hidden, aspects of organizational life. This, in turn, could be useful both for policy regarding health care and for practice in health care facilities.

That O'Brien would be engaging in exploratory research where the relevant variables had not been identified and uncovering the tacit aspects of organizational life strongly suggested qualitative methods. Fieldwork would be most appropriate for discovering the relevant variables and building a thorough, rich, detailed description of hospital culture. By linking her proposed research to concepts familiar to the quantitative sociologists, O'Brien hoped to draw the sociologists into the logic supporting her proposal and convince them of its sound design.

Vignette 2 Convincing Policymakers of the Utility of Qualitative Methods

Why, 6 months after state legislators had allocated $10 million to provide temporary shelters, were homeless families still sleeping in cars? Keppel and Wilson, researchers in the legislative analyst's office, knew that the question demanded qualitative research methodology. Convincing their skeptical superiors, however, would be a real challenge. They scoured their texts on research methods, selected convincing phrases and examples, and prepared a memo to demonstrate the viability of qualitative research and build the capacity of the legislative analyst's office in that direction. They argued that, too often, the office's research and evaluations missed the mark. The memo began with a quote about how an approximate answer to the right question is better than an exact answer to the wrong question. The winning points, though, in their presentation to their superiors related to two major goals. They spoke of needing to discover the right questions to ask so the systematic collection of data would follow. Thus, Keppel and Wilson convinced their superiors that their findings would help define the important questions, describe patterns of implementation, and identify the challenges and barriers that could lead to more effective policy outcomes.

■ Overview of the Book

This chapter has introduced the key issues and challenges in developing a solid and convincing proposal for qualitative research. Chapter 2 provides brief discussions of several qualitative research genres, with mention of intriguing new developments from the critical perspectives. This helps the qualitative researcher situate her proposal within one of these genres or within some wonderfully hybrid mix.

Because of their increasing importance to the research enterprise, social life, and human well-being, research ethics are the central consideration of this book. We discuss ethics more fully in Chapter 3 and revisit ethical considerations throughout the other chapters. Also in Chapter 3, we address concerns of ensuring trustworthy, credible qualitative research studies and considerations at the proposal stage.

In Chapter 4, we turn to the complex task of building a conceptual framework around the study. This process entails moving beyond the initial puzzle or intriguing paradox by embedding it in appropriate traditions of research—"currents of thought" (Schram, 2006, p. 63)—linking the specific case to larger theoretical domains. This framing argument also should demonstrate the "problem" that the proposed study will explore, which then links the study to its hoped-for significance for larger social policy issues, concerns of practice, and people's everyday lives, or some combination of these. Thus, the study's general focus and research questions, the literature, and the significance of the work are interrelated. We call this the substantive focus of the study—the *what.*

Chapter 5 presents a detailed discussion of the *how* of the study. Having focused on a research topic with a set of questions or a domain to explore, the proposal should describe how systematic inquiry will yield data that will provide answers to the questions. The writer should discuss the logic and assumptions of the overall design and methods, linking these directly to the focus of the study and justifying the choice of qualitative methods.

Chapter 6 describes the primary methods of data collection typically used in qualitative inquiry: in-depth interviewing, observation, participant observation, and analyzing artifacts and material cultures, including documents. Chapter 7 offers somewhat more specialized methods that may supplement the primary ones or could be used in and of themselves as the primary method for a particular study. These two chapters are not intended to replace the many exemplary texts that deal in great detail with specific methods; rather, we present a brief discussion of various alternatives and discuss the ways they can be generative, as well as challenges in their implementation. Chapter 8 describes ways to discuss in a preliminary manner how the complicated tasks of managing, recording, and analyzing qualitative data will be accomplished during implementation of the study. This discussion is necessarily brief because the writer cannot specify the exact categories and themes for analysis at the proposal stage, but she can still describe the strategy she will use and link this to the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 9 describes the complex, dialectical process of projecting the resources necessary for the study, as well as considering the political context surrounding a particular study. Time, personnel, and financial resources should be considered. Finally, Chapter 10 revisits the image introduced here of the proposal as an argument, focusing on strategies for writing up or presenting the research with the notion of audience as central. We also return to the key considerations of trustworthiness discussed in Chapter 2 and offer strategies for evaluating the soundness and competence of a qualitative proposal, with special attention to building a logical rationale and answering challenges from critics.

Throughout the book, we use vignettes to illustrate our points. Most of these are drawn from our own work and that of other social scientists; some have been written by our graduate students, and they are given full credit in those instances; and a few are fictitious with no references to published work. The principles depicted in the vignettes apply to research grounded in several disciplines as well as in the applied fields; they challenge you, the reader, to apply them to your own design.

Two themes run through this book. The first is that *design flexibility* is a crucial feature of qualitative inquiry, even though demands for specificity in design and method seem to preclude such flexibility. We urge the researcher to think of the proposal as an initial plan—one that is thorough, sound, well thought out, and based on current knowledge. The proposal reveals the researcher’s sensitivity to the setting, the issues to be explored, and the ethical dilemmas sure to be encountered, but it also reminds the reader that considerations as yet unforeseen (Milner, 2007) may well dictate changes in this initial plan. Therefore, the language used in discussing the design and methods is sure, positive, and active, while reserving the right to modify what is currently proposed.

The second theme, which we have already introduced, is that the *proposal is an argument*. Because its primary purpose is to convince the reader that the research shows promise of being substantive and will likely contribute to the field, that it is well conceived, and that the researcher is capable of carrying it through, the proposal should rely on reasoning and evidence sufficient to convince the reader:

The logic undergirding it should be carefully argued. All this will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of both the topic to be explored and the methods to be used. At times, we give guidance and use terminology that should assist in translating qualitative design assumptions for more quantitatively oriented audiences. In describing the proposal as an argument, we often mention the reader of the proposal to remind you, the reader of this book, that a sense of audience is critical in crafting a solid research proposal.

Finally, toward the end of several chapters, you will find a dialogue between two graduate students with whom we are working. We hope these dialogues will provide a model of the kind of dialogues you will have with others learning about qualitative proposals in your communities of practice. The dialogue participants, Karla Guiliano Sarr and Keren Dalyot, have been our graduate students during the preparation of this sixth edition of *Designing Qualitative Research*. We, the authors, have also written short dialogues with each other, reflecting on our years of teaching qualitative research, guiding dissertations, and developing new editions of the book. As in previous editions, citations for further reading and a list of key terms are provided at the end of each chapter.

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Catherine:* We’ve been at this for quite some time, haven’t we! I’m not sure how many of our readers know that you were my doctoral student many years ago. Perhaps we shouldn’t write about that! But think about all the students we have taught over the years. I still find it exciting as we bring the key ideas up-to-date for this edition.

Gretchen: The students have been my most insightful teachers (with you as the exception, of course ☺). Each new edition of this book inspires me to include new resources and ideas that I’ve learned from them. Still, it’s challenging to put ourselves back into the mind-set of those just beginning to learn. I find this the toughest part of both writing and teaching—to recall when important concepts, now second nature to me, were impenetrable. When taking your course in grad school, I was lost for the first half of the semester. Then everything clicked, and I went on to take other QR courses. Thanks for that!”

Further Reading

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Key Concepts

- conceptual framework
- do-ability
- ethical research practice
- research design
- researcher competence
- should-do-ability
- trustworthiness
- want-to-do-ability

Chapter 2 Qualitative Research Genres

Qualitative methodologists attempt to organize the various genres or approaches into categories or strands; this can be useful for the proposal writer, who can situate his study within one of these strands. We refer to these as *methodological currents of thought*, employing Schram's (2006) quite useful phrase to describe theoretical and empirical strands that inform a conceptual framework. Historically, this categorizing was relatively straightforward; with the amazing proliferation of genres, however, the task has become more challenging. This chapter provides a brief summary of historical ways of organizing qualitative research genres, followed by discussions of genres that offer alternatives, at times with a focus on a specific population and often from a critical stance with emancipatory goals. Our purpose here is to help the proposal writer situate his study to provide a more nuanced argument for the specific approach.

Historically, qualitative methodologists developed typologies to organize the field. Twenty-five years ago, work by Jacob (1987, 1988) described six qualitative traditions: human ethology, ecological psychology, holistic ethnography, cognitive anthropology, **ethnography** of communication, and symbolic interactionism (see Table 2.1). This typology was critiqued; Atkinson, Delamont, and Hammersley (1988) offered seven somewhat differing qualitative genres: symbolic interactionism, anthropology, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, democratic evaluation, neo-Marxist ethnography, and feminism. Some of these genres are no longer salient, while others remain important. Patton (2002) provided a much longer list of theoretical orientations in qualitative inquiry; his list included, in part, ethnography, autoethnography, phenomenology, symbolic interaction, ecological psychology, systems theory, chaos theory, and grounded theory. More recently, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) recognized case studies; ethnography, participant observation, and performance ethnography; phenomenology and ethnomethodology; grounded theory; life history and *testimonio*; historical method; action and applied research; and clinical research. Most recently, Creswell (2013) listed narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study as the major strategies.

Table 2.1 Historical Typologies of Qualitative Research

Jacob (1987, 1988)	*Atkinson, Delamont, and Hammersley (1988)*	*Patton (2002) (partial)*	*Denzin and Lincoln (2005)*	*Creswell (2013)*
Overlapping genres				
Holistic ethnography Cognitive anthropology	Anthropology Neo-Marxist ethnography	Ethnography Autoethnography	Ethnography Performance ethnography	Ethnography
Ethnography of communication	Sociolinguistics	Narrative inquiry	Life history and *testimonio*	Narrative research
Symbolic interactionism	Symbolic interactionism Ethnomethodology	Phenomenology Ethnomethodology	Phenomenology Ethnomethodology	Phenomenology
		Grounded theory	Grounded theory	Grounded theory
			Case study	Case study
Genres specific to author(s)				
Ecological psychology	Democratic evaluation	Ecological psychology	Historical method	
Human ethology	Feminism	Heuristic inquiry	Action research	
		Social construction and constructivism	Clinical research	

Building on the discussion provided in Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), analysis of these lists, especially those with similar entries, shows a focus on a specific level or "unit of analysis": (1) *society and culture*, as seen in ethnography, action research, case studies, and often grounded theory; (2) *individual lived experience*, as exemplified by phenomenological approaches, some feminist inquiry, life histories, and *testimonio*; and (3) *language and communication*—whether spoken or expressed in text—as in sociolinguistic approaches, including narrative analysis, critical discourse analysis, and conversation analysis. Below, we offer short descriptions of these major genres before turning to those genres that offer more explicit opportunities for critical qualitative inquiry. In our discussion of the major genres, we have also included notes on grounded theory and case study approaches, as well as arts-based inquiry. None of these maps neatly into one of the three foci listed above, as a researcher relying on grounded theory approaches, case study methodology, or arts-informed inquiry could focus on a group or organization (society and culture), on individuals, or on arts as culturally produced "texts." While first articulated by Eisner (1991), **arts-informed qualitative inquiry** has witnessed a growing focus that may well be a result of the recent explosion in the access to and use of the Internet and social media networking. Instant access to images and videos through the Internet and social networking has encouraged, in part, the development of this genre, where a multiplicity of images, sounds, and perhaps even odors are integrated into a single research project. We discuss arts-informed inquiry below, noting its increasing visibility on the qualitative research landscape. Thus, the major genres we list in this sixth edition include ethnographic approaches, phenomenological and narrative approaches, sociolinguistic approaches, grounded theory and analysis, case studies, and arts-informed inquiry. A few of the sections discussing the various genres have been written by our current or former graduate students. We indicate this by listing their names as authors of those sections.

■ Major Genres

A Focus on Society and Culture: Ethnographic Approaches

Ethnography is the hallmark of qualitative inquiry and, as Patton (2002) notes, “the earliest distinct tradition” (p. 81). Derived from anthropology and qualitative sociology, ethnographies study human groups, seeking to understand how they collectively form and maintain a culture. Thus, *culture* is a central concept for ethnographies. Focusing on an analysis of actions and interactions within the group, culture “describes the way things are and prescribes the ways people should act” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 93).

Ethnographers—those who inscribe (graph) the culture (ethnos)—typically study groups, communities, organizations, or perhaps social movements through long-term immersion in the setting and by using a variety of data collection methods. Through the primary approach of participant observation (discussed in Chapter 6), ethnographers describe and analyze patterns of interactions, roles, ceremonies and rituals, and artifacts of that cultural group.

Classical ethnography has been enriched by variations on its central principles and practices. Internet ethnography and critical ethnography are discussed briefly below, as are autoethnography (see Jones, 2005) and performance ethnography (see Alexander, 2005). These variations offer flexible approaches, but all derive from the foundational principles of classical ethnography.

A Focus on Individual Lived Experience: Phenomenological Approaches

Phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience: “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Derived from the German philosophy of **phenomenology** (see, e.g., Husserl, 1913/2012), this family of approaches (including hermeneutics as a methodology for examining text) typically involves several long, in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. Analysis proceeds from the central assumption that there is an *essence* to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience. The experiences of those participating in the study—those who have had a similar experience—are analyzed as unique expressions and then compared to identify the essence. The focus is on life as lived.

As narrative approaches have burgeoned and as an example of the increasing hybridity of the large field of qualitative inquiry, one could argue that narratives and analyses of texts and talk are examples of interdisciplinary work with links to psychology (Bruner, 1990) and literature (Polkinghorne, 1988) that blends a focus on individual lived experience from phenomenology with the analysis of expressions of self found in narrative inquiry.

A Focus on Talk and Text: Sociolinguistic Approaches

Related to ethnographic approaches in their interest to understand the meanings participants derive from and construct in social interactions and settings, sociolinguistic approaches focus on communicative behavior: talk and text. Researchers within this genre tend to record naturally occurring talk for analysis, although discourse analysts tend to embed talk in larger societal and cultural narratives (see Silverman, 2010, especially Chapter 7). The ubiquity of "talk" makes it quite generative for analysis. Specifically,

> face-to-face social interaction (or other live interaction mediated by phones and other technological media) is the most immediate and the most frequently experienced social reality. The heart of our social and personal being lies in the immediate contact with other humans. (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 874)

Analyzing talk, then, is a central focus for discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis (see Peräkylä, 2005), microethnography, and other variations within this genre. The focus for inquiry may be how particular speech events are accomplished, how identity is established and reproduced, or how social identity characteristics shape communicative behaviors. Recent critical examples in this genre focus on how "talk" expresses racist and other forms of oppression and aggression in everyday interactions (see Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2010).

Grounded Theory Approaches

First articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is an overall approach to inquiry with the primary purpose of generating theories that explain the interactions and/or settings of interest. In its original conception, grounded theory sought to build explanations of social phenomena by working backward, if you will, from data into theory, rather than through the more traditional approaches relied on in the social sciences at that time (from theory/hypothesis to data, back to theory). The term *grounded theory* was intended to capture this idea: Work began "on the ground," prior to building theoretical insights. As such, it was somewhat revolutionary but soon suffered from substantial critique from other methodologists who argued that no researcher could enter "the field" without sensitizing concepts or working understandings (hypotheses) of the phenomena under investigation. Modifications to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) ideas emerged as Strauss began to work with Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), developing constructivist grounded theory approaches stipulating that theories and data are constructed by the researcher in interaction with and interpretation of the social phenomena of interest; they are not discovered, as the original ideas of grounded theory suggested.

Recent work by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2014) and especially Charmaz (2000, 2008, 2009, 2014) develops these ideas more fully. Central to grounded theory are approaches to analysis that include open coding and axial coding. Open coding is the process of identifying and naming the data. "Essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph etc. is read in search of the answer to the repeated question 'what is this about? What is being referenced here?'" (Borgatti, 2014, "Open Coding"). Through the comparative processes of axial coding, these categories are related to one other, frequently searching for causal explanations for events and interactions. The softening of Glaser and Strauss's original ideas (especially by Corbin and Charmaz) makes them more accessible to many researchers who seek to make theory-building contributions about the phenomena that interest them.

Case Studies

By Gerardo Blanco Ramírez

Case studies are widely used among qualitative researchers because of their explicit focus on context and dynamic interactions, often over time. While many assume that case studies rely only on qualitative methods, such is not the case. One of the strengths of the case study approach is its methodological eclecticism; a variety of methods may be used, including those that generate quantitative data. The flexibility of the case study approach prompted Stake (2005) to note that "a majority of researchers doing casework call their studies by some other name" (p. 443).

However, when relying primarily (or exclusively) on qualitative methods, the researcher may be informed by the assumptions or strategies of a variety of qualitative genres. So a case study could be primarily ethnographic but also draw on critical discourse analysis, thus blending genres. Single-standing genre or not, case studies present many advantages, chief among them being the flexibility to incorporate multiple perspectives, data collection tools, and interpretive strategies. However, the merits of the case study as a qualitative genre face skeptics (Stake, 2005) as well as supporters (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Many methodologists have contributed to contest the misplaced objections against the value of case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Kennedy, 1979; Yin, 2014).

Even though there have been many attempts to define the case study, and despite the variations existing among these definitions, the centrality of contextualized deep understanding is recognized almost uniformly. Case studies favor intensity and depth, as well as exploring the interaction between case and context (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Also widely recognized is the need for defining the unit of analysis—an individual, a small group, an intervention—and setting boundaries around the case (Yin, 2014). When many cases are available for study, it is necessary to clarify the selection process; for instance, one may be interested in a particular case in and of itself (an intrinsic case), or one may wish to explore a case as an illustration of a larger phenomenon (instrumental case), and one could even be interested in exploring several instances of a phenomenon (multiple case study; Stake, 2005). While different criteria are acceptable depending on the study, researchers must be able to present rationales for selection depending on purpose and intended use. Selection criteria may include researchers' familiarity with the case and the case's intrinsic significance, among many other criteria (Thomas, 2011b). Once the case has been carefully selected and defined, researchers may draw on data collection and analytical strategies according to the unique opportunities and challenges the case presents.

Given the interpretative nature of qualitative inquiry, it is possible to state that, rather than merely identifying and isolating a case, researchers reconstruct it. The critical and postmodern turns in qualitative inquiry, characterized by skepticism toward master narratives and grand theories, open new spaces for epistemological debate. As a result, the discussion has departed from arguing the case study's ability to establish generalizations and has been directed toward *phronesis* (Thomas, 2011a). Phronesis involves practical, contextualized knowledge—"practical wisdom, common sense" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 313; see also, Thomas, 2010, 2011a). These ideas are not new to qualitative inquiry, and yet they may foster a resurgence of case study research as a means to construct practical knowledge that is responsive to its environment.

Arts-Informed and Multimodal Inquiry

By Rachael B. Lawrence

Arts-based and arts-informed qualitative research is an emerging genre of qualitative inquiry. Although only recently recognized in the formal research literature, this line of inquiry may not be so new (Harvard University, 2008). Theorists and practitioners of arts-based and arts-informed research view the distinction between arts and sciences as an artificial bifurcation of formerly interrelated and intertwined thought processes and activities; viewing the “arts” and “research” as separate processes may, in some ways, harm both fields (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Sullivan, 2010). Would Leonardo da Vinci the inventor have been able to visualize as he did without his arts training? Would Albert Einstein the violinist have conceptualized relativity without his musical training? Would Caroline Herschel have discovered comets or theorized about space without her training on the opera stage? Because the fields of arts and sciences were not so distinct in the past, many researchers are examining ways the two fields can work together to generate knowledge and understanding.

Because the arts play a key role in the way people make sense of their worlds and surroundings, “arts-based researchers consciously place creative and critical processes at the core of research process so as to fully investigate the contexts that shape complex human thoughts and actions” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 58). Instead of standing as separate disciplines, the arts and inquiry can dynamically inform each other. Research can inform the development of artistic pieces, and the arts can inform research at nearly any point of the journey. Arts-based or arts-informed research means that artistic processes or artistic pieces are incorporated in the development, data collection, and/or analysis of the project, or that they are being used to represent findings. Consider how the act of drawing or painting may help with the conceptualization of a project, or how poetry may be a tool for data analysis. Are there times when a dramatic play, film, photograph collection, collage, or musical piece may serve as a trustworthy and powerful way to present findings? Arts-based and arts-informed researchers believe so (see Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Pink, 2012; Rose, 2012).

In the past three decades, a critical turn has taken place in the social sciences, humanities, and applied fields. Some qualitative researchers have espoused postmodern, postpositivist, and postcolonial theoretical perspectives that critique traditional social science (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000; Connor, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Rosenau, 1992). These scholars challenge the historical assumption of neutrality in inquiry and assert that *all* research is interpretive and fundamentally political, spoken "from within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). Luker (2008) describes this as our "fishiness":

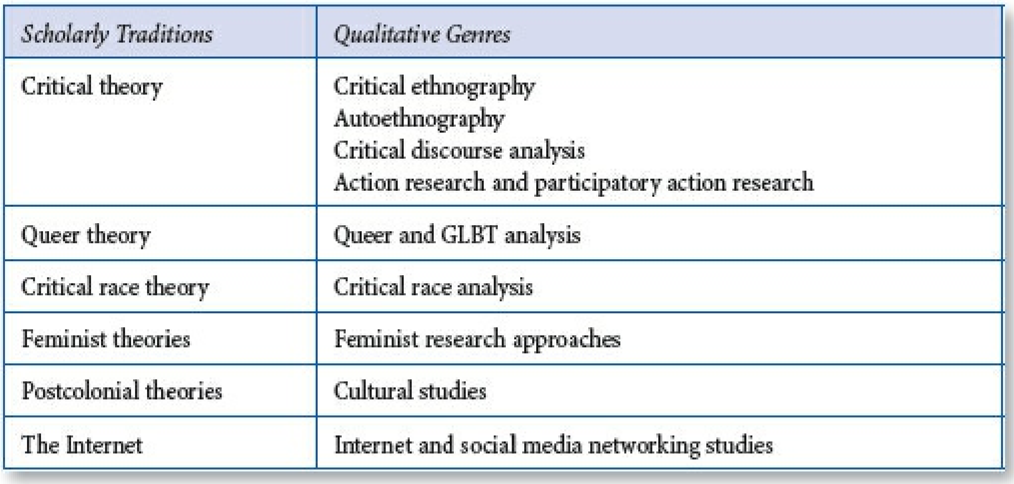
> Whether we know it or not, we are guided by our taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes "good," "rigorous" methods whenever we undertake to do research. How could we not be? The studying of the social order is itself a social process, so how could the process of doing it not be surrounded by assumptions, fetishes, beliefs, and values that are not simply mirror reflections of objective reality, if there is such a thing? . . . We are fish studying water, and our very fishiness shapes how we think about it. (p. 31)

This argument underscores that research involves issues of power and that traditionally conducted social science research has silenced many marginalized and oppressed groups in society by making them the passive objects of inquiry. Qualitative research is deemed especially guilty because of its historical complicity with colonialism (Bishop, 2005). Those espousing critical perspectives have developed research strategies that are openly ideological and have empowering and democratizing goals. Some of these can be understood as "counternarratives," as they situate themselves as challenging the historical, neutral image of social science and its sometimes totalizing grand narratives. Of these, we see various forms of **narrative analysis**, including autoethnography and *testimonio*, as counternarratives; such studies explicitly take on the hegemonic grand narratives of dominant voices and seek to find a legitimate space for life experiences to be heard. Given this goal of telling one's story, these genres can be seen as having assumptions consistent with phenomenological approaches. Such may well be the case and represents another example of the increasing hybridity of methodological choices even under the large umbrella of qualitative inquiry.

An interdisciplinary approach with many guises, *critical narrative analysis* seeks to describe the meaning of experience for those who frequently are socially marginalized or oppressed, as they construct stories (narratives) about their lives. Life histories, biographies and autobiographies, oral histories, and personal narratives are all forms of narrative analysis. Each specific approach assumes that storytelling is integral to understanding lives and that all people construct narratives as a process in constructing and reconstructing identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Some approaches focus on the sociolinguistic techniques a narrator uses, others on life events and a narrator's meaning making. When framed by feminist or critical theory, narrative analysis also can have an emancipatory purpose (Chase, 2005), as when stories are produced and politicized as counternarratives to prevailing oppressive "grand narratives" (discussed below under autoethnography, critical race theory, and queer theory).

We list several more critically informed genres in Table 2.2 and provide brief discussions of their key approaches and assumptions below.

Table 2.2 Critical Genres



Scholarly Traditions	*Qualitative Genres*
Critical theory	Critical ethnography Autoethnography Critical discourse analysis Action research and participatory action research
Queer theory	Queer and GLBT analysis
Critical race theory	Critical race analysis
Feminist theories	Feminist research approaches
Postcolonial theories	Cultural studies
The Internet	Internet and social media networking studies

We argue that either traditional or critical assumptions can undergird each of the major and specialized genres. Traditional qualitative research assumes that (a) knowledge is not objective Truth but is produced intersubjectively; (b) the researcher learns from participants to understand the meaning of their lives but should maintain a stance of neutrality; and (c) society is reasonably structured and primarily orderly and predictable.[1] Postmodern and postcolonial perspectives also assume that knowledge is subjective and must be challenged and critiqued. Similarly, critical theory, critical race theory, feminist theories, queer theory, and cultural studies also assume that knowledge is subjective but view society as essentially conflictual and oppressive. These positions critique traditional modes of knowledge production (i.e., research) that have evolved in settings structured to legitimize elite social scientists and to exclude other forms of knowing. Critical race theorists, feminist researchers, and those espousing postcolonial perspectives point to the exclusion of "peripheral" knowledges and truths from traditional knowledge production (Harding, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005; LeCompte, 1993; Matsuda, Delgado, Lawrence, & Crenshaw, 1993). By means of such challenges, it becomes clear that the assumptions behind research questions must be interrogated, deconstructed, and sometimes dismantled and reframed (Marshall, 1997a; Scheurich, 1997). Such inquiry could contribute to radical change or emancipation from oppressive social structures, either through a sustained critique or through direct advocacy and action taken by the researcher, often in collaboration with participants in the study. All these critiques share four assertions:

> (a) Research fundamentally involves issues of *power*; (b) the research report is not transparent, but rather it is *authored* by a raced, gendered, classed, and politically oriented individual; (c) race, class, and gender [among other social identities] are crucial for understanding experience; and (d) historically, *traditional research has silenced* members of oppressed and marginalized groups. (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 91)

These more critical perspectives on qualitative research contain three injunctions: As researchers, we should

1. examine how we represent the participants—the Other (Levinas, 1979)—in our work;
2. scrutinize the "complex interplay of our own personal biography, power and status, interactions with participants, and [the] written word" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 91); and
3. be vigilant about the dynamics of ethics and politics in our work.

One implication of these concerns is that qualitative researchers pay close attention to their participants' reactions and to the *voice* they use in their work as a representation of the relationship between themselves and their participants.[2] Another is that the traditional criteria for judging the adequacy or trustworthiness of a work have become essentially contested. As a result, the novice researcher might be left floundering for guidance as to what *will* constitute thoughtful and ethical research. We discuss these issues in Chapter 3.

As noted above, those frustrated with traditional qualitative research may find greater flexibility of expression in critical ethnography, autoethnography, critical discourse analysis, action and participatory action research, queer theory and analysis, critical race theory and analysis, feminist approaches (increasingly referred to as gender studies), cultural studies, or Internet ethnography, to mention a few of the more critical genres under the qualitative inquiry umbrella. Each embraces changing existing social structures and processes as a primary purpose and, when framed by explicitly critical orientations, has openly political agendas and often emancipatory goals. We briefly discuss each genre below.

■ Critical Genres

Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography is grounded in theories assuming that society is structured by class and status as well as by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation to maintain the oppression of marginalized groups. As defined by Madison (2005), “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (p. 5). Historically, critical ethnography developed from the commitment to radical education in several works sharply critical of accepted teaching practice (hooks, 1994; Keddie, 1971; Sharp & Green, 1975; Weis, 1990; Weis & Fine, 2000; Young, 1971). Later work of this type has focused on the constraints of adopting radical teaching practices (Atkinson et al., 1988). Critical ethnography can also go beyond the classroom to ask questions about the historical forces shaping societal patterns as well as the fundamental issues and dilemmas of policy, power, and dominance in institutions, including their role in reproducing and reinforcing inequities such as those based on gender and race (Anderson, 1989; Anderson & Herr, 1993; Kelly & Gaskell, 1996; Marshall, 1991, 1997a).

We should note here the recent development of postcritical ethnography, which moves beyond critical ethnography to explicitly incorporate postmodern perspectives. This discourse community develops critical social narratives that are ethnographies in the traditional sense but in which the involved social scientist explicitly takes a political stand (Everhart, 2005). Postcritical ethnographers use narrative, performance, poetry, autoethnography, and ethnographic fiction as their forms of representation. Their goal is to take a stand (like participatory action researchers) and have greater impact than that allowed by a 20-page article in an academic journal or a book read by 40 people (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2005). An example closely linked to the more familiar autobiography is the genre of autoethnography, mentioned below, which has evolved over the past two decades. Using the self as both subject and object, its inquiry proceeds through “multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). The self is deployed as an exemplar through which social processes and identities are constructed and contested, changed and resisted.

Another of postcritical ethnography’s forms of representation that has entered the lexicon of qualitative scholars is the notion of performance. **Performance ethnography** has become a critical mode of representing ethnographic materials, “the staged reenactment of ethnographically derived notes” (Alexander, 2005, p. 411). Embodying cultural knowledge through performance not only depicts cultural practice but might also lead to social change, as actors and audience reconceptualize their social circumstances. This genre finds representation in popular theater (Boal, 1997, 2002), arts-based studies (Barone & Eisner, 2012; see above in arts-informed inquiry), music (Said, 2007), and other media. It also evokes the notion of "cultural performance": the methods and resources available to members of a community or social identity group to construct and reconstruct (perform) those identities. (See Denzin, 2005, for an example.)

Autoethnography

More closely related to autobiography than traditional ethnography, **autoethnography** is a reflexive approach to understanding the human condition through critical and engaged analysis of one's own experiences. Although a precise definition is difficult, autoethnography is both a method and a product. Through self-observation and analysis of various personal artifacts, autoethnographers seek to produce personal stories and narratives that depict their lives, based on the assumption that these aspects of their lives resonate with the experiences of others. At their best, autoethnographies are counternarratives that challenge the predominant grand narratives of a particular aspect of the social world by providing alternative, deeply personal viewpoints. Examples include Boylorn (2013) and Larsen (2014). While not technically an autoethnography, Mariama Bâ's (1979/1989) evocative narrative of her life as a Senegalese woman shows many similarities to the counternarratives of strong autoethnographies. However, at times, autoethnographies become intellectual "navel-gazing," revealing intimate details of lives that seem out of place (to some) in social science discourse.

The rise of autoethnography within qualitative inquiry parallels the extraordinary increase in opportunities for public self-disclosure found in contemporary society. Personal blogs; reality television shows that invite sharing intimate details; YouTube, where one can share personal video clips instantaneously—all have fostered or encouraged the kind of self-disclosure that autoethnography represents. Within the field of sociology, Ellis (see, especially, 1986) turned to autoethnography following public condemnation of how she treated participants in her ethnographic study of "fisher folk" in Tidewater Maryland (see Allen, 1997, for details). Her writings on autoethnography, many along with Bochner, have been prolific.

Critical Discourse Analysis

By Gerardo Blanco Ramírez

Critical discourse analysis makes explicit a theoretical focus on issues of power, access to linguistic resources, and the ways these resources are distributed unevenly across both dominant and marginalized populations (see Rogers, 2004). This focus on "discourse" (talk and text) as it shapes lives and perceptions has had a palpable impact on qualitative methodologies in the past several years, invoking the naming of this focus as the "discursive turn" in modern social science. Under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis, it is possible to identify strategies that are grounded in different ontological and epistemological assumptions. The term *discourse* is interpreted and used in a vast number of ways (Mills, 2004). Notwithstanding the significant differences that exist among interpretations of the concept and approaches to analysis, critical discourse analysts share a commitment to reveal and confront dominant discourses and ideology. In this respect, discourse is construed as a bounded, controlled, and rule-driven process of knowledge construction that establishes and perpetuates social relations (Foucault, 1972; Mills, 2004). Broadly speaking, critical discourse analysts incorporate political perspectives with the analysis of texts; sometimes they use Marxist–materialist assumptions, sometimes postmodern/poststructural views (Mills, 2004). These differences cannot be overlooked, because theory and method are inseparable in discourse analysis and there must be coherence among one's epistemological, ontological, theoretical, and methodological assumptions, in what Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) call a "complete package" (p. 4). Moreover, Jørgensen and Phillips identify that critical discourse analysts often embrace the following assumptions, stemming from social constructionism, about knowledge: a critical stance, recognition of its socially constructed nature, and its connection to social action.

A set of principles, proposed by Foucault (1972), may guide the process of discourse analysis. These principles involve turning familiar or taken-for-granted discourses into unfamiliar entities to be analyzed in connection with their specific environments. Even though critical discourse analysis has been used in a broad sense here, a narrower meaning of critical discourse analysis refers to the work of Norman Fairclough. Fairclough (2003) construes discourses as representational structures employed to establish relations among individuals and groups; he proposes that discourse analysis involves analyzing texts according to their genre, their relationship to other texts (intertextuality), and their guiding assumptions, representations, and modalities. Fairclough (2005) advocates for a discourse analysis approach that relies on critical–realist ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Despite the value of efforts intended to systematize the craft of critical discourse analysis, it is important to emphasize that there is not a step-by-step process or recipe. However, some strategies shared across approaches are comparing texts, substituting elements in the text for others to elucidate relations among elements, identifying different voices or perspectives, and conducting close detailed analysis; these strategies have the purpose of identifying patterns and exploring the implications of different discursive constructions (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Silverstein, 1996; Wortham, 2001). While these steps are to be considered heuristics, standards of practice require critical discourse analysis to be “solid,” “comprehensive,” and “transparent” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 173).

Action Research and Participatory Action Research

Action research challenges the claim of neutrality and objectivity by traditional social science and seeks full, collaborative inquiry by all participants, often to engage in sustained change in organizations, communities, or institutions (Stringer, 2007). It seeks to decentralize traditional research by staying committed to local contexts rather than to the quest for Truth and to liberation of research from its excessive reliance on the “restrictive conventional rules of the research game” (Guba, 1978, as quoted in Stringer, 1996, p. x). When ideally executed, action research blurs the distinctions between researcher and participants, creating a democratic inquiry process. It is often practiced in organizational contexts and in education, where professionals collaboratively question their practice, make changes, and assess the effects of those changes (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; McNiff & Whitehead, 2003; Sagor, 2005). Also active in social work, business management, and community development (Hollingsworth, 1997), researchers who engage in action research do so to improve their practice.

More visible in international work, **participatory action research** draws on the precept of emancipation, as articulated by Freire (1970), that sustainable empowerment and development must begin with the concerns of the marginalized (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993). In addition to an explicit commitment to action, the hallmark of participatory action research is full collaboration between researcher and participants in posing the questions to be pursued and in gathering data to respond to them. It entails a cycle of research, reflection, and action. Examples include research by Maguire (2000) on battered women, by Phaik-Lah (1997) in Malaysia on World Bank projects, and by Titchen and Bennie (1993) on training for nursing. For a strong historical analysis of action research, see Putney and Green (2010).

Queer Theory and Analysis

By Paul St. John Frisoli

Stemming from lesbian feminism, poststructuralism, and the civil rights and gay and lesbian political movements of the 1960s, **queer theory** attempts to deconstruct social categories and binary identities to demonstrate the fluidity and transparency of otherwise demarcated boundaries within the social world. Queer theorists argue that identity is not unitary but multiple, therefore allowing for an unstable acceptance of the different lived experiences of people (Jagose, 1996; Seidman, 1996; Stein & Plummer, 1996). Judith Butler (1999) is considered the unofficial "founder" of queer theory. Her pivotal work, *Gender Trouble*, argues that gender and sexuality are performative, meaning that individuals subconsciously act out these normalized, socially constructed identity categories that serve specific purposes in society. Naturally and definitively assumed standards such as heterosexuality are deconstructed to demonstrate that every aspect of a person's identity is based on norms, rules, and cultural models (Jagose, 1996). To define these concepts as queer is to acknowledge the possibilities, fluidities, and processes and not fix them into a concrete discipline. As a result, queer theory does not solely highlight sexuality but recognizes "that identities are always multiple or at best composites with literally an infinite number of ways which 'identity-components' (e.g., sexual orientation, race, class, nationality, gender, age, able-ness) can intersect or combine" (Seidman, 1996, p. 11). But critics highlight the point that the political origins of queer theory and, at times, the continued politicization of a "gay identity" and equal rights in the "sexual minority movement" fix and essentialize a universal identity category based on sexual orientation (Walters, 2004). Postcolonial queer theory scholars highlight the importance of recognizing the role of colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization in imposing cultural imperialistic ideas of sexuality that fail to take non-Western cultures and histories into account (Altman, 2001).

Queer theory has played a pivotal role in qualitative studies to unravel supposedly scientific data that reified, objectified, and pathologized "homosexuals" and other socially marginalized groups as deviant in society (Rhyne, 2000). Of equal importance, the deconstructing nature and acceptance of the fluidity concept have made a variety of contributions to qualitative inquiry that include favoring multiple methods that foster researcher and participant understanding and collaboration and the researcher's reflexivity and self-awareness during multiple stages of the research project to recognize the lens through which he interprets someone else's life world (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2002). Queer theory also allows postcolonial scholars to present new types of non-Western queer identities that offer insights that debunk narrow understandings of sexuality.

Critical Race Theory and Analysis

Critical race theory emerged from a strand of critical theorizing applied to the U.S. legal system called critical legal studies. With links to critical theory generally, the feminist critique of the principles and practice of law, and postcolonial theory, critical race theorists take up issues of racism, racial oppression, and racial discrimination as their central focus for analysis. Those within this genre argue that legal decisions—both historical ones and those belonging to the present day—reflect the intersection of racism, sexism, and classism, and that legal principles are applied unevenly, with race as the central differentiating quality. They further argue that race is socially constructed and argue against practices that promote or express racial discrimination.

Derrick Bell, the sometimes controversial legal scholar, is credited with initiating and sustaining the advocacy and ideology inherent in critical race theory with his persistent critique of the liberalism of the U.S. civil rights movement. (Bell's legal papers, speeches, and academic publications are stored in the New York University Archives, available at dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/archives/bell.) In the mid-1990s, the field of education began to take up the core arguments and analytic focus of critical race theory. Notable in this field is Ladson-Billings (1997, 2000, 2001, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006), whose work centered on issues of race in teaching practice and educational research. Her early work highlighted the pedagogical practices of teachers who had great success teaching African American students. More recently, Dixson (2005; Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, 2007) has applied the qualitative methodology of portraiture (see Lightfoot, 1985; Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to analyses of issues of race and racism, focusing specifically on "jazz methodology" (Dixson, 2005).

Other methodologies associated with critical race theory include storytelling (narrative analysis) and the production of counterstories to balance the hegemonic, often white, representations of the experiences of African Americans and other racially oppressed groups, primarily in the United States. Thus, critical race theory's methodological emphasis on storytelling and its political commitment to counterhegemonic representations have links with postcolonialism's emphasis on *testimonio*—giving witness to social injustices—and the production of counternarratives.

Critical race theory and analysis takes up an explicitly political agenda, with its focus on racial discrimination, white supremacy, and advocacy for redressing past injustices. In its avowedly political stance, critical race theory has much in common with queer theory and analysis and with certain strands of feminism (especially the more critical strands), to which we now turn.

Feminist Theories and Methodologies

Feminist theories and methodologies can be used to frame research across issues and disciplines. These theories place gender relations at the center of any inquiry and usually have critical and emancipatory aims, with a focus on women. Importantly, feminist perspectives increasingly incorporate the recognition of multiple intersectionalities of identity. Thus, gender, sexuality, race, religion, country of origin, language, age or generation, health and physical abilities, class, social networks, and so on, all combine in fluid ways (Friend, 1993; Herr, 2004; Young & Skrla, 2003). Gender is not the sole, essential, and fixed category identifying a person. Further, feminist inquiry cautions against simplistic representations of women in developing countries to avoid concluding that some practice is oppressive without recognizing that women are making practical and political choices within the local context (Mohanty, 2009).

Feminist work includes examination of videotaped interactions between mothers and young children that show the power of language in conveying gendered expectations for boys and girls (Gelman, Taylor, & Nguyen, 2004), gender differences in schools (Clarricoates, 1987), and the development of adolescent girls (Griffin, 1985; Lees, 1986); the challenges made by Indonesian women to male dominance in shaman rituals as well as challenges to male dominance in school superintendent positions (Scott, 2003; Tsing, 1990); and studies of the effect of poverty and food insecurity on the relationships between boys and girls in South Africa (Bhana, 2005a, 2005b). Feminist perspectives "uncover cultural and institutional sources and forces of oppression. . . . They name and value women's subjective experience" (Marshall, 1997a, p. 12). By combining feminist and critical perspectives, scholars dismantle traditional policy analysis that has failed to incorporate women (Marshall, 1997a) and create research agendas that turn critical thought into emancipating action (Lather, 1991).

Different feminisms frame different research goals (Collins, 1990; Marshall, 1997a; Tong, 2014). For example, socialist and women's-ways feminisms focus on women in leadership positions to expand leadership theory. Power-and-politics feminisms identify patriarchy as a key structure for understanding experience. Such theory can frame examinations of the state-imposed oppression of women in welfare, medical, and other systems the state regulates. It can identify how the institutional practices

> were developed in a way, and continue to function in a way that specifically benefits one group of people. [In the United States] that group is Euro-

> American, middle- to upper-class, and usually male . . . [and the ways] the standard operating procedures tend to hurt those people who do not fit the above profile. (Laible, 2003, p. 185)

Such theories help frame research, identifying “the political choices and power-driven ideologies and embedded forces that categorize, oppress, and exclude” (Marshall, 1997a, p. 13).

Feminist theories now move far beyond the demand that the voices and lives of women and girls be included in studies. This “add women and stir” response is inadequate. Feminist researchers have expanded qualitative inquiry especially by focusing on the power imbalances between the researcher and the researched, by expanding collaborative research, and by asserting that reflexivity is a strategy for embracing subjectivity, replacing pretenses of objectivity (Marshall & Young, 2006; Olesen, 2000). Recent work focuses on indigenous worldviews, drawing on postcolonial theory and perspectives (see Cannella & Manuelito, 2008). However, given the empowerment focus of indigenous methodologies, they can also be usefully situated within the various strands of participatory action research.

Cultural Studies

By Paul St. John Frisoli

The domain of **cultural studies** encompasses a broad range of perspectives and interpretations of "culture." Major themes throughout the discipline include acknowledging what we know, understanding the relationship of that knowledge to who we are (our identities), and examining the relationship between the "knower" and the one who is "giving" the knowledge. Gray (2003) explains that "one of the key characteristics of cultural studies is that of understanding culture as constitutive of and constituted by 'the lived,' that is the material, social, and symbolic practices of everyday life" (p. 1). Within this domain, scholars underline the importance of deconstructing the intersection of language, text, power, and knowledge to gain a better understanding of how we craft representations of our life worlds (Gray, 2003; Grey, 2004; Ryen, 2003; Saukko, 2008). These scholars argue that language and text, when associated with power, help shape how we see, differentiate, and interpret the world around us to find our place within it (Prior, 2004). Research is embedded within the meaning-making process, which can contribute to and endorse discursive representations that in turn objectify a research participant's lived experiences. Research is part of the process of "forming the social mosaic" creating different social realities (Saukko, 2008, p. 471). Cultural studies examine these liminal spaces to "interrogate issues of domination and power" (hooks, 2004, p. 156) to surface different linguistic and textual interpretations and representations. This process relates to feminist theory and critical race theory, which break down essentialist notions of difference to offer opportunities for creating multiple discourses from voices that are frequently left out of the academy.

In qualitative research, cultural studies offer a lens to acknowledge a researcher's place and position of power, while recognizing how the researcher's past can shape the ways he represents the world of another (Gray, 2003; Ryen, 2003; Saukko, 2008). This process requires researchers to uncover their "fractured fragmented identities" (Gannon, 2006, p. 474) and recognize how hegemonic messages influence their identities and therefore their interpretations of reality (Saukko, 2003). Expressions of Barthes's (1972) notion of the body as fragmented, dispersed, continuous, and changing are materialized through a variety of approaches of cultural studies based in ethnography, which include montage, poetry, and performance (discussed above). These become different and legitimate forms of ethnography that depict the multisided and complex nature of a researcher's methodology and interpretive process. Autoethnography (discussed above), a type of ethnography where the researcher is central to the inquiry process, is another generative means to demonstrate the "liminal, dynamic, and contingent” (Gannon, 2006, p. 480) selves/bodies that construct knowledge within cultural spaces.

Internet/Virtual Ethnography

By Paul St. John Frisoli

Emerging from the basic principles of ethnography, **Internet ethnography**, also known as virtual ethnography, is considered a method and methodology for conducting qualitative research. The Internet is loosely defined as a medium for communication, a venue to connect across physical borders, and a socially constructed space (Markham, 2004, p. 119). Therefore, this medium is seen as both a tool and a site for qualitative research, developed from the observation that social life in contemporary society communicates, interacts, and lives more online; for ethnographers to better understand the "social world," they must adjust their research methods to reflect these changes (Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, & Cui, 2009; Markham, 2004).

When the Internet is conceptualized as a tool, researchers may conduct and distribute e-mail or web-based surveys, interview participants either synchronously in chat rooms or asynchronously via e-mail, create discussion boards and group blogs, or suggest online journaling for participants. This method challenges the assumed rapport-building ethnographic approaches of "being there, being part of an everyday life of a community or culture" (Flick, 2006, p. 265). Critics argue that with Internet ethnography, there are "removed social context cues such as gender, age, race, social status, facial expression and intonation resulting in a disinhibiting effect upon group participants" (Williams, 2007, p. 7). However, others argue that though these methods may prevent the researcher and participants from interacting face-to-face, they allow for more reflective, participant-driven textual responses, especially when rigorous and systematic qualitative research principles are enacted (Flick, 2006; Garcia et al., 2009; Mann & Stewart, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2007). One advantage of using the Internet for qualitative studies is that it allows researchers to conduct interviews in remote areas of the world while sitting in their offices, maintain day-to-day synchronous and asynchronous communication, and speak with individuals who may not be able to participate in face-to-face interviews because of physical barriers or protection issues (Mann & Stewart, 2002). We provide more details on the Internet and computer applications as tools for research in Chapter 7.

When the Internet is conceptualized as a site for research, the focus shifts to understanding and analyzing the medium as a central feature of contemporary social life and, therefore, as noted above, ripe for study. Particularly relevant is the work of Markham (2004), who takes a cultural studies approach to legitimate use of the Internet as both a tool and a "discursive milieu that facilitates the researcher's ability to witness and analyze the structure of talk, the negotiation of meaning and identity, the development of relationships and communities, and the construction of social structures as these occur discursively" (p. 97). As a result, Internet ethnography also identifies the World Wide Web as socially constructed virtual worlds (Hine, 2000) that can be researched to understand how people give meaning to their spaces. Virtual communities are graphical online environments in which people construct and represent their identities in the form of characters, also known as avatars. The avatars, representing research participants, are subject to participant observation to better understand the social construction of these virtual domains. Participating in these worlds may well ensure more anonymity, and participants may be more likely to disclose information when they are not inhibited by a face-to-face social hierarchy with the researcher (Garcia et al., 2009). The virtual can offer a sense of safety where individuals feel freer to reconfigure their identities to express themselves and relate to those who are like them (Markham, 2004).

However, this world is an uncertain one, and maneuvering through it has yet to produce context-specific, agreed-on research ethics such as privacy, identity authenticity, and informed consent. We discuss ethical issues associated with the Internet in Chapter 7. Researchers and participants alike are able to create their own identities that may differ from who they say they really are. Researchers can "lurk" online to begin identifying study participants without such individuals knowing (Mann & Stewart, 2004). It is also unclear if a researcher has the right to extract text from individuals' blogs, discussion boards, and other publicly accessible information without permission. The Internet, as a new tool and site, is dynamic and fluid; its generativity for the development of qualitative research is just emerging.

The preceding discussion is intended to provide ways of categorizing a variety of qualitative research genres and approaches, as well as briefly describe some of the emerging strands that derive from the critical, feminist, and postmodern critiques of traditional social science inquiry. As we note, systematic inquiry in each genre occurs in a natural setting rather than an artificially constrained one, such as a laboratory. The approaches, however, vary depending on theory and ideology, the focus of interest (individual, group or organization, or a communicative interaction, such as a text message or website), the degree of interaction between researcher and participants in gathering data, and the participants' role in the research. The discussion was intended to provide some sense of the array of approaches under the qualitative research umbrella. This text, however, cannot do justice to the detailed and nuanced variety of qualitative methods; so we refer you to additional sources at the end of this chapter. Some of these sources are classic—the “grandmothers and grandfathers” in the field—others reflect emergent perspectives. Our purpose in this book is to describe the generic process of designing qualitative research that immerses researchers in the everyday life of a setting chosen for study. These researchers value and seek to discover participants’ perspectives on their worlds, and view inquiry as an interactive process between themselves and the participants. The process is descriptive, analytic, and interpretive, and relies on people’s words, observable behavior, and various texts as the primary data. Whether or not some single methodological refinement is qualitative could be debated in another arena. We hope to give practical guidance to those embarking on an exciting, sometimes frustrating, and ultimately rewarding journey into qualitative inquiry.

In the next chapter, we turn to the important considerations of trustworthiness and ethics. At the proposal stage, how might the researcher argue that his study will address the canons of trustworthiness? And which ones? He should also demonstrate a deep sensitivity to the ethical issues that may arise during the conduct of the study. These are taken up in the next chapter.

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Catherine:* It’s kind of interesting to go back over the earlier editions of this book to see how our thinking has evolved about genres. A tough challenge, organizing all the various strands into a coherent package. Even more difficult these days, with all the blurring of boundaries—the hybridity.

Gretchen: But exciting, to see all the interdisciplinary ways folks are using the various methods. It’s almost as if disciplinary roots don’t mean as much as they used to. An early article I wrote with colleagues used the term *shamelessly eclectic* to capture a stance relative to methods—being shamelessly eclectic, we argued, could bring about new possibilities. It certainly works when thinking about all the movement across genre boundaries and the enormous creativity that we’ve witnessed over our careers.”

Dialogue Between Learners

“Hi, Karla,

I would like to start our dialogue by introducing myself and, more important, my relation to qualitative research. My name is Keren, and I am a doctoral student at the UNC-CH School of Education, working with Catherine Marshall. I was born and raised in Israel and came to North Carolina about 5 years ago to do an MA at UNC-CH. Prior to coming to the USA I studied in the UK for an interdisciplinary MA in human rights and worked in several grassroots organizations in Israel. Currently I am working on my comprehensive examinations. One of the issues I am writing about is the important contribution qualitative methods can have in the field I am studying: international development policies, especially those pertaining to gender equality in education. I believe qualitative methods help us look critically at international policy formulation and implementation by examining local context and by listening to stakeholders usually ignored by statistical analysis. Traditionally the field of international development has been overwhelmingly quantitative, and so I often struggle with formulating my questions and contributions in a way that is substantial enough for the field.

Are you already in your dissertation writing phase? Did you always know you wanted to work with qualitative methodologies?

I am really excited about this dialogue, and I look forward to learning more about your research interests and reflections.

Keren

Hi, Keren,

Thank you for the introduction. I'm very interested in your research and corresponding with you as we move through this process. I am an American doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, working with Gretchen Rossman, also concentrating on international education development issues. I am currently in the writing phase of my dissertation. Looking back, choosing qualitative methods seems to have been an obvious choice. I am investigating the cultural relevancy of schooling practices and curriculum within a primary school in Senegal, using a compressed ethnographic approach. Because ethnographic approaches and my own values emphasize multiple and coexisting forms of knowledge, a qualitative research design allows me to deeply explore the nuances of participants' experiences and to provide a rich and complex illustration of their schooling realities. I also struggled with my own positionality as an outsider in Senegal throughout my research. Again, qualitative methods were a good fit because they privilege reflexivity. I also found that qualitative methods aligned well with the conceptual framework that I finally chose. I'm sure we'll have time to talk about this more later, but I can assure you that it was a difficult (but rewarding!) process.

Well, I feel like I'm rambling, but I hope I responded to your question. Perhaps we can talk more about rationale later.

Best wishes to you and, again, nice to be dialoguing with you!

Karla"

Further Reading

Major Genres

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Key Concepts

action research
arts-informed qualitative inquiry
autoethnography
critical discourse analysis
critical ethnography
critical race theory and analysis
cultural studies
ethnography
feminist theories and methodologies
Internet ethnography
narrative analysis
participatory action research
performance ethnography
phenomenological approaches
phenomenology
queer theory

Notes

1. Burrell and Morgan (1979) provide one useful way for understanding research paradigms and the assumptions they embrace; Rossman and Rallis (2012) rely on their conceptualization to help situate various qualitative research genres. The discussion here draws on the work of Rossman and Rallis.

2. We address this more fully in Chapters 3 and 7, but here we note that participants may disagree with the researcher's report and that passive constructions ("The research was conducted") suggest anonymity and distance, whereas active ones ("We conducted the research") claim agency.

Chapter 3 Trustworthiness and Ethics

As we have indicated in Chapters 1 and 2, when developing a proposal for qualitative research, the writer needs to address certain key issues and considerations to demonstrate that the study, as designed, is well thought out, responds to criteria or canons for good research practice (depending on the genre), and is likely to be implemented with an ethical mindfulness. This chapter emphasizes the intertwining of **trustworthiness** and ethics and forecasts further, more specific, recommendations to come in subsequent chapters.

Historically, concerns with the trustworthiness or goodness of qualitative research drew from the natural and experimental sciences for direction. Thus, **reliability**, **validity**, **objectivity**, and **generalizability**—borrowed from more quantitative approaches—were the criteria against which the soundness of a qualitative study was judged. This era has been characterized as one of "physics envy" (Rossman, Rallis, & Kuntz, 2010), where reliability, validity, and generalizability were seen as a "holy trinity . . . , worshipped with respect by all true believers in science" (Kvale, 1996, p. 229). With the postmodern turn/s, however, these canonical standards have been challenged, as has the very notion of putting forth criteria at all (Schwandt, 1996).

We do, however, worry about proposals that simplistically reject theory or blithely refuse to take on the researcher's responsibility to interpret data. Too often, proposers say they do not want to use imperialistic power over their participants by laying their interpretations over their presentation of descriptive data. To present voluminous raw data in indiscriminately selected and uninterrupted segments of interview data as

> findings, . . . that (a) such data speak for themselves or that (b) researchers should not (in the interests of voicing the voiceless) speak for the participants from whom these data were derived . . . and the idea that researchers are behaving unethically when they seek to interpret those data is too often a pretext to avoid the rigors, responsibilities, and risk of interpretation. (Sandelowski, 2010, p. 79)

Further, the determination to avoid placing artificial boundaries does not give one license to muck around in natural settings without theory. Yes, one can explore the fit of a range of theories or develop grounded theory, but there is no such thing as research conducted with no preconceptions. As Sandelowski (2010) says, "every word is a theory; the very way researchers talk about their subject matter reflects their leanings, regardless of whether they present these inclinations as such or even recognize them" (p. 80).

Choosing the topic is, in itself, having or taking a view, standing somewhere (Haraway, 1991); so good proposals include the researcher's standpoint, both in the literature review and in a section on the personal significance of the study, including the reasons for choosing the topic, presuppositions, previous experiences with the topic, the setting, the participants, and an expression of the hope or expectation that the study will somehow contribute by changing knowledge assumptions and/or solving a societal challenge.

Thus, readers who judge a proposal, and the actual research, can see for themselves the ways theory and researchers' use of their interpretive skills have shaped the progression of the study. Transparency in that use of conceptual and empirical literatures, blended with researchers' abilities and intentions, contributes to a study's being seen as sound, trustworthy, and good.

A range of ways to conceptualize soundness (often referred to as "validity," using the historic term) has emerged. We discuss several approaches to trustworthiness and then build the argument that trustworthiness considerations cannot be separated from ethical concerns. Table 3.1 presents an overview of ways to balance a researcher's goals with various assumptions about the study's design and what makes the study good.

■ Trustworthiness

Articulating the elements of sound design for trustworthiness has been critical for the development of qualitative methodologies. Lincoln and Guba (1985), in *Naturalistic Inquiry,* addressed central questions that determine the trust we have in research: Do we believe in the claims that a research report puts forward? On what grounds do we judge these as credible? What evidence is presented to support the claims? How do we evaluate that evidence? Are the claims potentially useful for the problematic we are concerned with? These questions capture concerns with validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability while broadening and deepening them. Since it could be unethical, qualitative researchers seldom attempt to conduct experiments that could help establish cause–effect relationships. Also, sample sizes are small, as qualitative studies aim at depth and crafting relationships with participants rather than at studies with large-scale randomly selected participants. So the traditional criteria pursued in research seeking to establish statistically significant causality or relationships just do not apply. Historically, the concept of reliability focused on the quality and appropriateness of the instrument and whether it yielded comparable results across administration. However, in qualitative inquiry, where the researcher is “the instrument,” calling herself “reliable” isn’t enough. Instead, we distinguish the traits that make us personally “credible” and ensure that our interpretations of the data are “trustworthy.”

Table 3.1 Continuum of Qualitative Studies' Goals and Criteria

	Art/Impressionist	*Middle-Grounded Approaches*	*Science/Realist*
Goals	To unravel accepted truths To construct personal truths To explore the specific To generate art	To construct situated knowledges To explore the typical To generate description and understanding To trouble the taken-for-granted To generate pragmatic implications for practitioners	To discover objective truth To generalize to larger population To explain reality "out there" To generate scientific knowledge To predict and control behavior
Questions	How do we/can we cope with life? What other ways can we imagine? What is unique about my or another's experience?	How do participants understand their world? How do the participants and author co-construct a world? What are the pragmatic implications of research?	What does it mean from the researcher's point of view? What is the relationship among factors? What behaviors can be predicted?
Methods	Autoethnography Interactive interviewing Participant observation Performance Sociological introspection Visual arts	Semistructured interviewing Focus groups Participant observation/ ethnography Thematic, metaphoric, and narrative analysis Grounded theory Case studies Participatory action research Historical/archival research	Coding textual data Random sampling Frequencies of behaviors Measurement Surveys Structured interviews
Writing	Use of first-person voice Literary techniques Stories Poetry/poetic transcription Multivocal, multigenre texts Layered accounts Experiential forms Personal reflections Open to multiple interpretations	Use of first-person voice Incorporation of brief narratives in research reports Use "snippets" of participants' words Usually a single interpretation, with implied partiality and positionality Some consideration of researcher's standpoint(s)	Use of passive voice "View from nowhere"(Haraway, 1988) Claim single authoritative interpretation Meaning summarized in tables and charts Objectivity and minimization of bias highlighted

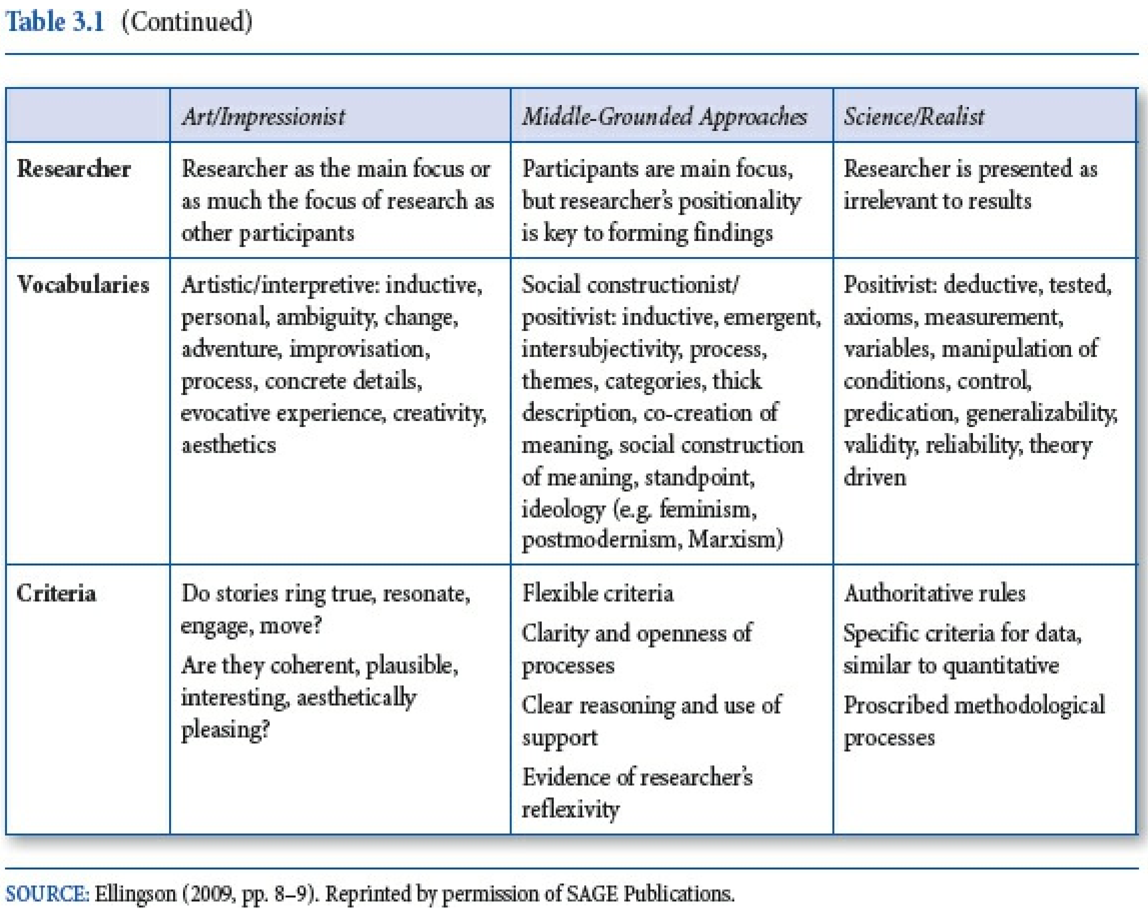

Table 3.1 (Continued)

	Art/Impressionist	*Middle-Grounded Approaches*	*Science/Realist*
Researcher	Researcher as the main focus or as much the focus of research as other participants	Participants are main focus, but researcher's positionality is key to forming findings	Researcher is presented as irrelevant to results
Vocabularies	Artistic/interpretive: inductive, personal, ambiguity, change, adventure, improvisation, process, concrete details, evocative experience, creativity, aesthetics	Social constructionist/ positivist: inductive, emergent, intersubjectivity, process, themes, categories, thick description, co-creation of meaning, social construction of meaning, standpoint, ideology (e.g. feminism, postmodernism, Marxism)	Positivist: deductive, tested, axioms, measurement, variables, manipulation of conditions, control, predication, generalizability, validity, reliability, theory driven
Criteria	Do stories ring true, resonate, engage, move? Are they coherent, plausible, interesting, aesthetically pleasing?	Flexible criteria Clarity and openness of processes Clear reasoning and use of support Evidence of researcher's reflexivity	Authoritative rules Specific criteria for data, similar to quantitative Proscribed methodological processes

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Lincoln and Guba (1985) put forward alternative constructs to capture these concerns: **credibility**, **dependability**, confirmability, and **transferability**. Moreover, they offered a set of procedures to help ensure that these standards of trustworthiness would be met. For validity/credibility, they urged qualitative researchers to be in the setting for a long period of time (**prolonged engagement**); share data and interpretations with participants (**member checks**); triangulate by gathering data from multiple sources, through multiple methods, and using multiple theoretical lenses; and discuss their emergent findings with critical friends to ensure that analyses are grounded in the data (**peer debriefing**). They also firmly critiqued the positivist assertion that objectivity is possible and argued for alternative logics to better capture the usefulness of qualitative studies.

Their work was generative. Subsequent writing on the canons of trustworthiness often invokes their work and uses both their terminology and their procedural recommendations. For example, in 2000, Creswell and Miller developed this list of procedures to help ensure the rigor and usefulness of a qualitative study:

- **Triangulation**
- **Searching for disconfirming evidence**
- Engaging in reflexivity
- Member checking

- Prolonged engagement in the field
- Collaboration with participants
- Developing an **audit trail**
- Peer debriefing

Most of these were articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Another example can be found in Maxwell's (2012) list of validity strategies:

- Searching for alternative explanations
- Searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases
- Triangulation
- Soliciting feedback from those familiar with the setting and from strangers
- Member checks
- Rich data
- Quasi statistics to assess the amount of evidence
- Comparison

We could offer other examples. As Kvale (1996, p. 231) noted, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work "reclaimed ordinary language terms," making these ideas more accessible. And many others have invoked their work, either as a starting point for a critique or to deepen the ideas they developed. Most major texts about qualitative inquiry cite this seminal work (see, e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Creswell, 2013, 2014; Flick, 2014; Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2015; Wolcott, 2009; Yin, 2014). And despite the postmodern turn/s that challenge the notion of validity, the argument is still persuasive that "determining reliability and validity remains the qualitative researcher's goal" and that "to claim that reliability and validity have no place in qualitative inquiry is to place the entire paradigm under suspicion" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 168). What is now contested is how these key terms are to be defined, by whom, for which research project, and for what audience. A recurrent question arises: How can one design research so that findings are "true" or "right"? Another is, doesn't the researcher just find what she wants to find? (These questions should be asked for all methodologies.) A third question is, how can it look like research when there are no "hard data" or the data are "just stories"?

The traditional terms—*reliability*, *validity*, *objectivity*, and *generalizability*—and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) modernization of them—*credibility*, *dependability*, *confirmability*, and *transferability*—need to be considered at the research design stage. Decisions at the proposal stage forecast what the researcher intends to do during implementation of the study, thereby demonstrating how the study design will likely ensure that the data and their interpretations will be sound and appear credible. However, the postmodern turn in the humanities and social sciences has encouraged a radical questioning of the "regulatory demand" implied by considerations of validity. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) lament,

> The notion of judging the quality of research seemed so clear before postmodernist and constructionist thinking pointed out the fallacies of some of our ways. Now I wonder, if findings are constructions and truth a "mirage," aren't evaluative criteria also constructions and therefore subject to debate? (p. 297)

Thus, the debate on validity rages on, offering a confusing array of choices for the proposal writer. Cho and Trent (2006) offer a useful method for organizing the various writings on validity. They put forward the notions of "**transactional validity**" and "**transformational validity**" to capture the essential arguments in the foundationalist/antifoundationalist debate. These recent developments provide research proposers the challenge to create designs that will be empowering, can contribute to societal transformation, and can be catalysts for a widened understanding of the human condition.

Transactional, Catalytic, Transgressive, and Transformational Validity, or Crystallization?

Cho and Trent (2006) argue that historic approaches to ensuring validity (including the work of Lincoln & Guba, 1985) can be described as transactional, involving participants in the research project to validate themes, interpretations, and/or findings. They write,

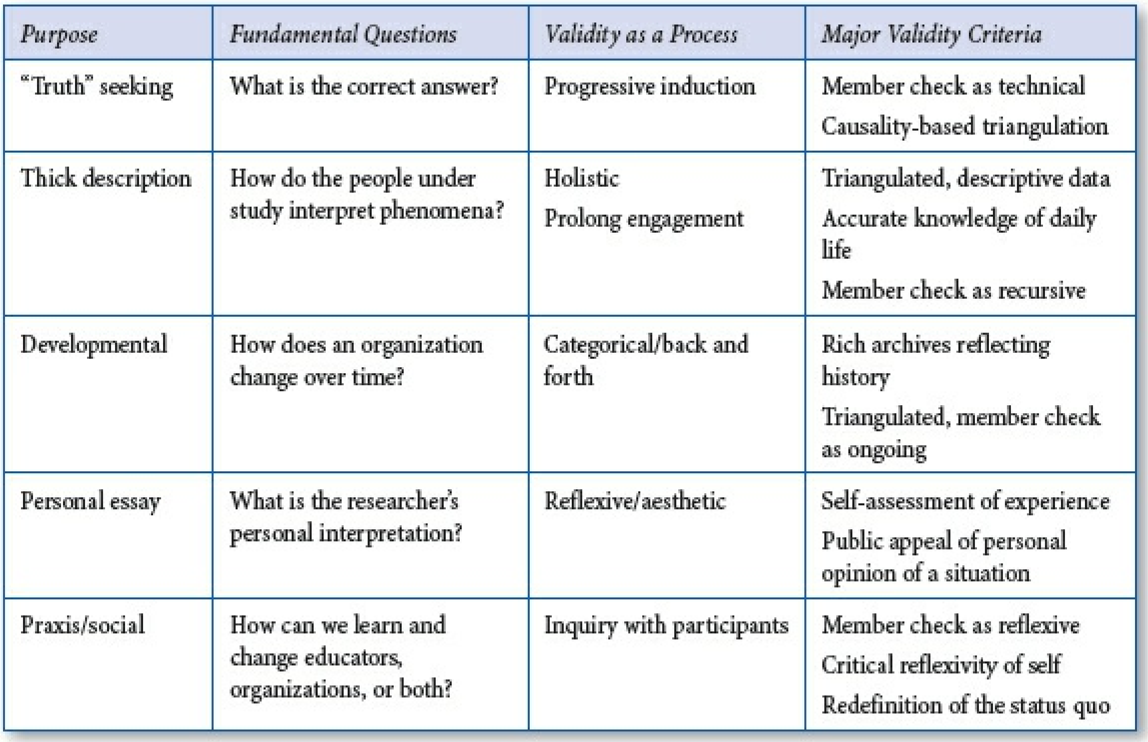
> This approach assumes that qualitative research can be more credible as long as certain techniques, methods, and/or strategies are employed during the conduct of the inquiry. In other words, techniques are seen as a medium to insure an accurate reflection of reality (or at least, participants' constructions of reality). (p. 322)

Thus, stipulating that one will engage in member checks (the central procedure, they argue), which invite participants to confirm one's findings, and the extent to which one will design and implement a study using triangulation as a strategy will help ensure validity. Through member checks, the participants can correct the researcher's (perhaps not quite accurate) representations of their worlds. Through triangulation (using data sources, methods, theories, or researchers), the validity of specific knowledge claims is argued to be more robust. In both procedures, the goal is a more accurate, objective, and neutral representation of the topic under inquiry.

Given the complexity of the diverse genres and subgenres that coexist under the qualitative-inquiry umbrella, Cho and Trent (2006) provide some refreshing simplicity. Drawing on the work of Donmoyer (2001), they offer a table that summarizes the main purposes of a qualitative genre, the fundamental questions, validity as a process, and the major criteria for validity within those broad purposes. Table 3.2 suggests a key point that we have made thus far: Criteria vary, as do the major qualitative genres.

The "transactional" family of approaches has been critiqued for its emphasis on **convergence** and **corroboration**, and for its assumption that procedures can help ensure a more accurate rendering of the topic. Cho and Trent (2006) argue that another family of validity approaches has emerged from this critique—what they refer to as "transformational validity." Writers within this category take quite seriously the notion (central to qualitative inquiry) that multiple perspectives, including those of the researcher-writer, exist; they thus grapple with ways to ensure that those voices are represented transparently and that the full dynamics of the research process are examined and critiqued. For some of these approaches, the processes and end results of the inquiry are the most important (e.g., empowerment, civic action, and greater efficacy); researcher reflexivity becomes central (discussed more fully in Chapter 8). They write that within this family of approaches,

Table 3.2 Assumptions About Validity Depending on Overarching Purposes



Purpose	*Fundamental Questions*	*Validity as a Process*	*Major Validity Criteria*
"Truth" seeking	What is the correct answer?	Progressive induction	Member check as technical Causality-based triangulation
Thick description	How do the people under study interpret phenomena?	Holistic Prolong engagement	Triangulated, descriptive data Accurate knowledge of daily life Member check as recursive
Developmental	How does an organization change over time?	Categorical/back and forth	Rich archives reflecting history Triangulated, member check as ongoing
Personal essay	What is the researcher's personal interpretation?	Reflexive/aesthetic	Self-assessment of experience Public appeal of personal opinion of a situation
Praxis/social	How can we learn and change educators, organizations, or both?	Inquiry with participants	Member check as reflexive Critical reflexivity of self Redefinition of the status quo

SOURCE: Adapted from from Cho and Trent (2006, p. 326).

SOURCE: Adapted from from Cho and Trent (2006, p. 326).

> the question of validity in itself is convergent with the way the researcher self-reflects, both explicitly and implicitly, upon the multiple dimensions in which the inquiry is conducted. In this respect, validity is not so much something that can be achieved solely by way of certain techniques. (p. 324)

Within this family are the "transgressive approaches" to validity articulated by Lather (1993, 2001) and Koro-Ljungberg (2008), among others. These scholars seek to interrogate the term *validity* and encourage methodologies that express the dynamics and complexities of individuals interacting within a particular sociohistorical site. Perhaps best known within this family is Lather's conception of **catalytic validity**—"the manner in which the process of research re-orients participants to their reality to stimulate *transformative* [italics added] possibilities" (Rossman et al., 2010, p. 512). Also, the conceptualization by Kirkhart (1995) of *multicultural validity* is quite generative, as it carries an explicit **social justice** agenda. Table 3.2 provides another useful way of looking at how a researcher balances her purpose with ways of demonstrating that her study design is sound and the resulting research quite likely to be useful.

In discussions of validity, the concept of **crystallization** is useful as an alternative to triangulation. First brought into the research methodology discourse by Richardson (1997), the concept has provided a flexible way of thinking about validity. The triangle is critiqued as a rigid structure with only three fixed points, while crystals are "prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves" (p. 92). Crystals thus offer multiple perspectives, colors, and refractions. Conceptualizing validity through the metaphor of the crystal calls on a methodology that demands self-critique or self-reflexivity. Ellingson (2009) develops the methodology of crystallization, offering a figure that depicts qualitative inquiry genres along a continuum. She articulates various positions along this continuum for thinking about crystallization.

In sum, recent discourse on validity in qualitative inquiry offers the proposal writer alternatives for developing arguments to convince the reader that her study is well conceptualized and will be conducted rigorously and ethically. These arguments, with appropriate and convincing rationales, should be grounded in literature that is congruent with the study's genre, assumptions, and purposes.

While the debate rages about what should constitute criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry, who makes those determinations, and the attendant discussion of what constitutes "evidence," many qualitative researchers—especially those writing proposals for the first time—find a firm grounding in the ideas and procedures first articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). For qualitative beginners, we recommend using their procedures to establish grounding to convince a reviewer that the proposed study will be conducted rigorously and that the resulting assertions ("findings") will rest on solid methodological practice. But they must update to incorporate current thinking about the nuances of these key concepts. They will then be able to answer the doubters and critics who know only traditional validity criteria. They can offer persuasive arguments that qualitative goodness can yield more exciting possibilities, and take delight in the strengths of inquiry that empowers, transforms, and acts as societal catalyst.

We provide more specifics for building a design that establishes credibility and trustworthiness in Chapter 8. For now, we are discussing the imperative to incorporate ethical considerations into the overarching criteria for trustworthiness.

■ Bring Ethics Into Trustworthiness

Explicit discussions of the principles and practice of ethical research as central to the goodness of any study are notably absent from many methodological discussions. But for any qualitative study, validity, trustworthiness, and goodness criteria must include discussion of the fit within the setting and the participants' sensitivities. At the proposal stage, the potential trustworthiness and goodness of a study should be judged not only by how competently it is designed (according to the norms and standards of a discipline) but also by the stipulated plan for how the researcher will be ethically engaged. We believe she must think beyond being careful about procedural matters and documentation for the protection of human subjects.

In proposal decisions, by trying to be scrupulous and ethical about gaining access and encouraging participants to cooperate, the researcher has to consider trustworthiness. If the study is designed to depend on access to participants who volunteer freely, its trustworthiness may be undermined if it does not include potential participants who have low social capital or who would participate only with tangible incentives such as money or gift certificates (Tyldum, 2012). Still, monetary incentives may result in a skewed study with participants who are quite needy.

Ethics require a focus on matters of relationships—with participants, with stakeholders, with peers, and with the larger community of discourse. Writing about their research in the allied health field, Davies and Dodd (2002) argue that

> ethics are an essential part of rigorous research. Ethics are more than a set of principles or abstract rules that sit as an overarching entity guiding our research. . . . Ethics exist in our actions and in our ways of doing and practicing our research; we perceive ethics to be always in progress, never to be taken for granted, flexible, and responsive to change. (p. 281)

They further urge, "Ethics is not treated as a separate part of our research—a form that is filled in for the ethics committee and forgotten" (p. 281). Thus, at the proposal stage, addressing the large questions posed at the beginning of this section as well as engaging explicitly with the ethics of everyday practice will go far to convince proposal readers that the study is likely to be designed and conducted in trustworthy ways.

Some transformational approaches suggest a focus on the ethical with their commitment to social justice and the disruption of hegemonic structures, but an explicit focus on the ethical is frequently absent. When moral principles are discussed, moreover, the paramount considerations of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are often reduced to the procedural matters of gaining **informed consent**, as noted above.

■ Ethics: Focusing on People

In universities and other institutions that receive federal funding, questions about how the researcher relates to participants—ethical matters—come under the jurisdiction of **institutional review boards** (IRBs), which are charged with ensuring the protection of human subjects in all research conducted under the auspices of that institution. Such boards serve important defining and policing roles in judging what is considered **ethical practice** with human subjects, frequently requiring researchers to pass the appropriate **Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative** (CITI) modules.

Developing a sound proposal entails building an argument that is cogent and persuasive, and demonstrates that the researcher has an exquisite sensitivity to both the procedural and the everyday **ethical issues** (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) inherent in research with human beings; some issues might be called *big E* (procedural and IRB) and others *little e* (the complicated and messy issues of relationships). For any inquiry project, ethical research practice is grounded in the moral principles of *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice*. **Respect for persons** captures the notion that we do not use the people who participate in our studies as a means to an end (often our own) and that we do respect their privacy, their anonymity, and their right to participate—or not—with their free consent. **Beneficence** addresses the central dictum, *primum non nocere* (first, do no harm)—originally developed in medical fields. This means that the researcher does whatever she reasonably can to ensure that participants are not harmed by participating in the study. Finally, *justice* refers to distributive justice—that is, considerations of who benefits and who does not from the study, with special attention to the redress of past societal injustices.

Of the three moral principles, respect for persons usually receives the most attention in institutional policies and procedures. Through the informed consent form, the researcher assures review boards that participants are fully informed about the purpose of the study, that their participation is voluntary, that they understand the extent of their commitment to the study, that their identities will be protected, and that there are minimal risks associated with participating.

Institutional Review Boards

To protect human subjects from unnecessary harm, universities and professional associations have created codes of ethics and research review boards. IRBs in universities and agencies receiving federal funds must review all research proposals to ensure that the research will proceed with appropriate protections against risk to humans and animals, as mandated by the National Research Act, Public Law 93-348. Standards and guidelines are most stringent in the United States and Canada, and less so in other countries. Universities and agencies vary in their interpretations of the guidelines, and sometimes board members are unfamiliar with qualitative proposals. Furthermore, IRBs' primary purpose—to avoid biomedical and physical experimentation and guard against manipulation of humans without their consent—is less relevant for many qualitative social science proposals. (See the overview of IRB benefits and drawbacks in Brainard, 2001.)

Sometimes qualitative proposals undergo criticism and demands for revisions as IRBs expect them to conform to more conventional designs. Even as qualitative inquiry has attained acceptance in scholarly inquiry, these demands are confused by narrow views of what should be considered scientific inquiry. In her commentary on these narrowing trends in the research community, Lincoln (2005) notes about current IRB regulation on campuses,

> New paradigms encounter: (a) increased scrutiny surrounding research with human subjects (a response to failures in biomedical research), (b) new scrutiny of classroom research and training in qualitative methods involving human subjects, (c) new discourses regarding what constitutes "evidence-based research," and (d) the long-term effects of the National Research Council (2002) report on what should be considered to be scientific inquiry. (p. 166)

Nevertheless, the principles of ethical management of role, access, data collection, storage, and reporting serve as essential reminders. IRBs require answers to certain specific questions: Describe the research, sites, and subjects; how will you attain access? How will you provide for informed consent, and what will your entry letter and informed consent form look like? What kinds of interactions will you have with subjects? What risks will subjects take, and how will you reduce those risks? How will you guard your data and your informants' privacy?

Potential dilemmas can be addressed at the proposal stage. For example, in a phenomenological study of gay, lesbian, and straight youth who participate in gay/straight alliances in high schools, Doppler (1998) described in some detail the issues involving ethics and human subjects in her study. To provide details of how to write about ethics, we include, below, excerpts from Doppler's proposal as well as her consent letter for students. Doppler's discussion of informed consent included the following:

> Because participants will be high school students, some of whom may be especially vulnerable because of being lesbian or gay or due to status as a heterosexual ally of lesbian and gay youth, it will be particularly important to protect them from any potential harm. . . . Participants will have the opportunity to read transcripts of each interview in which they share their reactions and will be asked to modify the transcript.

Doppler's Appendix included the consent letter shown in Figure 3.1. (She constructed a similar informed consent letter to be signed by willing parents.) Doppler's (1998) discussion of reciprocity included these reflections:

> [Participants] will have an opportunity to voice their experiences and feelings in a safe setting with someone who *will* validate the importance of their participation in a GSA [gay/straight alliance]. Lesbian or gay students may receive the greatest benefit because they will have an opportunity to voice feelings and thoughts about which they may usually remain silent. Also, interacting with a lesbian educator who is happy and well-adjusted to life as a lesbian can provide a positive role model. . . . On a cursory level, I will share power with participants by encouraging them to modify interview transcripts to make them fully accurate. Much more important is the power dispensed by providing opportunity for students to give voice to their experiences.

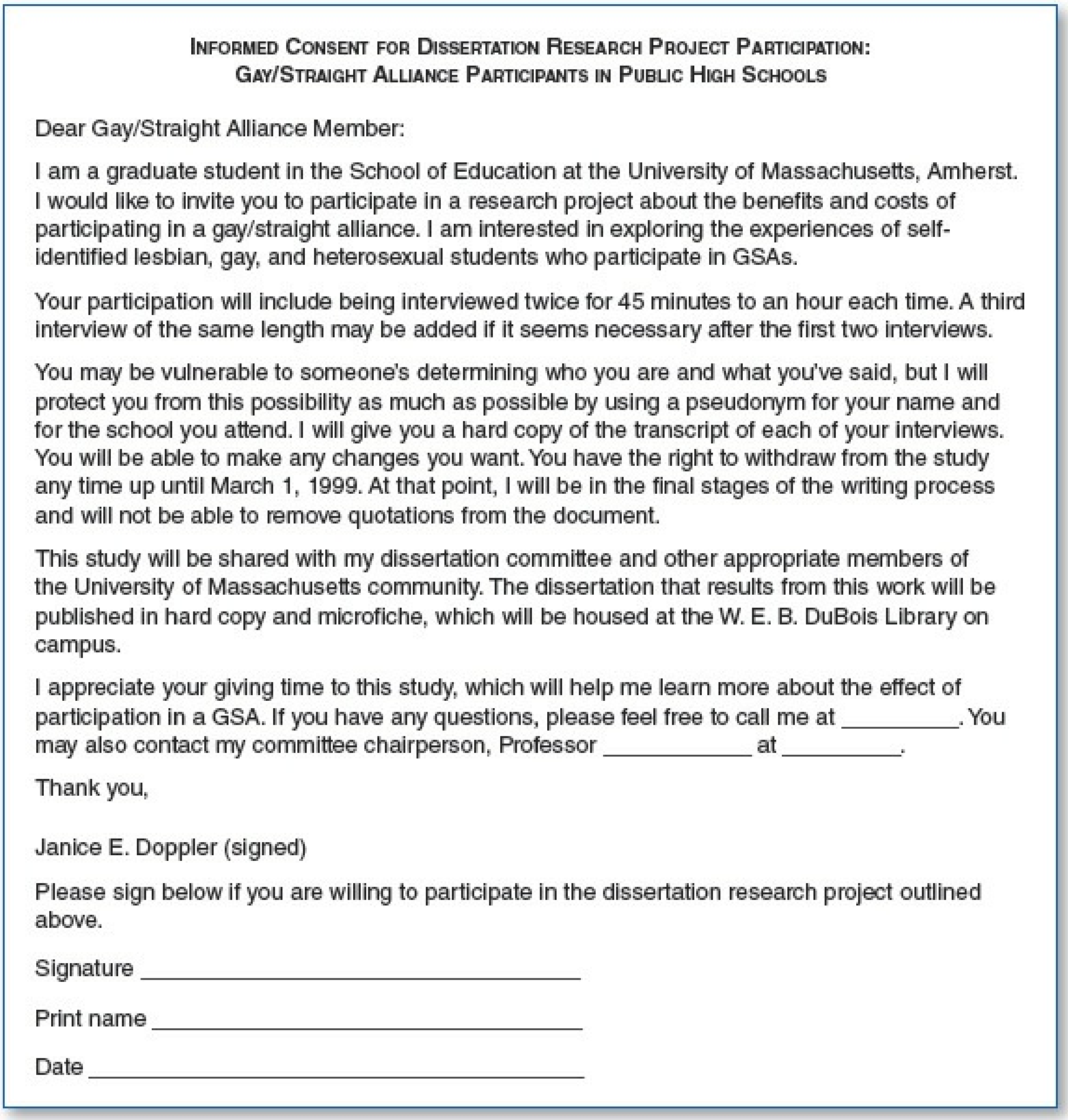
In the section titled "Right to Privacy," Doppler (1998) wrote,

> Pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of participants. It is possible for this study, however, that some participants will want to have their names used as a rite of passage out of the closet. In that case, the implications of the use of actual names versus pseudonyms will be discussed with any participant who wants her or his name to be used. Participants will be promised every reasonable attempt to maintain confidentiality with the exception of self-reports of suicidality or abuse.

Doppler (1998) also included a section titled “Advocacy/Intervention,” in which she wrote,

> I anticipate that ethical considerations around advocacy/intervention may create personal dilemmas during my fieldwork. During the course of interviews, it is likely that I will hear about harassment and discrimination. My impulse may be to intervene in the situation. At this point, I believe that it will be appropriate to be sure students know what avenues they can take to deal with harassment or discrimination. When that sort of situation arises, I will continue the interview to keep the flow going, but at the end of the interview session, I can offer to discuss channels of possible support within their individual schools or provide phone numbers for supports outside their schools.

Figure 3.1 Informed Consent: Students



INFORMED CONSENT FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROJECT PARTICIPATION:
GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE PARTICIPANTS IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Dear Gay/Straight Alliance Member:

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project about the benefits and costs of participating in a gay/straight alliance. I am interested in exploring the experiences of self-identified lesbian, gay, and heterosexual students who participate in GSAs.

Your participation will include being interviewed twice for 45 minutes to an hour each time. A third interview of the same length may be added if it seems necessary after the first two interviews.

You may be vulnerable to someone's determining who you are and what you've said, but I will protect you from this possibility as much as possible by using a pseudonym for your name and for the school you attend. I will give you a hard copy of the transcript of each of your interviews. You will be able to make any changes you want. You have the right to withdraw from the study any time up until March 1, 1999. At that point, I will be in the final stages of the writing process and will not be able to remove quotations from the document.

This study will be shared with my dissertation committee and other appropriate members of the University of Massachusetts community. The dissertation that results from this work will be published in hard copy and microfiche, which will be housed at the W. E. B. DuBois Library on campus.

I appreciate your giving time to this study, which will help me learn more about the effect of participation in a GSA. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at __________. You may also contact my committee chairperson, Professor ____________ at __________.

Thank you,

Janice E. Doppler (signed)

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in the dissertation research project outlined above.

Signature ________________________________

Print name ________________________________

Date ____________________________________

SOURCE: Reprinted by permission of Janice Doppler.

She then provided specific examples of situations that might occur, with discussions of how she would handle them, thus demonstrating her sensitivity. She went on to show how she would manage political independence, how she would protect her ownership of the data, and why potential benefits would outweigh any risks associated with conducting the study. As she illustrates, informed consent can be a complicated process. Simplistic, trite, and unreflective verbiage will not suffice.

Such examples can serve as guides, to be adapted to other submissions to the IRB.

Cultural Challenges to Informed Consent

The IRB, with its requirement of informed consent, is a uniquely Western practice. Informed consent is based on principles of individualism and free will—also on uniquely Western cultural assumptions. Written informed **consent forms** also assume literacy, a skill that may not be present when doing fieldwork in countries with different cultural and legal traditions. When working in cross-cultural contexts, where cultural beliefs and values may be collectivist and hierarchical, how does the notion of informed consent play out? Putting one's name or mark on a piece of paper may seem dangerous to participants outside the United States or Europe, or to anyone with sensitivity to the increasingly sophisticated ways private information can be accessed. These issues must be discussed directly. International students doing fieldwork in their countries of origin must complete appropriate forms and undergo the required human subjects review by the university. Their challenges include meeting the demands for the protection of human subjects required by U.S. universities and yet still respecting the cultural norms operating in the settings for their research.

Formulaic completion of the required forms is not enough; that evades the deeper issues of cultural biases embedded in the documents and procedures. To be true to the intent behind the protection of human subjects that is encoded in documents and procedures, proposal writers must address four key demands: Participants need to understand (have explained to them) that (1) this is a research study with specific parameters and interests, (2) they are free to participate or not without prejudice (but this raises its own set of issues, as discussed in Vignette 3), (3) there is a plan for reducing any potential risks, and (4) their identities will be masked (protected) as much as possible.

While no perfect solutions emerged in this vignette, the issues were engaged openly, using a cultural critique of Western practice for research conducted in very different cultural contexts.

However, developing informed consent forms—as one must do for research conducted under the aegis of any institution receiving federal funding—is the minimum requirement. While necessary for research proposals, this procedural matter is just the beginning of demonstrating that the writer is likely to conduct the study with deep sensitivity to the ethics of everyday research practice (Rossman & Rallis, 2010) and the often unforeseen issues (Milner, 2007) that may arise. While procedures matter—one must, after all, include an informed consent form with the research proposal—how we relate to the persons who participate in a study and the ethical issues that may arise should also be addressed in the proposal. Above all, at the proposal stage, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that they understand ethical practice as complex processes, not mere events. Ethical practice is ongoing; obtaining a signature on an informed consent form is merely one observable indicator of the researcher's sensitivity (see Bhattacharya, 2007, for an excellent discussion of the complexities of informed consent). Proposals must demonstrate awareness of the ways the culture and participants could introduce ethical dilemmas. In a study of street children in Cairo, Egypt, Fahmi (2007) found himself falling to positions of advocating for the children, and also wondering whether he should intervene when the children might harm themselves by sniffing glue to get high. A good proposal would lay out possible ethical dilemmas that might arise and the kinds of decision rules to guide that research. (Chapter 6 provides a discussion of research with children.)

As we have witnessed over the years, this has had important consequences: Graduate students with whom we work speak in coded language about IRB approval, appearing to believe that such approval certifies their research as "ethical." At times, engaging with the thorny issues associated with ongoing ethical practice appears tedious, unproductive, and unnecessary. Cultural differences in interpretation of standard forms, such as informed consent, are sidelined; discussions about the ethical representation of what participants have shared are lost; and epistemological questions about the knowledge claims made in written texts gloss over the crucial relational foundation that generated those claims (Gunzenhauser & Gerstl-Pepin, 2006).

The proposal writer can attend to the deeper relational matters by explicitly addressing issues that may arise in her proposed research. She should view the standard forms as only a starting point. She should provide a critique of the intercultural insensitivity embedded in consent forms and their attendant explanations. These forms and guidelines typically provide little direction on how to mediate between the demands of a U.S.-based (and Eurocentric) university and the sensibilities of quite different cultural groups. For example, informed consent presumes that participants can freely give their assent to participate in a research study. However, this assumption does not travel well across national boundaries, especially into more collectivist cultures. What does this notion of individual rights mean in a nation-state where the concept of the individual is blurred and the group is paramount, where one's obligations extend well beyond the self? And what happens to the assumption that an individual is free to participate or withdraw from a study at any time without prejudice when one is a civil servant, obligated by ties to the government to participate? Furthermore, how is the requirement that a participant sign the informed consent form viewed in cultures where literacy is not prevalent or, more ominously, where giving one's consent by signing or making one's mark on a document puts one at risk in an authoritarian regime? Finally, how can the researcher give even reasonable assurances of protection from harm without fully understanding the consequences of village women's participating in a study in a deeply patriarchal society?

Viewing the moral principles that guide research practice as *relational*, rather than merely as some procedural hoops one must jump through, centers the inquiry on people—which, we argue, is where it should be. Explicitly valuing participants and recognizing the potential interpersonal impact of the inquiry helps demonstrate that the researcher will be deeply ethical. Her stances and decisions, then, will likely be grounded in what Kirkhart (1995) has termed *interpersonal validity*—that is, "the trustworthiness of understandings emanating from personal interactions" (p. 4). "This dimension of validity concerns itself with the skills and sensitivities of the researcher in how one uses oneself as a knower, as an inquirer" (Reason & Rowan, 1981, cited in Kirkhart, 1995, p. 4). This concept of interpersonal validity inextricably intertwines ethics with trustworthiness.

Further, Vignette 4 illustrates the challenges of forecasting the deeply personal aspects of ethical qualitative inquiry practice.

Vignette 4 represents coming face-to-face with the "**ethically important moments**" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Rossman & Rallis, 2010) that might arise in the everyday conduct of a study—moments the writer should discuss in the proposal. These issues can be discussed in a section of the research design specifically devoted to "ethical considerations" and can be augmented in the discussion of the researcher's "personal biography," "social identities," or "positionality," where the potentially thorny interactions of power, status, social identity, and cultural difference should be explored. Chapter 5 will address more details for writing this section of the research design. Also, see Chapters 6 and 7 for discussion of ethical issues related to specific data collection approaches (e.g., observation, research with children, digital and Internet data, etc.).

The preceding discussion is intended to sensitize the proposal writer to the important considerations of trustworthiness, or validity, and ethics in developing a convincing proposal. The specific emphases that the writer puts forward will depend, to some extent, on the genre of qualitative inquiry in which her study is situated. Thus, a proposal drawing on autoethnographic methods will need to demonstrate a deep familiarity with theorizing and pragmatic examples of that genre, specifically as those writings address validity and ethical issues.

However, the details of ensuring (or trying to ensure) that a study will be seen as trustworthy and ethical are guided by traditions within the study's genre and the conceptual framework in which the writer situates her study. The conceptual framework is derived from the review of theory and research, the plans for the study's potential significance, and the array of research questions posed. These, in turn, will frame the design of the study and specific methods of data collection chosen.

At this point, we remind the reader of the complexity of developing a proposal, where recycling and revisiting ideas and decisions is just part of the game. A full understanding of the stances and strategies for ensuring trustworthiness and the potential ethical issues that might arise will emerge only after the writer of the proposal has made some initial decisions about the conceptual framework, the study's design, and generative data collection methods. We turn to these next in Chapters 4 (conceptualizing the study), 5 (design), 6 (basic data collection methods), and 7 (focused and specialized methods). While this need to consider all elements at the same time is frustrating, it mirrors the complex processes of writing in general. So bear with it!

Vignette 3 Talking Through Cultural Challenges

MacJessie-Mbewe (2004), a doctoral student from Malawi in southern Africa, discussed with Rossman at length how he would approach the participants in his study, given that Malawi is a highly collectivist and hierarchical culture. In his human subjects review forms, he wrote, “According to Malawian rural culture, informed consent will be obtained orally. Getting them to sign a form will yield unpleasant reactions and many will fear to participate because of that. Permission will be taken from heads of school, district, and Ministry [of Education]. According to Malawian rules, once you take permission from the Ministry of Education and the district education manager, it is enough to use schools for research.”

Although this rationale passed the review process, many ethical issues arose in their discussion. For example, what does consent mean when, if a higher official has approved the study, teachers and heads of schools—as civil servants—must comply and participate? Are they freely agreeing to participate? Can they withdraw without repercussions from higher officials? Discussions with MacJessie-Mbewe and other students from Malawi centered on these issues. While working on the required forms, Rossman engaged students in discussions of how culturally inappropriate a written informed consent may be and encouraged them to elaborate on the reasons why. One typical reason is that written forms, which one must sign or put one’s mark on, are associated with the government, often with sinister connotations in repressive or highly corrupt regimes. Another is that the participant (subject) may not be literate and hence cannot be fully informed as to what she is signing. A third is that, in more collectivist cultures than those of the United States or Europe, trust and good faith are observed through one’s word rather than one’s signature. Thus, asking someone to sign a form will be taken as a sign of disrespect. In the end, students agreed on ways to discuss how they would observe the intent of the procedures: informing participants about their research, engaging their willing participation, and protecting their identities as much as feasible. So now MacJessie-Mbewe had more guidance.

Vignette 4 Challenges in Anticipating Ethical Issues

By Aaron Kuntz

I didn’t truly appreciate the subtle ethical implications of my methodological decisions until I had already completed the data collection for my study of faculty activism. I had covered all my ethical bases in both my dissertation proposal and IRB document preparation, and had successfully defended my proposal with little methodological fanfare. The bulk of the questions from my committee were on the content of my research, not as much on the ethics of how I proposed to collect, analyze, and represent my data. My application sailed through the IRB process without even one recommendation for improvement.

The practical implications of ethics came into the foreground when a study participant stopped midsentence to ask, “This is all anonymous right? You won’t connect this to my name or anything like that?” I assured the participant that everyone in the study would be given pseudonyms and all identifying markers would be stripped from written documents—after all, that’s what was in my IRB application. The same question came up with two additional participants, and I began to realize that basic methodological decisions held layered ethical tensions.

The subtlety of ethics hit me—how was I to adequately depict the stories of my participants’ lives without breaching the pledge of anonymity? How could I represent participants as dynamic, complex humans and, at the same time, remove any and all identifications that might reveal who they were? In short, how was I to represent participants fully and, at the same time, incompletely? In a discussion with my dissertation chair, I was advised to simply separate quotations from identities. That is, I should understand my transcripts as textual data removed from the actual narrative of participants’ lives. Yet this position stood in direct opposition to my belief in giving participants a “voice” in my study. I maintained an ethical position that separating participant utterances from the participants themselves was wrong and continued a long history of misrepresenting and silencing participants within research studies. I wanted to honor those who participated in my study by allowing their distinctly individual voices to emerge and not be lost amidst a collective jumble of thematized quotations.

Over time, I realized that ethical decision making was not adequately resolved or even anticipated by a series of institutional procedures (e.g., IRB or a dissertation proposal defense) but instead involved a process of on-the-ground experiences in need of reflexive reasoning. I began a series of analytic memos detailing the ethical quandaries I experienced throughout the day-to-day practices of my research. I noted the tension between maintaining anonymity and representing participants as more than simply the “subjects” of my study. I also noted inconsistencies between my espousal of postmodern interpretations of identity as fragmented and incomplete and a romanticized vision of representing the “whole selves” of those who participated in my study. In a way, these analytic memos gave me the opportunity to step outside a study that consumed my life at that particular time—to make strange the familiar—and this process of defamiliarizing my research process brought otherwise unacknowledged ethical tensions to the fore and required newly reasoned research practices.

I regret that these ethically laden analytic memos never made it into the finished product of my dissertation; I suppose at the time I didn’t feel as though there was a space for me to include the ethical process inherent in my research, that the formality of the dissertation left no room for discussions of my ethics-in-practice. Now, I wonder about the ethical implications of not including my readers in thoughts about such ethically laden decisions.

Dialogue Between Authors

"*Gretchen:* I'm reminded by this chapter of just how impossible it is to sort of divide up into separate sections any talk about entry, respect, reciprocity, ethics, role, positionality, AND truthfulness and goodness of a study. This is one of the areas where the overlapping considerations become truly messy, at least for new learners. I wonder what we might do to help them out here.

Catherine: True. I always insist on them being subsections in the "Research Design" section of a proposal, but I must admit, these topics are so very intertwined! When I teach these intertwined topics, the main ideas and the readings don't mean anything until we try out some nonthreatening mock interviewing in small groups in class, and then reflect on the range of topics, showing how each affects the other."

Dialogue Between Learners

“Hi, Keren,

Addressing issues of credibility and trustworthiness has been a major concern of mine throughout this process. Partly for this reason, I chose an approach that favored a thick description. Yet I also found that being ethical wasn’t entirely straightforward. Gretchen and Catherine write about ethics with a big and small *E*. Certainly, there are the requirements of the IRB, and then there are the real requirements of the site and participants. Culture certainly plays a role in this as well. For example, I’ll mention briefly two tensions that arose in regard to anonymity. Although anonymity is important in protecting the identities of the participants from any negative retribution as a result of the research and its publication, there were moments when I felt like anonymity also performed a disservice to participants. For instance, I met with an oral historian who told me repeatedly how people who record his oral knowledge in books are credited but that his oral practice provides little acknowledgement. I had the power in my dissertation to acknowledge his contributions both to my research and, more important, to the general historical knowledge of his town. Yet doing so would have identified the town and the other participants. I felt stuck, and the rules of ethics with a big *E* prevailed. He, like others, remained anonymous.

Similarly, I mentioned that I worked with a research associate as part of my compressed ethnography research design. This collaboration not only facilitated access but also allowed for peer debriefing and, I believe, enriched my findings. Again, because naming him could result in identification of the research site and participants, I could not acknowledge his full contribution to my research. In many ways, that was a painful decision to make. We have discussed it and he is fine with anonymity, but I still remain unsatisfied. Oh, the ethical tensions of qualitative research! There seems to be no straightforward or perfect solution.

Keren, do you imagine you will encounter any similar ethical dilemmas?

Take care,

Karla

Hello, Karla,

The ethical dilemmas you describe demonstrate clearly the limitations of the IRB process, especially in locations outside the United States. In fact, I’ve been told that I will need to be ready to discuss and think deeply about ethical issues as part of the oral defense of my proposal. For example, since I plan to conduct my research in a developing country it will not be enough to get IRB approval from my university; I will need to actively seek out local modules of ethical research. All through the research process we are faced with ethical considerations and questions, and perhaps part of being a good, reflective qualitative researcher is learning to share our processes and mechanisms with our readers.

I know I didn’t answer your question directly, partly because I think that in answering it I will be violating ethical principles by giving more information than I want on my research location.

Sincerely and ethically,

Keren”

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Key Concepts

audit trail
beneficence
catalytic validity
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
consent forms
convergence
corroboration
credibility
crystallization
dependability
ethical issues
ethical practice
ethically important moments
generalizability
informed consent
institutional review boards
member checks
objectivity
peer debriefing
prolonged engagement
reliability
respect for persons
searching for disconfirming evidence
social justice
transactional validity
transferability
transformational validity
triangulation
trustworthiness
validity

Chapter 4 The What of the Study Building the Conceptual Framework

What is research? What is a research proposal? How do the two relate to each other? The social scientist may view research as a process of trying to gain a better understanding of the complexities of human experience—by asking basic questions. With somewhat different purposes, other researchers ask applied and practical questions aimed at contributing possible solutions to pressing challenges (as, perhaps, in nursing or educational research). In some genres of research, the aim is to identify productive ways to take action based on the research findings. Through systematic and sometimes collaborative strategies, the researcher gathers information about actions and interactions, reflects on their meaning, arrives at and evaluates conclusions, and eventually puts forward an interpretation, most frequently in written form.

Quite unlike its pristine and logical presentation in journal articles—"the reconstructed logic of science" (Kaplan, 1964, p. 67)—research is often confusing, messy, intensely frustrating, and fundamentally nonlinear. In critiquing the way journal articles display research as a supremely sequential and objective endeavor, Bargar and Duncan (1982) describe how, "through such highly standardized reporting practices, scientists inadvertently hide from view the real inner drama of their work, with its intuitive base, its halting timeline, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives" (p. 2). This drama is delightful but also daunting.

The researcher begins by attending to interesting, mysterious, curious, or anomalous phenomena that he observes, discovers, or stumbles across. Like detective work or the most ethical traditions in investigative reporting, research seeks to explain, describe, explore, and/or critique the phenomenon chosen for study. Critical genres challenge dominant, taken-for-granted knowledge, as does postmodernism. Emancipatory genres, such as those represented by some critical, feminist, and participatory action research approaches, also make explicit their intent to act toward the change of oppressive circumstances. The commitment of these emancipatory genres to social justice is increasingly present in all genres of qualitative inquiry. Thus, the research proposal is *a plan for engaging in systematic inquiry* to bring about a better understanding of the phenomenon and/or to change problematic social circumstances. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the finished proposal should demonstrate that (a) the research is worth doing, (b) the researcher is competent to conduct the study, and (c) the study is carefully planned and can be executed successfully.

A proposal for the conduct of any research represents *decisions* the researcher has made—that a theoretical framework, design, and methodology will generate data appropriate and adequate for responding to the research questions and will conform to ethical standards. These decisions emerge through intuition, complex reasoning, and the weighing of a number of possible research questions, possible conceptual frameworks, and alternative designs and strategies for gathering data. Throughout, the researcher considers the “should-do-ability,” “do-ability,” and “want-to-do-ability” of the proposed project (discussed in Chapter 1). This is the complex, dialectical process of designing a qualitative study. This chapter discusses how, in qualitative design, you are choosing from among possible research questions, frameworks, approaches, sites, and data collection methods the one most suited to your research project. Building the research proposal demands that the researcher consider all the elements of the proposal *at the same time.* As noted in Chapter 1, this recursive process is complex and intellectually challenging because he needs to consider multiple elements—multiple decisions and choices—of the proposal simultaneously.

But how to begin? This is often the most challenging aspect of developing a successful proposal. A quick answer is, “Start where you are.” Long ago, Anselm Strauss (1969) said, “The naming of an object provides directive for action” (p. 22). He pointed to how powerfully mobilizing it is to give one’s project a name—to be able to put it into a short, simple sentence.

Our experience suggests that research interests may have their origins in deeply personal experiences, professional commitments and concerns, intriguing theoretical frameworks, methodological predilections, and/or recurring social problems. Whatever their source, these interests must be transformed into a logical proposal that articulates key elements and demonstrates competence. We offer one model for those elements, recognizing that much thought and drafting have preceded this formal, public writing.

■ Sections of the Proposal

Proposals for qualitative research vary in format but typically include the following three sections: (1) *the introduction*, which includes an overview of the proposal, a discussion of the topic or focus of the inquiry and the general research questions, the study's purpose and potential significance, and its limitations; (2) *a discussion of related literature* or "currents of thought" (Schram, 2006, p. 63), which situates the study in the ongoing discourse about the topic and develops the specific intellectual traditions to which the study is linked; and (c) *the research design and methods*, which detail the overall design, the site or population of interest, the specific methods for gathering data, a preliminary discussion of strategies for analyzing the data and for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study, a biography of the researcher, and ethical and political issues that may arise in the conduct of the study. In all research, these sections are interrelated—each one building on the others. They are listed in Table 4.1. In qualitative inquiry, the proposal should reserve some flexibility in research questions and design, because these are likely to change. The qualitative research proposal is, actually, the researcher's very best reasoning about how he justifies his questions and how he can proceed to find answers. The next section provides some strategies for building a clear conceptual framework while retaining the flexibility to allow the unanticipated to emerge.

■ Building the Conceptual Framework: Topic, Purpose, and Significance

The proposal should present a convincing argument, showing how the proposed research will likely be meaningful and will contribute to improving the human condition. In the outline provided in Table 4.1, the introductory section presents an overview of this argument because it (a) describes the substantive focus of the research—the topic—and its purpose; (b) frames it in larger theoretical, policy, social, or practical domains and thereby develops its significance; (c) poses initial research questions; (d) forecasts the literature to be reviewed; and (e) discusses the limitations of the study. The proposal writer should organize the information so that a reader can clearly ascertain the essence of the research study. This section, along with the review and critique of related literature, forms the **conceptual framework** of the study and informs the reader of the study's substantive focus and purpose. We share the good advice of Schram (2006), who suggests that, on the way to developing the theoretical framework, the researcher should be able to say, "Here's how I am positioning my problem within an established arena of ideas, and here's why it matters" (p. 62). The conceptual framework doesn't come out of the sky, or even from one theorist's book. Rather, it is developed by the researcher himself, and the task, says Schram, is in "uncovering what is relevant and what is problematic among the ideas circulating around your problem, making new connections, and then formulating an argument that positions you to address that problem" (p. 63). The design section (discussed in Chapter 5) then describes how the study will be conducted and showcases the writer's ability to do so.

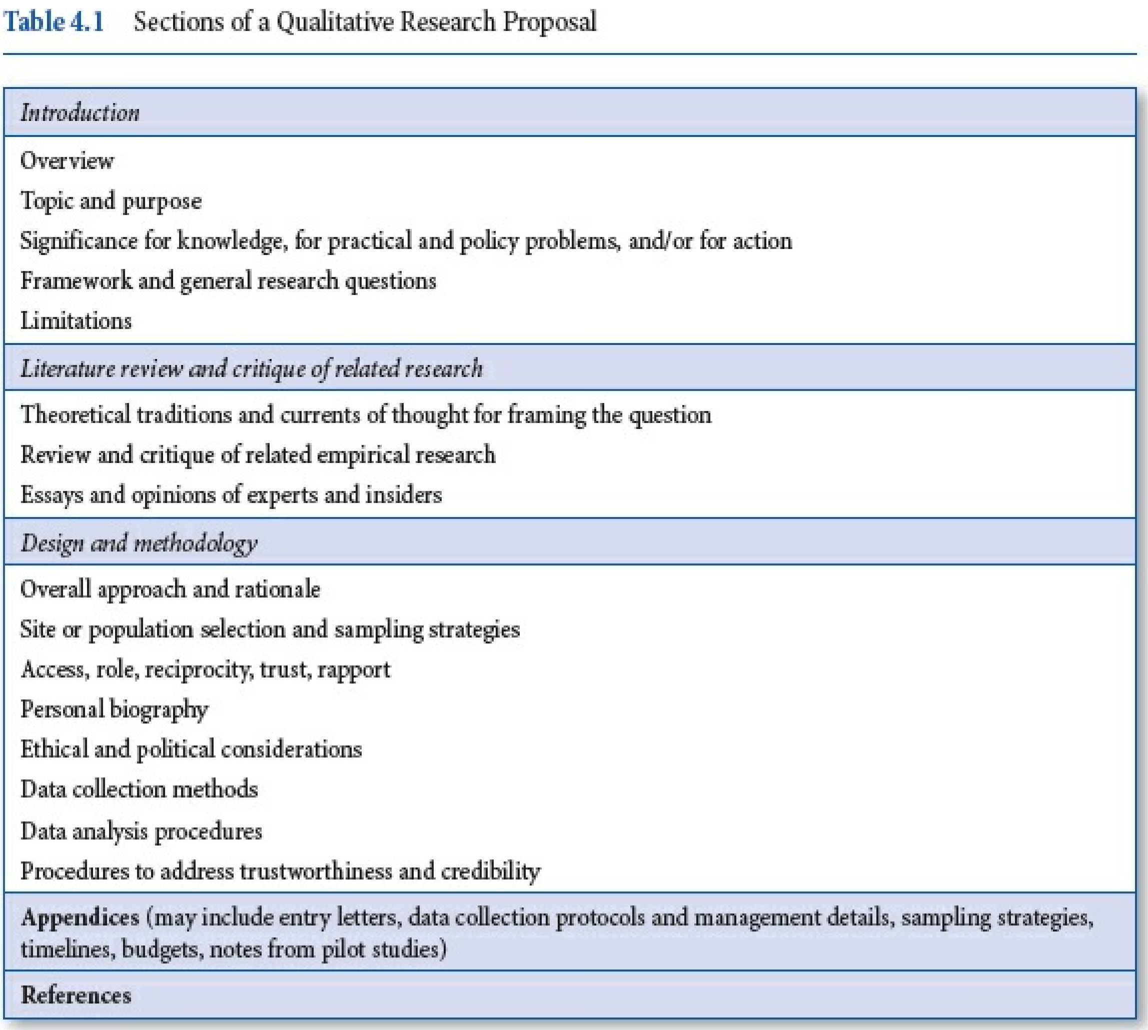


Table 4.1 Sections of a Qualitative Research Proposal

Introduction
Overview Topic and purpose Significance for knowledge, for practical and policy problems, and/or for action Framework and general research questions Limitations
Literature review and critique of related research
Theoretical traditions and currents of thought for framing the question Review and critique of related empirical research Essays and opinions of experts and insiders
Design and methodology
Overall approach and rationale Site or population selection and sampling strategies Access, role, reciprocity, trust, rapport Personal biography Ethical and political considerations Data collection methods Data analysis procedures Procedures to address trustworthiness and credibility
Appendices (may include entry letters, data collection protocols and management details, sampling strategies, timelines, budgets, notes from pilot studies)
References

Although our outline has separate sections, the researcher's narrative of the first two sections—the introduction and the review and critique of the literature—is derived from his thorough familiarity with the literature on relevant theory, empirical studies, reviews of previous research, and informed essays by experts. His careful review of the related literature accomplishes three main purposes. First, it provides evidence that the study has potential **significance for practice and policy** and is likely to contribute to the ongoing discourse about the topic (often referred to as contributing to "knowledge"). Second, it identifies the important intellectual traditions that guide the study—the "currents of thought" that frame it. Third, it identifies gaps in what is known—by critiquing previous research, extending existing theory, or pointing to practices and policies that are not working. These elements constitute the building blocks for a conceptual framework and help refine important and viable research questions. Before writing this section, the researcher probably has an intuitive sense that his questions are important or has pragmatic reasons for zeroing in on these questions. After writing the introduction and the literature review, he will be quite convincing in his argument and assertion that the research has larger meaning.

Because of the interrelatedness of the sections and because writing is developmental and recursive—a “method of inquiry” itself (Richardson, 2000, p. 923)—the writer may find it necessary to rewrite the research questions or problem statement after reviewing the literature or to refocus on the significance of the research after its design is developed. Bargar and Duncan’s (1982) description of “extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives” (p. 2) captures this dialectical process. Our advice is that the writer be sensitive to the need for change and flexibility: Be prepared to rewrite sections numerous times, not rush to closure too soon, and learn to love the word processor’s functions. Sound ideas for research may come in a moment of inspiration, but the hard work is in developing, refining, and polishing the idea—that is, the pursuance of the intellectual traditions that surround the idea—and in the methods used for exploring it.

The Overview Section

The first section of the proposal provides an overview of the study for the reader. It introduces the topic or problem and the purpose of the study, the general research questions it will address, and how it is designed. This section should be written crisply, engage the reader's interest, and foreshadow the sections that follow. First, the topic or problem that the study will address is introduced, linking this to practice, policy, social issues, and/or theory, thereby forecasting the study's significance. Next, the broad areas of theory and research to be discussed in the literature review are outlined. Then, the design of the study is sketched, focusing on the principal techniques for data collection and the unique features of the design. This short overview provides a transition to a more detailed discussion of the topic, the study's significance, and the research questions.

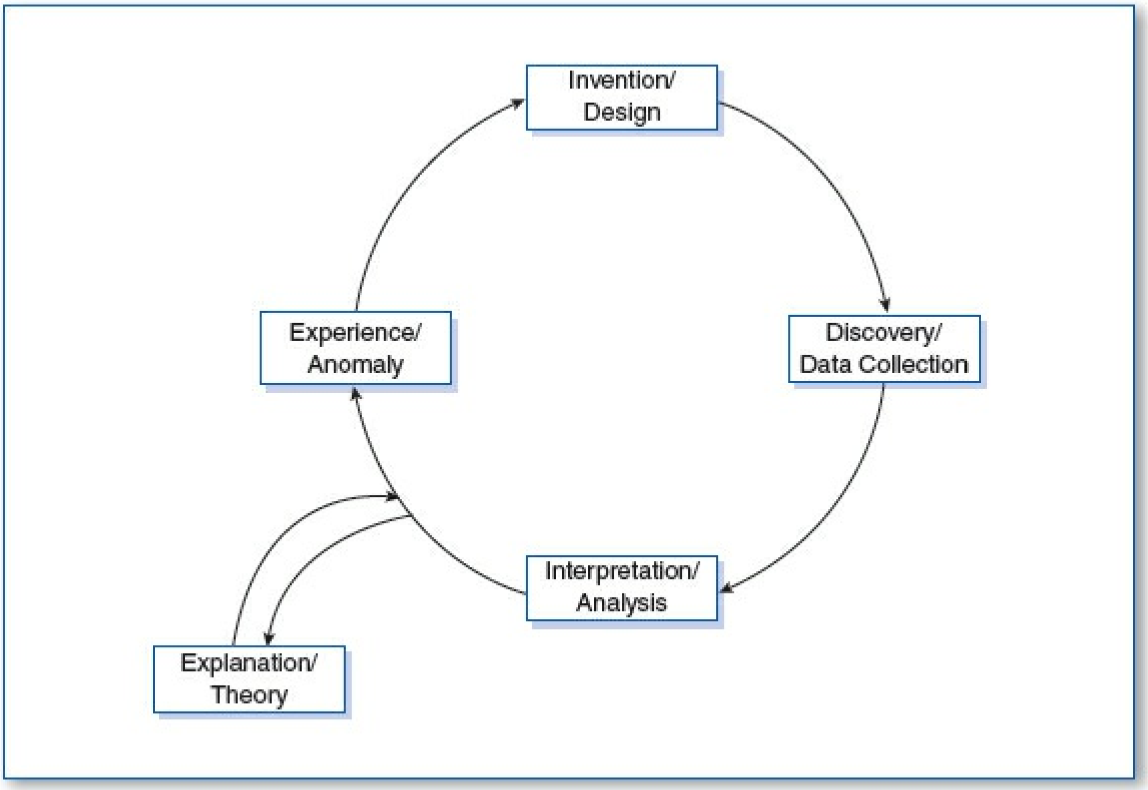
Introducing the Topic

The curiosity that inspires qualitative research often comes initially from observations of the real world, emerging from the interplay of direct experience and theoretical notions and of political commitment and practice, as well as from growing scholarly interests, as noted above. At other times, a topic derives from a review and critique of the empirical research and traditions of theory. Beginning researchers should examine journals specifically committed to publishing extensive reviews of literature (e.g., *Review of Educational Research*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *American Review of Public Administration*, and *Annual Review of Public Health*), peruse policy-oriented publications to learn about current or emerging issues and challenges in their fields, and talk with experts about crucial issues. They might also reflect on the intersection of their personal, professional, and political interests. Those with little experience with literature reviews can greatly benefit from the "road map" format in Bloomberg and Volpe's (2012) *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation.* It breaks down into meaningful and more manageable pieces the steps and stages of undertaking research—the ways of using different theorists, ways to be selective and integrate critiques, and ways to move from the review of literature to a conceptual framework.

Inquiry cycles between theory, practice, research questions, and personal experience. A research project may begin at any point in this complex process. Considering possible research questions, potential sites, and individuals or groups to invite to participate in the research may lead to a focus for the study. Imagining potential sites or groups of people to work with may reshape the focus of the study. Thinking about sites or people for the study also encourages the researcher to think about his positionality and possible strategies for gathering data. He may know of a site where intriguing issues of practice capture his imagination. Developing the research project proceeds dialectically, as possible focuses of the research, questions, sites, and strategies for gathering data are considered.

Crabtree and Miller (1999) offer useful conceptualizations of the *cycle of inquiry.* They argue that a metaphor for the process of much qualitative research is embedded in "Shiva's circle of constructivist inquiry," Shiva being the Hindu god of dance and death (see Figure 4.1). The researcher enters a cycle of interpretation with exquisite sensitivity to context, seeking no ultimate truths. He must be faithful to the "performance or subject, must be both apart from and part of the dance, and must be always rooted to the context" (p. 10). They go on to note that "there is no ultimate truth; there are context-bound constructions that are all part of the larger universe of stories" (p. 10).

Figure 4.1 Shiva’s Circle of Constructivist Inquiry



SOURCE: Crabtree and Miller (1999, p. 11). Reprinted with permission from SAGE Publications.

Crabtree and Miller (1999) also discuss the “critical/ecological” approach to inquiry (pp. 10–11), wherein the researcher seeks out expressions of domination, oppression, and power in daily life. Then his goal is to unmask this “false consciousness” and create “a more empowered and emancipated consciousness that incorporates social justice issues” of experience (p. 10). He may be inspired to embed empowerment goals, such as critical indigenous consciousness, in his research goals, as Lee (2006) did in her study of University of New Mexico’s summer leadership program. Thinking about this site and the issues and people in it fosters analysis of which research questions are likely to be significant for practice. These questions then shape decisions about gathering data. Whatever the qualitative genre or research goal, the cycle of inquiry entails question posing, design, data collection and discovery, analysis, and interpretation. Theory is used throughout, but especially for question posing and for guiding interpretation and explanation.

The **problematic** of an everyday world issue for institutional ethnography is the realization of the project of inquiry, according to Smith (2005), that begins “in the actualities of peoples’ lives with a focus of investigation that comes from how they participate and are hooked up into institutional practices” (p. 107). Especially in applied fields, such as management, nursing, community development, education, and clinical psychology, a strong autobiographical element often drives the study. For example, one student of international development education studied the dilemmas in refugee and immigrant groups in the United States because of her own professional work with similar groups in community development (Jones, 2004). Another student studied Indonesian farmers' views on land use, because of her political commitment to indigenous peoples (Campbell-Nelson, 1997). And yet another student explored the deep experiences of coping among HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children in her native village in Kenya (Ochiel, 2009). A final example is the student of social psychology, deeply committed to the protection of the environment, who studied environmental attitudes from the perspective of adult development theory (Greenwald, 1992).

One's **personal biography** is often a source, an inspiration, and an initial way of framing a research question. In qualitative research genres, the influences of biography are often stated explicitly (although such statements are more often placed later, under "Research Design"—see Chapter 5). The following quote illustrates such a statement:

> I strongly believe that for Black, Latina/o, Asian American, and Native American youth to succeed in this nation, we must have strong Black, Latina/o, Asian American, and Native American teachers. I also know, however, that many of us have been socialized through racially biased educational systems and carry skewed perceptions of ourselves, our communities, and other non-White racial or ethnic groups. (Kohli, 2008, p. 3)

Kohli (2008) continued with descriptions of sources for these beliefs, both personal and research based. By developing and including such personal biography statements, qualitative researchers show potential readers that they are addressing aspects of themselves that have led to their research focus and interest. Later, we will show how this is useful for the sections on research design (in Chapter 5), data analysis (in Chapter 8), and presentation of findings (in Chapter 10).

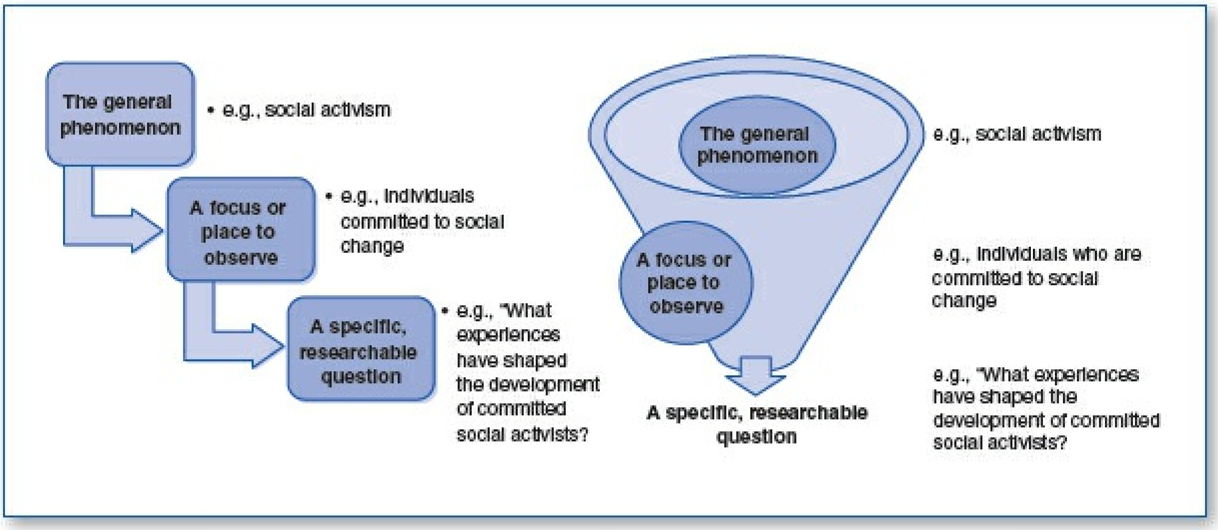
In Vignette 5, we see a researcher, Paul St. John Frisoli, beginning the challenge of taking a practical and policy question about West African youth and then combining it with his search for a focus that will give him personal significance. From his moment of insight, he is energized to search the literature and identify manageable data collection strategies.

For Paul, and for all researchers, the challenge is to demonstrate that this personal interest—increasingly referred to as the researcher's *positionality*—will not preordain the findings or bias the study. Sensitivity to the methodological literature on the self and on one's social identities in conducting inquiry, interpreting data, and constructing the final narrative helps accomplish this. Knowledge of the epistemological debate about what constitutes knowledge and knowledge claims, especially the critique of power and dominance in traditional research, is also valuable (see Chapter 2 on critical ethnography, feminist research, participatory action research, and postmodern perspectives).

When direct experience stimulates initial curiosity, the researcher needs to link that curiosity to general research questions. The mouth of the **conceptual funnel**, if you will, contains the general, or "grand tour," questions the study will explore; the specific focus for the proposed study is funneled from these questions.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the conceptual funnel as a metaphor (as illustrated in Benbow's 1994 study about the development of commitment to social action). The mouth of the funnel represents the general conceptual focus—for example, the general issue of social activism and its role in ameliorating oppressive circumstances. He then narrows the focus. Social activism becomes more researchable when the focus is on individuals who have demonstrated intense commitment to social causes or, possibly, on social movements such as group phenomena. A research question (or set of questions) can then funnel down to a more manageable and narrow focus on how life experiences help shape commitment to social activism. Researchers with very general and vague questions can benefit from putting their thoughts through the exercise represented by the funnel.

Figure 4.2 The Conceptual Funnel


The general phenomenon
• e.g., social activism
A focus or place to observe
• e.g., individuals committed to social change
A specific, researchable question
• e.g., "What experiences have shaped the development of committed social activists?
The general phenomenon
e.g., social activism
A focus or place to observe
e.g., individuals who are committed to social change
A specific, researchable question
e.g., "What experiences have shaped the development of committed social activists?

Formal theories have traditionally been used to develop research questions and are useful as funnels or lenses for viewing the topic of interest. However, there is another meaning to "theories," that is, the **personal theories**—theories in use or tacit theories (Argyris & Schön, 1974)—that people develop about events as ways to reduce ambiguity and explain paradox. If research inspiration derives from personal or tacit theory, however, the researcher should move beyond these and be guided by systematic considerations, such as existing theory and empirical research. Tacit theory (one's personal understanding) together with formal theory (from the literature) helps bring a question, a curious phenomenon, a silenced or marginalized population, or a problematic issue into focus, and raises it to a more generalized perspective. The potential research moves from a troubling or intriguing real-world observation (e.g., a teacher reflecting, "These kids won't volunteer in class no matter how much it's rewarded") to personal theory (e.g., the teacher saying, "I think they care more about what other kids think than they do about their grades") to formal theory (e.g., the teacher considering doing research and using developmental theories of motivation to frame his thinking) to concepts and models from the literature (e.g., the teacher-researcher identifying previous research on students' behavior in the classroom mediated by the informal expectations of the student subculture). These coalesce to frame research, providing a focus for this hypothetical teacher-researcher's study in the form of a research question such as, "What are the expectations of the student subculture concerning class participation?" Schram (2006) says that theory is a way of asking, pulling from

> a constellation of ideas and issues brought into focus by your inquiry . . . [and] provides something of a legitimizing and a narrowing influence upon the wide-ranging trajectories of hunches, tentative musings, and other forms of entry-level theorizing in which you have engaged. (p. 61)

To recapitulate, this complex process of conceptualizing, framing, and **focusing** a study typically begins with a personally defined question or identified problem. Personal observations are then transformed into systematic inquiry by reviewing the work of other scholars and practitioners on the topic, thereby building a theoretical rationale and conceptual framework to guide the study. Research questions can then be refined, and the design of the study can be more tightly focused; decisions about where to go, what to look for, and how to move to real-world observations become more specific. As the researcher moves back and forth through these various stages, the guidelines given in Figure 4.3 can help him visualize the process of moving from personal observations to conceptual framework to a specific focus and, finally, to useful and/or creative questions connected to the literature and real-life observations. They then help him visualize the research design: Where can I do this study? With whom? How can I actually gather data? How shall I plan for data analysis and reporting?

Framing the Research Process

However, the process is not nearly as linear as Figure 4.3 portrays. When, for example, the researcher is planning for the last "bubble" in the figure (categories, themes, patterns for findings), he will be asking himself what themes might be there and how the literature can help.

And when he is at the very last stage (reports and publications), he will harken back to the very first stage, recalling his original causal observations and concerns or desires for change as he decides on the reporting formats and calculates what audiences to address and to whom he will be reporting.

Figure 4.3 and these questions are intended to be suggestive of others to pose when going through this difficult process of conceptualizing and designing. However, this process applies generically whether the research is set in an urban neighborhood; with a legislative body; in a rural village in West Timor, Indonesia; or with newly arrived immigrant groups. Also, the process applies generically whether the research question is about health, human sentiments, leadership, economies, community building, rituals, or any other topic.

This early work of conceptualizing is the most difficult and intellectually rigorous in the entire process of proposal writing. It is messy and dialectical, as alternative frames (scholarly traditions) are examined for their power to illuminate and sharpen the research focus. As noted earlier, exploring possible designs and strategies for gathering data also enters into this initial process. The researcher must let go of some topics and captivating questions as he fine-tunes and focuses the study to ensure its do-ability. Although this entails loss, it bounds the study and protects him from impractical ventures. As Paul realized in Vignette 5, simply jumping into interviewing and observation in West Africa would put people in jeopardy and plainly would not work.

Intuition in this phase of the research process cannot be underestimated. Studies of eminent scientists reveal the central role of creative insight—intuition—in their thought processes (Briggs, 2000; Hoffman, 1972; Libby, 1922; Mooney, 1951). By allowing ideas to incubate and maintaining a healthy respect for the mind's capacity to reorganize and reconstruct, the researcher finds that richer research questions evolve. This observation is not intended to devalue the analytic process but, instead, to give the creative act its proper due. Bargar and Duncan (1982) note that research is a process

> that religiously uses logical analysis as a critical tool in the *refinement* of ideas, but which often begins at a very different place, where imagery, metaphor and analogy, intuitive hunches, kinesthetic feeling states, and even dreams and dream-like states are prepotent. (p. 3)

Initial insights and recycled concepts begin the process of bounding and framing the research by defining the larger theoretical, policy, or social problem or issue of practice that the study will address. This complex thinking also begins to establish the study's parameters (what it is and what it is not) and to develop the conceptual framework that will ground it in ongoing research traditions.

Vignette 5 Intertwining My Research, My Self, and Real-World Significance

By Paul St. John Frisoli

I’ve been living and working throughout West Africa for the past 7 years. It’s been a fantastic experience, but at times I feel like I’m leading two separate lives. At home, I’m a gay man ready to jump into a same-sex marriage while also trying to zero in on a dissertation research topic. In West Africa, I’m the practitioner who does not disclose his sexuality or divulge information about his life back home. Compounding this sense of contradictory identities is the realization that my dissertation research topic isn’t clicking. I’ve been interested in issues affecting youth in West Africa but have been unsure how to proceed.

My “eureka” moment was the recognition of how to fuse my research topic with my own homo/hetero identities! This came at a time when issues of sexuality seemed to be popping up more frequently all over the world: Iceland designated the first ever openly homosexual prime minister. California rescinded same-sex marriage benefits. A major American motion picture depicting the life of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay American politician in the 1970s, was screened in major theaters throughout the country.

Homosexuality in African countries has also been in the news: Senegalese men staged a same-sex marriage to promote awareness that homosexual people do exist in West Africa. The Gambian president reported the need to cut off the head of any gay person in his country. Once again in Senegal, eight HIV/AIDS awareness public health workers who provided help and assistance to men who have sex with men were arrested and imprisoned for 8 years for violation of sodomy laws and enacting criminal activities. In summary, young men of differing sexualities are being persecuted in West Africa, while gay people are being chosen as heads of state. I realized that, in this divided world in which we live, my multiple identities may not be so odd after all. I want to know about other people who may be experiencing similar disjointed sexual lifestyles. More specifically, I want to ask the following question of West African men: What is it like to live a life that does not fit into a clean heteronormative lifestyle? This is my “want-to-do-ability”—a study to understand the lived experiences of young West African men who do not entirely conform to hegemonic concepts of gender and sexuality. My partner, Brad, told me that this project is also about me trying to discover something about myself, which is an assertion that I also believe to be true and valid for the want-to-do-ability of such a project.

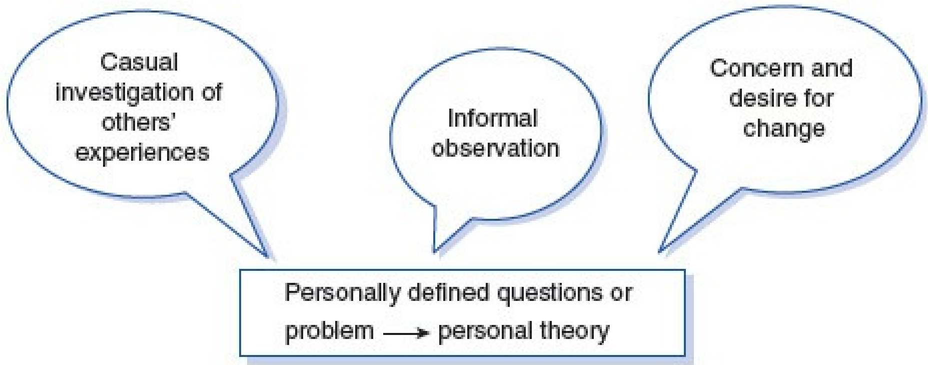
Why is this important to anyone but me? How would I go about conducting such a study? Doing research in the contexts where people are being imprisoned and threatened did not seem like a safe pursuit for my participants or me. An Internet search with key words such as *gay* and *Africa* yielded a number of young African men’s blogs. Many of the blogs talked about identity issues in relation to their family, social, and professional lives. I immediately recognized the power of using the Internet to express oneself in a way that is safe, anonymous, and informative. These young men seem to have become Internet activists, using the Internet as a space for sharing their experiences, stories, and thoughts about their sexual identities. Not all of them claim to be "gay," but they talk about their own discovery processes. These public blogs have also allowed not-so-gay-friendly Africans to respond, introducing voices that concur with hegemonic political and social discourses found throughout scholarly texts and the media.

Now this is territory uncharted in previous research! I imagine that the value of this study will be to describe and analyze the presence of counterhegemonic sexualities, to give voice to a population of people whose emotional, educational, and health needs may be different from those of other men. I'm now thinking that this study should be done, is potentially doable, and that I certainly want to do it.

The Purpose of the Study

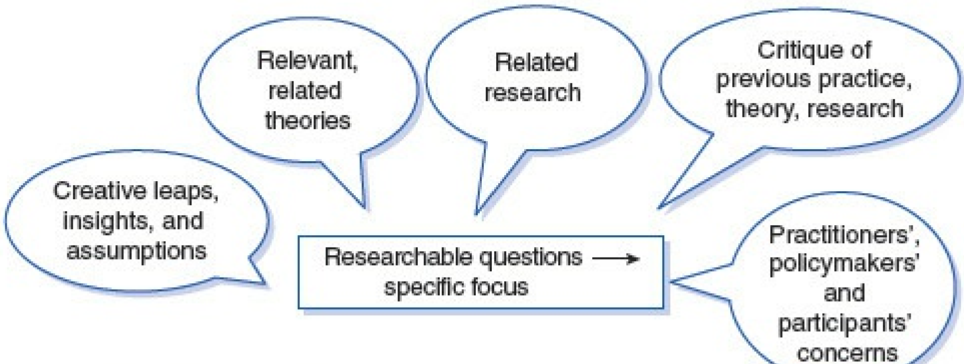
The researcher should also describe his intent in conducting the research—that is, its purpose. Generally embedded in a discussion of the topic (often only a sentence or two but important nonetheless), a statement of the purpose of the study tells the reader what the research is likely to accomplish. Historically, qualitative methodologists have described three major purposes for research: to *explore*, *explain*, or *describe* a phenomenon. Synonyms for these terms could include *understand*, *develop*, and *discover*. Many qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory: They build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature. Others are explicitly explanatory: They show relationships between events (frequently as perceived by the participants in the study) and the meaning of those relationships. These traditional discussions of purpose, however, are silent about critique, action, advocacy, empowerment, and emancipation—the purposes often found in studies grounded in critical, feminist, or postmodern assumptions. The researcher can assert *taking action* as part of the intention of the proposed study, as in action research. He can assert *empowerment* (the goal of participatory action research) as a goal, but he can only, at best, discuss how the inquiry *may* create opportunities for empowerment (see Table 4.2).

Figure 4.3 Framing the Research Process


Casual investigation of others' experiences
Informal observation
Concern and desire for change
Personally defined questions or problem ⟶ personal theory

Personal Theories, Hunches, Curiosities

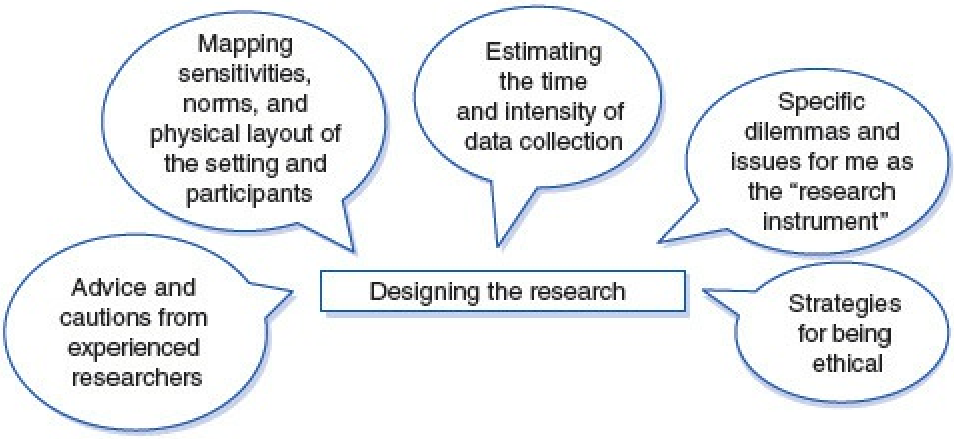
How do I move from casual observations to systematic inquiry? What previous research, existing theoretical frameworks, expressions of concern, and calls for change should focus my research?


Relevant, related theories
Related research
Critique of previous practice, theory, research
Creative leaps, insights, and assumptions
Researchable questions ⟶ specific focus
Practitioners', policymakers' and participants' concerns

Literatures Frame Questions and Design

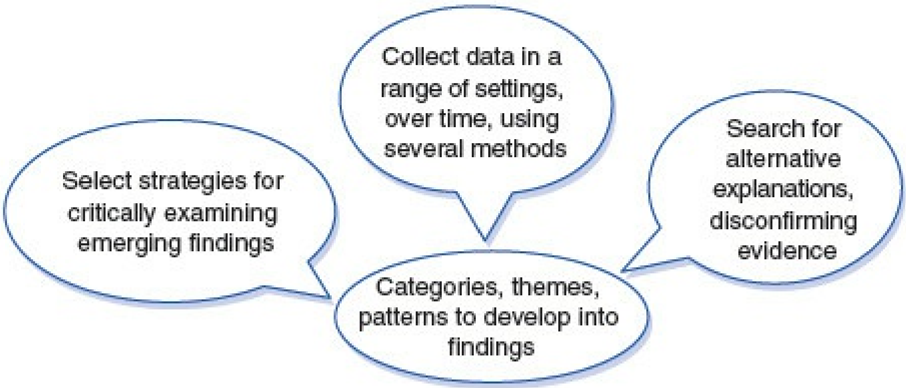
Guiding Questions and Focus

Now that the literature review has revealed an array of settings, populations, and methodological traditions used in previous research on similar questions, what is my focus? What will be the most creative and useful questions? What do I assume or imagine that I will learn? What settings and populations can I observe and gather data from to explore these questions? What will I look at? How do I connect the concepts in the literature to actions and interactions in the setting? How might I gain access? Record data? Decide whether to move to other settings or different methods?


Mapping sensitivities, norms, and physical layout of the setting and participants
Estimating the time and intensity of data collection
Specific dilemmas and issues for me as the "research instrument"
Advice and cautions from experienced researchers
Designing the research
Strategies for being ethical

Research Design, Data Collection, and Management

As I gather data, what strategies will I use to organize the data? How will I begin to identify patterns and work systematically to ensure that I am finding useful and significant themes? How can I ensure that the processes and report will be credible and trustworthy?


Collect data in a range of settings, over time, using several methods
Select strategies for critically examining emerging findings
Search for alternative explanations, disconfirming evidence
Categories, themes, patterns to develop into findings

Reporting Findings Through Various Modalities

What modes of sharing the findings are ethical, appropriate to a specific audience, useful for my career, useful for participants and others? How might I use different modalities: video? photos? social media? exhibits? How do I convince audiences of the trustworthiness of the study? of its usefulness?

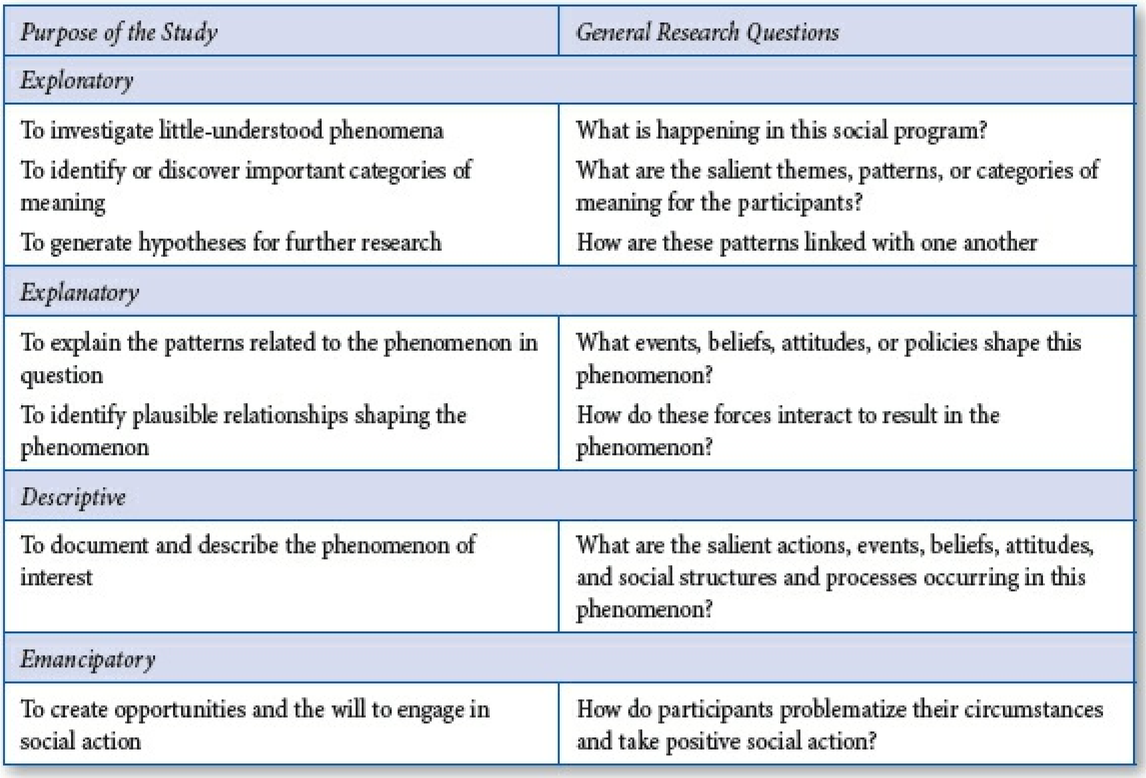
Reports? Videos? Multi-media productions? Drama? Poetry?

The discussion of the topic and purpose also articulates the *unit of analysis*—the level of inquiry on which the study will focus. Qualitative studies typically focus on individuals, dyads, groups, processes, or organizations. Discussing the level of inquiry helps focus subsequent decisions about data gathering.

The Significance and Potential Contributions of the Study

Convincing the reader that the study is likely to be significant and should be conducted entails building an argument that links the research to important theoretical perspectives, policy issues, concerns of practice, or social issues that affect people's everyday lives. Think of it as an opportunity to discuss ways the study is likely to contribute to policy, practice, or theory, or to measures for taking social action. Who might be interested in the results? With what groups might the results be shared? Scholars? Policymakers? Practitioners? Members of similar groups? Individuals or groups usually silenced or marginalized? The challenge here is to situate the study as addressing an important problem; defining the problem shapes the study's significance.

Table 4.2 Matching Research Questions and Purpose



Purpose of the Study	*General Research Questions*
Exploratory	
To investigate little-understood phenomena To identify or discover important categories of meaning To generate hypotheses for further research	What is happening in this social program? What are the salient themes, patterns, or categories of meaning for the participants? How are these patterns linked with one another
Explanatory	
To explain the patterns related to the phenomenon in question To identify plausible relationships shaping the phenomenon	What events, beliefs, attitudes, or policies shape this phenomenon? How do these forces interact to result in the phenomenon?
Descriptive	
To document and describe the phenomenon of interest	What are the salient actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures and processes occurring in this phenomenon?
Emancipatory	
To create opportunities and the will to engage in social action	How do participants problematize their circumstances and take positive social action?

A clinical psychologist might identify a theoretical gap in the literature on isolation and define the topic for an ethnography of long-distance truck drivers. Such a study may be relatively unconcerned with policy or practice; its contributions to theory, however, are preordained. A feminist sociologist could frame a study of discriminatory thinking among business executives for policy and practice by addressing the problem of persistent sexism in the workplace. A study of the impact of welfare reform on the lives of adult learners in basic-education courses could focus either on policy issues or on how this recurring social problem plays out in the lives of the learners. In that event, theory is less significant. The researcher develops the significance of the study by defining the problem. Some researchers are inspired to add a dimension of action to the study's significance for policy and practice. When overly narrow views of policy and practice miss a range of meanings and needs, qualitative researchers want to provide a holistic presentation and use their research as a tool for action (Bustelo & Verloo, 2009; Lee, 2006; Wronka, 2008).

Funding opportunities often focus on a question. A welfare-to-work grants program calling for a multisite evaluation of programs for the so-called hard to employ might provide funding and an already interested audience. It also has direct significance for policy. These are rare opportunities for the researcher. Be wary of research opportunities focused on policy for their potential to seduce the researcher into agendas serving primarily the powerful elite (Ball, 2012; Marshall, 1997a; Scheurich, 1997). Recall the discussion of explicitly ideological research in Chapter 1. For further discussion of these issues, see Smith (1988).

A study may well be able to contribute understanding and opportunities for action in all four domains, but it is unlikely to contribute equally to all four; the statement of the topic should thus emphasize one of them. For example, a study on the integration of children with disabilities into regular classrooms could be significant for both policy and practice. Framing this as a policy study requires that the topic be situated in national and state policy debates on special education. Framing it as most significant for practice would require it to focus on structures supporting inclusive classrooms. Both frames are legitimate and defensible; the researcher's challenge is to argue for the study's potential contributions to the domains in which he is most interested. This, in turn, has implications for the literature review and design of the study.

Significance for Knowledge

The discussion of the study's **significance for knowledge** is often an intellectual odyssey, which the researcher can pursue more fully in the review of related literature. At this point in the proposal, he should outline the project's potential contribution to knowledge by describing how it fits into theoretical traditions in the social sciences or applied fields in ways that will be new, insightful, or creative. The significance statement should show how the study will contribute to research traditions or foundational literatures in new ways.

Often, the proposal identifies gaps in the literature to which the study will contribute. If the research is in an area for which theory is well developed, the study may be a significant test or expansion of the theory. The researcher may use concepts developed by previous researchers and formulate questions similar to those used in previous research. Data collection, however, may be in a different setting, with a different group, and certainly at a different time. Thus, the results of the research will constitute an extension of theory that will expand the generalizations or more finely tune the theoretical propositions. The contribution of such research is the expansion of previous theory. When researchers conceptualize the focus of the study and generate the research questions, they may draw on a body of theory and **related research** that is different from previous research. Significance of this sort, however, generally derives from an extensive and creative review of related literature. Having developed that section of the proposal, the writer then incorporates references to and summaries of it in the significance section. This type of significance is treated fully in the next section, on the review of related literature. Generally, by answering the question, "How is this research important?" the researcher can demonstrate the creative aspects of his work.

The development of theory takes place by incremental advances and small contributions to knowledge through well-conceptualized and well-conducted research. Most researchers use theory to guide their own work, to locate their studies in larger scholarly traditions, or to map the topography of the specific concepts they will explore in detail. In addition, some very creative research can emerge when a researcher breaks theoretical boundaries and reconceptualizes a problem or relocates the problem area. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1980) reconceptualized children's learning processes by applying the concept of *ecology* to child development theory. Weick's (1976) metaphor of schools as loosely coupled systems profoundly altered theoretical conceptualizations of educational organizations. Often, researchers follow a theoretical pragmatism, being "shamelessly eclectic" in the creative application of concepts from one discipline to another (Rossman & Wilson, 1994).

Significance for Practical and Policy Problems

The significance of a study for policy can be developed by discussing formal policy development in that area and presenting data that show how often the problem occurs and how costly it can be. For example, to demonstrate the significance of a study of the careers of women faculty, the researcher could present statistics documenting persistently lower salaries for women than for men at comparable ranks; this is the problem the study will address. The study's potential contributions to university compensation policies could then be spelled out. Based on that, contributions to the university degree program policy could then be articulated. In another example, the researcher could describe recent changes in welfare law and discuss how this reform was developed with little regard for those most affected, which is the problem the study will address. Potential contributions of the study to further reform of welfare law could then be described. In developing the topic and how the study might contribute to policy in that area, he would demonstrate that the general topic is one of significant proportions that should be studied systematically.

A study's importance can also be argued through summaries of the writings of policymakers and informed experts who identify the topic as important and call for research pursuing the general questions. Statistical presentations of the incidence and persistence of the problem, as well as calls for research by experts, demonstrate that the study addresses an important topic, one of concern to policymakers in that area. In applied fields such as education, health policy, management, regional planning, and clinical psychology, for example, demonstrating a study's significance to policy—whether international, national, state, regional, or institutional—may be especially important.

Situating a study as significant for practice follows the same logic as developing significance for policy. The argument here should rely on a discussion of the concerns or problems articulated in the literature. This will involve citing experts, referencing prior research, and summarizing incidence data. Recall the preceding discussion of a study about the inclusion of children with disabilities. The researcher who wants this study to focus on issues of practice would discuss the literature detailing teachers' concerns about meeting the needs of children with disabilities in their classrooms. The study's potential contribution, then, would be improvement in teachers' classroom practice. Shadduck-Hernandez's (1997) proposal for her dissertation research about immigrant and refugee college students' sense of ethnic identity summarized the incidence data on enrollment and the paucity of culturally relevant experiences for these students in the college curriculum. This set up her assertions of the study's potential contributions to pedagogical practice in university classrooms.

Significance for Action

Finally, a study may be significant for its detailed description of life circumstances that express particular social issues. Such a study may not influence policy, contribute to scholarly literature, or improve practice; it may instead illuminate the lived experiences of interest by providing rich description and thus foster taking action. Action research and participatory action research genres stipulate taking action as central to their work. In these cases, researchers should argue that the proposed inquiry and its attendant action will likely be valuable to those who participate, as well as to others committed to the issue. The challenge here is to identify how and in what ways it will be valuable.

Maguire's (2000) study with battered women was a participatory action research project. Her study's primary contributions were not intended for scholarly traditions, policy, or practice per se; rather, they were meant for the women involved in the work and for others committed to alleviating the abuse of women. The work was important because it focused on a major social issue. In contrast, Browne's (1987) study of battered women who kill their assailants made a different kind of significant contribution: It provided a critique of the legal system, which does little to protect women under threat, and then led to increased activism for women in these circumstances. Lather and Smithies's (1997) study collaborating with HIV-positive women invited the reader to enter into these women's lives so as to create new connections and open possibilities for action.

Through a discussion of relevant scholarship and the concerns of practice, the significance section articulates the topic to be studied and argues that further investigation of this problem has the potential to contribute to scholarship, policy, practice, or a better understanding of recurring social issues. This section defines who is likely to have an interest in the topic and therefore how and in what ways the study may contribute.

Of course, researchers preparing proposals for funding should adjust their statements about significance to the needs and priorities of the funding agencies. The foundation that takes pride in funding action projects or interventions will want to see statements about how the proposed research will directly help people or change a problematic situation. On the other hand, when seeking funds from an agency whose goals include expanding knowledge and theory (e.g., the National Science Foundation), to demonstrate the significance of the research, the researcher should emphasize the undeveloped or unsolved theoretical puzzles to be addressed.

The Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

Qualitative approaches to inquiry are uniquely suited to uncovering the unexpected and exploring new avenues. This demands flexibility in the proposal so that data gathering can respond to increasingly refined research questions. Herein lies a dilemma, however. The proposal should be sufficiently clear, both in research questions and design, so that the reader can evaluate its do-ability; on the other hand, the proposal should reserve the flexibility that is the hallmark of qualitative methods. This suggests that the research questions should be general enough to permit exploration but focused enough to delimit the study—not an easy task.

Focusing the study and posing general research questions are best addressed in a developmental manner, relying on discussions of related literature to help frame and refine the specific topic. Often, the primary research goal is to discover those very questions that are most probing and insightful. Most likely, the relevant concepts will be developed during the research process, but the research proposal must suggest themes based on one's knowledge of the literature.

Initial questions should be linked to the problem and its significance and should forecast the literature to be reviewed. Questions may be theoretical ones, which can be studied in a number of different sites or with different samples. They may focus on a population or class of individuals; these, too, can be studied in various places. Finally, the questions may be site specific because of the uniqueness of a certain program or organization. The study of refugee and immigrant college experiences (Shadduck-Hernandez, 1997, 2005) could have been conducted in any setting that had newcomer students; the theoretical interest driving the research was not linked to a particular organization. A study of an exemplary sex education program, however, can be conducted only at that site because the problem identified is one of practice. Thus, the questions posed are shaped by the identified problem and, in turn, constrain the design of the study.

Examples of *theoretical questions* include the following:

- How does play affect reading readiness? Through what cognitive and affective process? Do children who take certain roles—for example, leadership roles—learn faster? If so, what makes the difference?
- How does the sponsor–protégé socialization process function in professional careers? Does it work differently for women? For minorities? What processes are operating?
- What are the assumptions of medical staff and laypeople about how "positive thinking" affects coping with cancer?

Questions focused on *particular populations* could include the following:

- How do neurosurgeons cope with the reality that they hold people's lives in their hands? That many of their patients die?
- What happens to women who enter elite MBA programs? What are their career paths?
- What is the life of the long-distance truck driver like?
- How do school superintendents manage relations with school board members? What influence processes do they use?
- What happens to change-agent teachers during their careers? Do organizational socialization processes change or eliminate them? Do they burn out early in their careers?
- What are the life and career experiences of women PhDs who come from very poor families of origin?

Finally, *site-specific* and *policy-focused* research questions might take the following form:

- Why is the sex education program working well in this school but not in the others? What is special about the people, the plan, the support, and the context?
- How do the school–parent community relations of an elite private school differ from those in the neighboring public school? How are the differences connected with differences in educational philosophies and outcomes?
- What are the ways lobbying groups influence pollution control policy in the Massachusetts legislature?
- Why is there a discrepancy in perceptions of the efficacy of affirmative action policy between university officials and groups of students of color at the University of North Carolina? What explains the discrepancy?

These are typical examples of initial questions developed in the proposal. They serve as boundaries around the study without unduly constraining it. The questions focus on interactions and processes in sociocultural systems and in organizations and thus link to important research literature and theory, but they are also grounded in everyday realities. The goal of this section of the proposal is to explicate the questions, thereby further focusing the study, and to forecast the literature to be discussed in the next section. Vignette 6 shows early development of an introductory statement for a pilot-study proposal.

Fan Yihong (2000) has introduced the topic—the persistent problem of confining versus liberating educational environments—posed the preliminary general research questions, and forecast the study’s potential significance. While this approach is not at all typical, it represents congruence with her theoretical framework and personal epistemology and cosmology. Following are two examples of other introductory paragraphs. Each states the topic, discusses the purpose, stipulates the unit of analysis, and forecasts the study’s significance:

> Children with physical handicaps have unique perceptions about their “bodiedness.” Grounded in phenomenological inquiry, this study will explore and describe the deep inner meaning of bodiedness for five children. The study will result in rich description through stories of these children’s relationships with sports. The central concept of bodiedness will be explicated through the children’s words. Those working with children with physical handicaps, as well as policymakers framing programs that affect them, will find the study of interest. (Adapted from Rossman & Rallis, 2003)

> The Neighborhood Arts Center in Orange, Massachusetts, is an award-winning program that serves all members of its community. The purpose of this study is to explain the success of this program in bringing arts to members of this low-income community. The study will use an ethnographic design, seeking detailed explanations of the program’s success. The study will help decision makers and funders design similar programs that involve groups historically underrepresented in the arts. (Adapted from Rossman & Rallis, 2003)

Vignette 6 An Initial Statement

A doctoral student from China, Fan Yihong (2000), became deeply concerned about the fundamental purposes of education, especially as enacted in universities. Her experiences in universities in China and the United States led her to see that much of the organizational practice—procedures, norms, disciplinary boundaries—on both continents was deadening human spirit and creativity. She immersed herself in organizational theory, science and technology, and the development of the "new sciences" and complex systems theory in relation to Eastern philosophy. During this journey, she came on the emerging theories of the holographic universe and the holotropic mind (Capra, 1975, 1982, 1996; Senge, 1990; Wilber, 1996) that stress the wholeness of people, events, nature, and the world, and the innate capacity of the mind to comprehend reality in a holistic manner. Based on these interests, she posed four overarching research questions that would allow her to integrate the various complex intellectual traditions that framed her study:

1. What serves as triggers and preconditions for individuals to change their worldviews?
2. What processes have they undertaken to enable them to transform their changed ways of knowing to their changed ways of doing and then to their changed ways of being, finally becoming transformed human beings?
3. What characterizes these change processes?
4. How does individual awakening, recognizing the need for change, help bring about collective and organizational transformational change?

The potential significance of the study was described in terms of its contributions to understanding how personal and organizational transformation is possible, through rich descriptions of people and organizations that were radically different from traditional ones. Thus, the study would potentially contribute theory and practice, building a thoughtful and detailed analysis of the processes of transformation.

Delineating the Limitations of the Study

All proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed. As Patton (2002) notes, “There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs” (p. 223). A discussion of the study’s limitations demonstrates that the researcher understands this reality—that he will make no overweening claims about generalizability or conclusiveness about what he has learned.

Limitations derive from the conceptual framework and the study’s design. A discussion of these limitations early on in the proposal reminds the reader of what the study is and is not—its boundaries—and how its results can and cannot contribute to understanding. Framing the study in specific research and scholarly traditions places limits on the research. A study of land use in Indonesia, for example, could be situated in development economics; reminding the reader that the study is framed this way helps allay criticism. The overall design, however, indicates how broadly applicable the study may be. Although no qualitative studies are generalizable in the probabilistic sense, their findings may be transferable. A discussion of these considerations reminds the reader that the study is bounded and situated in a specific context. The reader, then, can make decisions about its usefulness for other settings.

Equally important, though, is that statements about limitations, while acknowledging limits to generalizability, should reemphasize the qualitative study’s very different purposes and strengths. As we discussed in earlier chapters, one chooses a qualitative approach to understand phenomena from the participants’ perspectives and to explore and discover, in depth and in context, what may have been missed when studies were done with predetermined assumptions. So qualitative researchers must assert that traditional “gold standards” such as generalizability, replicability, control groups, and the like are not the right criteria to aim for. We will return to this point in Chapter 9. Still, in conceptualizing and framing the design, sites, sampling, and management of data, we do aim to maximize the value of our research by anticipating questions and challenges. When, for example, we want to explore and discover the range of responses of men diagnosed with prostate cancer, we will face questions such as the following: What is lost by limiting the study to easily accessible and articulate middle-class males? Or to males in Austin, Texas? Or to patients but not spouses and doctors? For another example, when our purpose is to uncover the crucial elements in “successful” programs for pregnant and parenting teens, we will face the following questions: Must my sample include programs with comparable budgets to maximize comparability? But if I study many programs, how can I get the in-depth participant observation and interviewing I need, with my limited budget? Have I focused too narrowly by accepting others' definitions of "successful"? These are difficult questions, which will be revisited in Chapter 6 and later chapters. Early on, we may have only best guesses and hopes about what can be done. Later, these guesses and hopes will be refined in the research design, then again in planning the time and budget for the study, and probably again in the field.

Write the introduction in draft or even outline. As you proceed through the literature review, many of the details of the introduction will become evident. You will redo it, ultimately, when all other parts of the proposal are complete; then and only then can you actually write an introduction. Keep it short and engaging. In the end, it should be the "warm-up" to situate the reader for the full proposal. The time-constrained (or lazy) reader should be able to learn, generally, what is being proposed just by reading the introduction.

■ Literature Review and Critique of Related Research

A thoughtful and insightful discussion of related literature builds a logical framework for the research and locates it within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies. The literature review serves four broad functions. First, it demonstrates the underlying assumptions behind the general research questions. If possible, it should display the research paradigm that undergirds the study and describe the assumptions and values the researcher brings to the research enterprise. Second, it demonstrates that he is knowledgeable about related research and the scholarly traditions that surround and support the study. Third, it shows that he has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need. Finally, the review refines and redefines the research questions by embedding them in larger traditions of inquiry. We describe the literature review as a *conversation* between the researcher and the related literature.

Theoretical Traditions for Framing the Questions

As the researcher conceptualizes the research problem, he locates it in a tradition of theory and related research. Initially, this may be an intuitive locating, chosen because of the underlying assumptions, such as how the researcher sees the world and how he sees the research questions fitting in. As he explores the literature, however, he should identify and state those assumptions in a framework of theory. This could be child development theory, organizational theory, adult socialization theory, critical race theory, or whatever theory is appropriate. This section of the literature review provides the framework for the research and identifies the area of knowledge the study is intended to expand.

Related Research, Reviewed and Critiqued

The next portion of the review of literature should, quite literally, review and critique previous research and scholarly writing that relates to the general research question. This critical review should lead to a more precise problem statement or refined questions, because it demonstrates a specific area that has not yet been adequately explored or shows that a different design would be more appropriate. If a major aspect of the significance of the study arises from a reconceptualization of the topic, it should be developed fully here. Cooper (1988) provides a discussion of the focus, goal, perspective, coverage, organization, and audience for a literature review.

Essays and Opinions of Experts

In this section of the literature review, the researcher presents the practitioner's, or even the journalist's and policymaker's, words. It is an opportunity to show that, in addition to academic scholars and authors of journal articles, people outside the academy have spoken about the need to find answers, to explore reasons why, and to find new ways to look at a problem. Government reports, lobbyists' assertions, newspaper articles, and even person-on-the-street accounts can be included. The reader understands that the sources for this section may be less credible to scholarly readers than are peer-reviewed sources; however, these sources often have the credibility that comes from direct personal experience and an insider's knowledge about a situation. Thus, quotes from state legislators and from the machinist union trade paper's editorials on the health problems of unemployed machinists can be cited to enhance or deepen insights regarding unemployment that were reviewed earlier from the scholarly research viewpoint.

Summarizing the Literature Review in a Conceptual Framework

Researchers develop an argument, throughout the literature review, by identifying the literatures that are useful and demonstrating how some are dated, limited, or leave questions unanswered. The argument buttresses the conceptual framework to be used and the questions to be asked. Figure 4.4 was derived from a literature review of organization theory, leadership theory, literature on the realities of school administrators' careers, and also government and professional associations' laments over administrator burnout and shortage (Marshall, 2008). The framework was created to buttress the proposal's argument—in this case, that research is needed to discover what organizational experiences support and entice healthy, engaged, and creative school administrators.

Model for Envisioning a Multiresearcher, Multifocal Study

The framework was used to graphically display the argument that had been developed in the literature review. It also was used to identify ways that seven related questions could be individual studies constructed to coordinate with one another, point to possible sites and foci, and clarify their significance for policymakers wringing their hands over administrator shortages and burnout. Finally, it showed the potential of the large project to take policymakers' worries and expand them, to address how the relevant policy issues should include the health, creativity, and engagement of administrators.

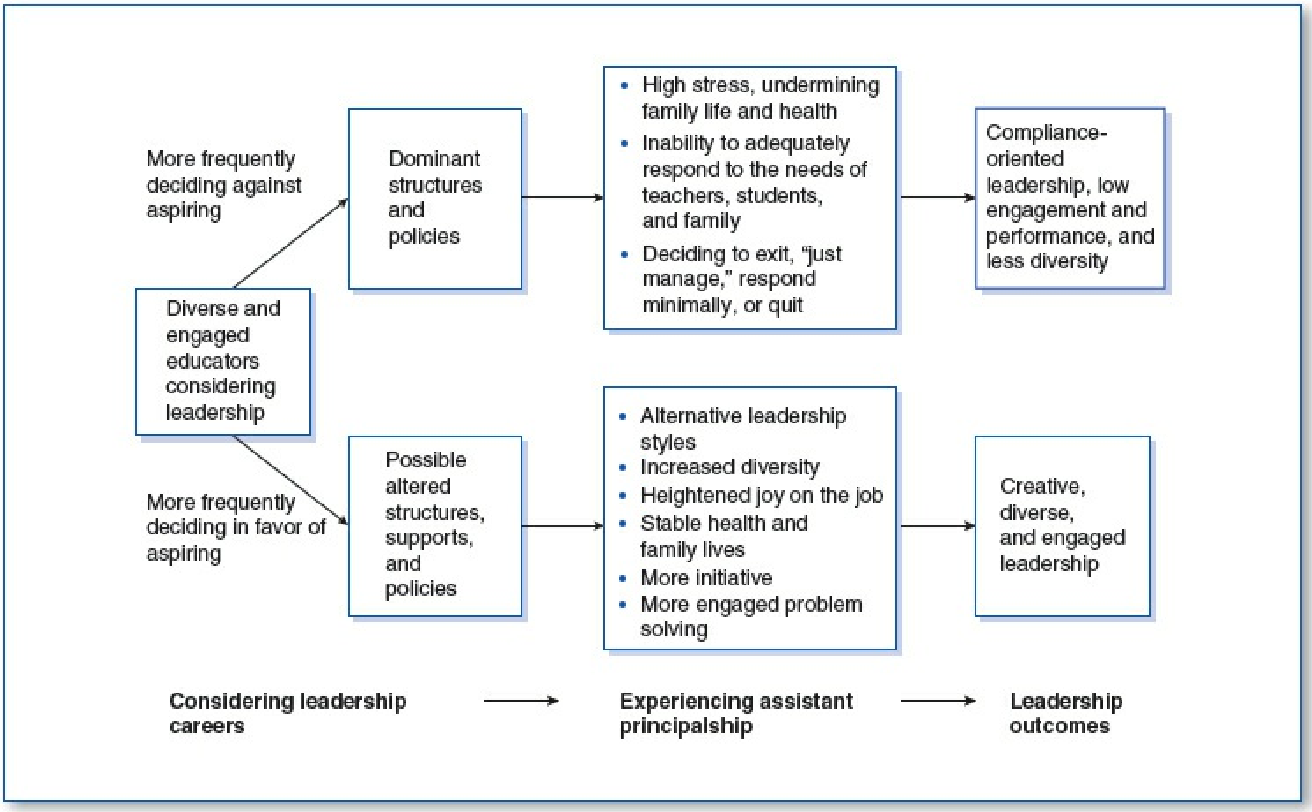
Some researchers find it useful to draw a **pictorial model** that identifies domains and relationships (as in concept mapping). Such pictures are not meant to predict one's findings but, rather, to present the researchers' current, proposal-stage thoughts about how things work. Figure 4.5 is one example of a simple conceptual model that can help a researcher envision his study's questions about the factors that affect patients' access to treatment.

Example of a Simple Conceptual Model

An extended example of integrating and dovetailing the significance of the review sections is provided in Vignette 7. Look for the ways the literature review led Marshall (1979, 1981, 1985b) to find new possibilities for pursuing the research questions.

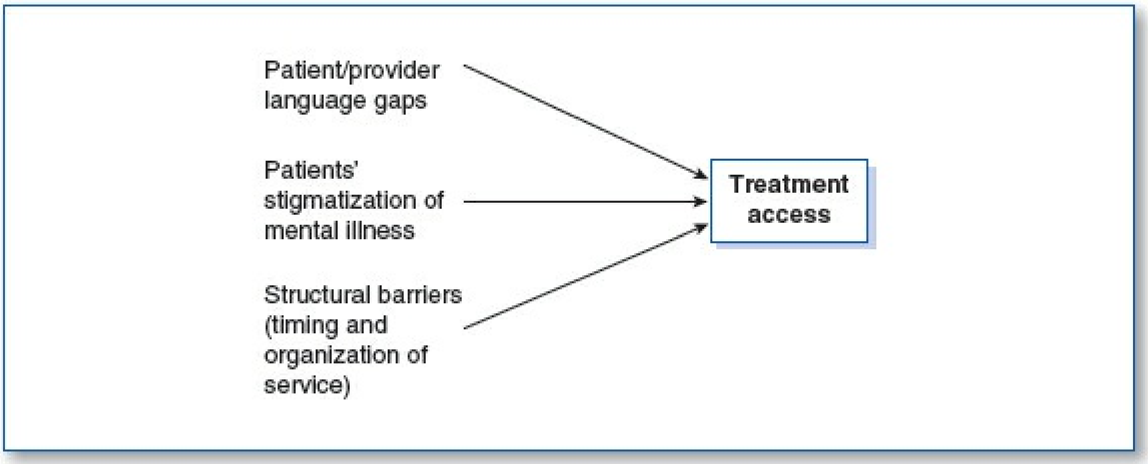
As Vignette 7 shows, the literature review can identify established knowledge and, more important, develop significance and new questions and often turn old questions around. This "initiating function" (Rossman & Wilson, 1994) of the literature review can be quite creative. It helps to try out "if–then propositions" and "thought experiments" (Schram, 2006, p. 67), where the researcher playfully generates possible linkages and relationships that can be made between theory and what might be discovered in data collection. For example, in a thought experiment in the research described in Vignette 7, Marshall (1979) posed a guiding hypothesis that if women anticipate the role strain to be incurred by the piling on of mothering roles, administrative tasks, as well as doubts that women can be "tough" leaders, they will repress any aspirations to school leadership positions. Thus, such a thought experiment yields **guiding hypotheses** and some clues about how to ask questions and how to be sensitized to themes in her data, and she has more confidence that she can move from the dryness of literature review to the liveliness of real people and real lives in her data collection.

Figure 4.4 Model for Envisioning a Multiresearcher, Multifocal Study


More frequently deciding against aspiring
Dominant structures and policies
High stress, undermining family life and health
Inability to adequately respond to the needs of teachers, students, and family
Deciding to exit, "just manage," respond minimally, or quit
Compliance-oriented leadership, low engagement and performance, and less diversity
Diverse and engaged educators considering leadership
More frequently deciding in favor of aspiring
Possible altered structures, supports, and policies
Alternative leadership styles
Increased diversity
Heightened joy on the job
Stable health and family lives
More initiative
More engaged problem solving
Creative, diverse, and engaged leadership
Considering leadership careers
Experiencing assistant principalship
Leadership outcomes

SOURCE: Marshall (2008).

Figure 4.5 Example of a Simple Conceptual Model


Patient/provider language gaps
Patients' stigmatization of mental illness
Structural barriers (timing and organization of service)
Treatment access

SOURCE: Schensul (2008, p. 519). Reprinted with permission from SAGE Publications.

The review, moreover, provides intellectual glue for the entire proposal by demonstrating the sections' conceptual relatedness. The researcher cannot write about the study's significance without knowledge of the literature. He cannot describe the design without a discussion of the general research topic. A proposal is divided into sections because of tradition and convention, not because of a magical formula. To organize complex topics and address the three critical questions posed at the beginning, however, the structure we provided in Table 4.1 is recommended. Vignette 8 illustrates how the conceptualization of a study can be creative and exciting as the researcher forges links among historically disparate literatures.

Vignette 8 shows a creative blending of several strands of literature for framing the research. The integration of literatures helped shape a research focus that was theoretically interesting, yet could help inform policy and practice in universities. Broad reading and knowledge of the history of institutions of higher education relative to their local communities—richly augmented by more **theoretical literature** on critical pedagogy, situated learning, and funds of knowledge—created a variegated and highly creative synthesis. Rather than narrowly constructing the study to focus on only one topic, the researcher searched widely for illuminating constructs from other disciplines. This work, although at times tedious, confusing, and ambiguous, enhances the research to follow and demonstrates that the researcher has engaged in significant intellectual work already.

The literature review serves many purposes for the research. It supports the importance of the study's focus and may serve to validate the eventual findings in a narrowly descriptive study. It also guides the development of explanations during data collection and analysis in studies that seek to explain, evaluate, and suggest linkages between events. In grounded-theory development, the literature review provides theoretical constructs, categories, and their properties that can be used to organize the data and discover new connections between theory and phenomenon.

The sections of the proposal addressed thus far—introduction, discussion of the topic and purpose, significance, general research questions, and literature review—stand together as the conceptual body of the proposal. Here, the major (and minor) ideas for the proposal are developed, their intellectual roots are displayed and critiqued, and the writings and studies of other researchers are presented and critiqued. All this is intended to tell the reader (1) what the research is about (its subject), (2) who ought to care about it (its significance), and (3) what others have described and concluded about the subject (its intellectual roots). All three purposes are interwoven into these sections of the proposal.

The final major section—research design and methods—must flow conceptually and logically from all that has gone before; the aspects of this section are discussed in Chapters 5 through 7. In the design and methods section, the researcher makes a case, based on the conceptual portion of the proposal, for the particular sample, methods, data analysis techniques, and reporting format chosen for the study. Thus, the section on design and methods should build a rationale for the study's design and data collection methods. Here, the researcher should develop a case for using qualitative methods. These topics are also discussed in Chapters 5 through 7.

Although there are parallels, proposals for qualitative research differ—sometimes substantially—from proposals for quantitative research. In the development of a qualitative proposal, the researcher first orients the proposal reader to the general topic to be explored. This will not involve a statement of specific research questions, propositions to be tested, or hypotheses to be examined; it can include a general discussion of the puzzle, the unexplored issue, or the group to be studied. Discussion becomes more focused through the literature review because, in exploratory studies, it is hard to predict which literature will be the most relevant; the focus of the study may best be served by an intersection of literatures.

In some cases, the literature review yields cogent and useful definitions, constructs, concepts, and even data collection strategies. These may fruitfully result in a set of preliminary guiding hypotheses. Using the term *guiding hypotheses* may assist readers accustomed to more traditional proposals. It is essential, however, that the researcher explain that guiding hypotheses are tools used to generate questions and search for patterns; they may be discarded when he gets into the field and finds other exciting patterns of phenomena. This approach retains the flexibility needed to permit the precise focus of the research to evolve. By avoiding precise hypotheses, the researcher retains his right to explore and *generate* questions. The guiding hypotheses illustrate for the reader some possible directions he may follow, but he is still free to discover and pursue other patterns.

Vignette 9 is an example of a very creative approach to a literature review, taken directly from an autoethnography written by Tassaporn (Pan) Sariyant (2002). Her literature review was extraordinarily creative and theoretically interesting. Although "performed" differently than most literature reviews, it holds true to the principles of a solid literature review and is engaging to read.

We do not intend to suggest that proposal development proceeds in a linear fashion, as we have noted earlier. The example in Vignette 9 shows wonderful creativity that was present even in Pan's proposal. Recall that in Chapter 1, we argued that conceptualizing a study and developing a design that is clear, flexible, and manageable is dialectic, messy, and just plain hard work. As the researcher plays with concepts and theoretical frames for the study, he often entertains alternative designs, assessing them for their power to address the emerging questions. Considering an ethnography, a case study, or an in-depth interview study as the overall design will, in turn, reshape the research questions. So the process continues as the conceptual framework and specific design features become more and more elegantly related. The challenge is to build the logical connections between the topic, the questions, and the design and methods.

Vignette 7 Building Significance Through the Literature

When Marshall (1979) was researching the general problem of women's unequal representation in school administration careers, she first reviewed the work of previous researchers. Many researchers before her had conducted surveys to identify the attributes, positions, and percentages of women in school administration. A few researchers had identified patterns of discrimination.

In a significant departure from this tradition, Marshall reconceptualized the problem. She viewed it as a problem in the area of adult socialization and looked to career socialization theory, finding useful concepts such as role strain, sponsorship, aspiration formation, and more. From a review of this body of theory and related empirical research on the school administrative career, including recruitment, training, and selection processes, and on women in jobs and careers, Marshall framed a new question. She asked, "What is the career socialization process for women in school administration? What is the process through which women make career decisions, acquire training and supports, overcome obstacles, and move up in the hierarchy?"

This reconceptualization came from asking the significance question: Who cares about this research? The question encouraged a review of previous research that demonstrated how other research had already answered many questions. It showed that women were as competent as men in school administration. But a critical review of this literature argued that this previous research had asked different questions. Marshall could assert that her study would be significant because it would focus on describing a process about which previous research had only an inkling. The new research would add to theory by exploring career socialization of women in a profession generally dominated by men. It would also identify the relevant social, psychological, and organizational variables that are part of women's career socialization. This established the significance of the research by showing how it would add to knowledge.

The literature review also established the significance of the research for practice and policy, with an overview of the issues of affirmative action and equity concerns. Thus, the research question, literature review, and research design were all tied in with the significance question. Responding to this question demanded a demonstration that this was an area of knowledge and practice that needed exploration. To ensure exploration, qualitative methods were the most appropriate for the conduct of the study.

Vignette 8 Creative Review of the Literature

When research questions explore new territory, a single line of previous literature and/or theory may be inadequate for constructing frameworks that usefully guide the study. A case in point is that of Shadduck-Hernandez (1997, 2005), a graduate student in international development education, who searched the literature for a way to frame her study of a community service learning initiative serving refugee and immigrant youth and undergraduate students at a major research university.

Shadduck-Hernandez's forays into the literature on community service learning and the relationships between institutions of higher education and the communities they serve identified a substantial gap. Previous studies described the demographics of participants in community service learning projects, noting that typical projects involved white, middle-class undergraduate students working with communities of color. However, few critiqued the hegemonic practice embodied in such projects or called into question the continuing Eurocentric values in university and community relations. It became clear that previous research had failed to conceptualize the problem in terms of a sustained critique of the university from the perspectives of those often marginalized in mainstream university discourse—refugee and immigrant students of color.

Having established that the study was situated in scholarly writing and research on community service learning and university–community relations, Shadduck-Hernandez still felt as though something was missing. This literature helped establish the context for her study but did not provide theoretical concepts or propositions that would help illuminate students' experiences. She turned to the literature on critical pedagogy to more fully frame the principles of the project. She also discussed situated learning theory, with its key notions of context, peer relations, and communities of practice, to provide analytic insights into the learning milieu of the project. Finally, she relied on the anthropological concept of funds of knowledge—"the strategic and cultural resources that racially and ethnically diverse and low-income students and communities possess" (Shadduck-Hernandez, 2005, pp. 115–116). Her discussion of these literatures was tested against their usefulness in understanding community service learning among similar and familiar ethnic groups and for developing a gentle but quite pointed critique of the university.

Vignette 9 Pan in (Academic) Wonderland: Discourse Review

Knowing requires a knower. Enter any great library, and one is surrounded by so much waste paper until the texts collected there are decoded. The "knowledge" of the library collection is underwritten by bodies of knowers, those who can interpret, evaluate, or, in a word, read (MacIntyre, 1981, quoted in Steedman, 1991, p. 53).

I don't know how long I have been sitting here. I must have dozed off on that chair for a long time. My back aches. My eyes are burning. When I look around, I notice that the few people who sat reading not far from me are not there anymore. The early afternoon sunlight that was shining through the window near the table where I sat reading is already gone. The atmosphere of the room at this moment gives me a creepy, uneasy feeling. The room looks quite dim. Rows and rows of gigantic bookshelves look spooky, like the walls of a mysterious dungeon. It makes me think that some unexpected things might be lurking behind any of them. However, I don't want to leave this library room before I finish reading a couple of books that I had taken from the shelves when I came in. I quickly brush those silly images out of my head.

After standing and stretching my weary body for a moment, I walk toward the light switch that I remember seeing on a wall at the opposite corner. As I walk toward the wall, out of the corner of my eye I suddenly notice several silhouette figures sitting quietly around a table in that very corner. Who are these people? Why do they sit talking in the dark? Ghosts of the library? A sudden cold fear runs down my spine. Goose bumps cover my whole body. I cannot decide whether I should run out of that room or go to the light switch and turn it on as quickly as possible. Before I can do anything, I hear a gentle voice from the table calling, "Are you coming to join us?" I stand frozen. Another figure waves a hand, beckoning me to the table and saying, "Please turn the light on and come and join us here." Although I am horrified by the thought that those figures will vanish as soon as the light is on, I quickly flick the light on.

To my relief, they do not disappear. Under the soft fluorescent light from the ceiling above them, those silhouette figures turn out to be seven scholarly looking women and men—precisely five women and two men—who sit smiling at me. They are not ghosts as I initially thought. Although their faces look familiar, I cannot recall where I have seen them. . . . A Caucasian man, sitting on the right of a white-bearded old man, urges me, "Come and join the dialogue with us." Dialogue with these people? Oh, my word! They look so scholarly, so knowledgeable. What am I going to say or discuss with them? "Come, sit next to me. There is a chair here." A kind, motherly woman, who sits on the left of the white-bearded old man, points at an empty chair beside her. . . .

I quickly introduce myself as I sit down. "My name is Pan, a Thai doctoral student at the Center for International Education. I am at the stage of writing my dissertation. I work in the Department of Nonformal Education in Thailand. Generally, my work revolves around education for community development. I am interested in exploring the relationships among the discourses on development, nonformal education, and pedagogy for empowerment, especially for rural Thai women, and I want to . . .”

“Wait.” Before I finish my sentence, the white-bearded old man interrupts. “You are not going to do your dissertation research on all those subjects, are you?” I shake my head and say no. The short-haired woman asks the question that I am afraid to face. “What is really your focus?” I drop my eyes to the table and admit with a great shame, “I am not quite sure yet.” When I look up, I see sympathetic looks on every face. I hear a quickly whispered phrase, “rookie academician,” which makes my ears turn red with embarrassment. Before I can think of how to defend myself, the woman with dark hair on my right suggests, “Why don’t we begin by asking her why she wants to know about those subjects, what she wants to get from those discourses, and how those discourses have anything to do with her dissertation topic. Then, we can give her some suggestions later.” She turns to me and says, “Could you elaborate on that for us?” My face suddenly turns pale with intimidation as every pair of questioning eyes fixes on me.

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Gretchen:* I find this conceptualizing “stuff” the most exciting of all! It’s just fascinating to see how different frames can alter research questions, design, and so on. I just love doing this with students on a chalkboard. I find that when the class has really “gelled” as a little community of practice, the students are incredibly helpful and supportive for each other. Most exciting is when there are students from a whole raft of departments together. They bring such intriguing questions and insights—make all of us think more deeply about conceptualizing a study.

Catherine: I think this conceptualizing process is scary and hard for people who want shortcuts. So many don’t realize that there is an intuitive framing early on that gets elaborated through the literature, then modified—maybe—as the analysis and interpretation unfold.”

Dialogue Between Learners

“Hi, Keren,

As I’m nearing the end of my process, I can’t help but think back to all the moments when I’ve doubted every step of the work I have done. This includes my research design, research questions, conceptual framework, and the significance of my topic. To illustrate my struggles, as well as the nonlinear nature of my own research, it was just recently that I began to feel as though I have a cogent argument! I finally feel that I can link together the different pieces of theory and concepts in a way that provides scaffolding for my own data. But, this said, I still feel as if I could have done it 10 other ways!

I don’t know about you, but often I have found that I had to create a space to rethink even the most basic underpinnings of my argument and approach. For me, this often involved stepping away—by going on a run, washing dishes, or even going to sleep. Somehow, that space allowed me to find what I needed to feel peace in the iterative process and to keep moving forward. I believe Catherine and Gretchen refer to these moments as “think time.” Luckily, my personal and professional interests in the subject matter also helped me maintain the much-needed “fire in the belly.”

I wonder if you’ve encountered any similar frustrations or bumps along your way.

Take care,

Karla

Dear Karla,

It’s funny how, as I was reading your letter, I was thinking, “Me too, me too.” I actually have a notebook and pen next to my bed because I often get bits and pieces of thoughts either right before I fall asleep or even in the middle of the night. Linkages that I was contemplating all day finally crystalize at odd moments.

I also remember coming back from a summer intensive course on research methods and feeling very insecure about what I am trying to accomplish with my research. Today I feel as though all the theoretical readings I have been doing have paid off—every new piece helps me in further narrowing my research parameters. I use the word *parameters* and not *questions* because I still feel that I can’t quite formulate questions. I guess I am using research parameters as a bridge between having a research interest and having researchable research questions.

Well, I better return to a little bit more theory now!

Keren”

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Key Concepts

conceptual framework
conceptual funnel
focusing
guiding hypotheses
personal biography
personal theories
pictorial model
problematic
related research
significance for knowledge
significance for practice and policy
theoretical literature

Chapter 5 The How of the Study Building the Research Design

In the research proposal, one section is devoted to a description of the design and methods. This serves three purposes:

1. It presents a plan for the conduct of the study.
2. It demonstrates that the researcher is capable of conducting the study.
3. It asserts the need for the qualitative approach and offers strategies to preserve the flexibility of design that is a hallmark of qualitative methods.

The latter purpose is often the most challenging.

Eight major topics are addressed in the research design section of the proposal, laying out the plans for (1) the qualitative genre, overall strategy, and **rationale**; (2) **site selection**, population selection, and **sampling**; (3) the researcher's **entry**, **role**, **reciprocity**, and **ethics**; (4) data collection methods; (5) data management; (6) data analysis strategy; (7) **trustworthiness**; and (8) a management plan or timeline. Woven into these is the challenge of presenting a clear, doable plan—with concrete, specific details—while maintaining flexibility in its implementation. After discussing this challenge, we address the first three topics. Later, Chapters 6 and 7 describe data collection methods, followed in Chapter 8 by a discussion of strategies for managing, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. Considerations for managing the entire research process (using a management plan, budget, and timeline) and organizing data collection and management are presented in Chapter 9. All along, we are building up to Chapter 10, in which we provide advice on modes of presenting and writing up qualitative research.

■ Meeting the Challenge

How do researchers maintain the needed flexibility of design so the research can “unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 210), and still present a plan that is logical, concise, and thorough, meeting the criterion of do-ability? The research design section should demonstrate to the reader that the overall plan is sound and the researcher is competent to undertake the research, capable of employing the chosen methods, and sufficiently self-aware and interested to sustain the effort necessary for the successful completion of the study. This design and the researcher’s defenses of it must stand up to questioning. After all, the design must convince reviewers that the researcher is able to handle a complex and personal process, often making decisions in the field during the unfolding, cascading, rolling, and emerging.

The researcher should demonstrate to the reader that she reserves the right to modify the original design as the research evolves: Building flexibility into the design is crucial. The researcher does so by (a) demonstrating the appropriateness and logic of using qualitative methods for the particular research question and (b) devising a proposal that includes many of the elements of traditional proposals. At the same time, she reserves the right to change the implementation plan during data collection. As mentioned earlier, this section of the proposal should discuss the rationale for and logic of the particular qualitative genre in which the study is grounded, the overall strategy, and the specific design elements. At times, however, the researcher may need to justify qualitative research, in general, before situating the proposed study in a genre. We address the reality of this issue first and then focus on specific genres and approaches.

■ Justifying Qualitative Research

In recent years, the value and prestige of qualitative inquiry have risen in many fields. Still, given the historical domination of social science research by traditional, quantitative models and the current federal government emphasis on quantitative approaches, the researcher may well have to develop a justification for qualitative methods in general. Before describing the specific genre and approach, she should show how and why the research questions will be best addressed in a natural setting, using exploratory approaches. To accomplish this, the strengths of qualitative methodology should be emphasized by elaborating the value of such studies for the following types of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall, 1985a, 1987):

- Research that seeks cultural description and ethnography
- Research that elicits multiple constructed realities, studied holistically
- Research that elicits tacit knowledge and subjective understandings and interpretations
- Research that delves in depth into complexities and processes
- Research on little-known phenomena or innovative systems
- Research that seeks to explore where and why policy is at odds with local knowledge and practice
- Research on informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organizations
- Research on actual, as opposed to stated, organizational goals
- Research that cannot be done experimentally for practical or ethical reasons
- Research that explores novel, ignored, or often marginalized populations
- Research for which relevant variables have yet to be identified
- Research that seeks to understand experience

Further support is found in the many excellent introductory texts on qualitative methods that describe their characteristics and strengths (see Chapter 1 Further Reading). Drawing on these sources, the researcher proposing a study in a particular setting (e.g., a hospital ward or social service agency) could argue that human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur and that one should therefore study that behavior in those real-life natural situations. The social and physical setting—schedules, space, pay, and rewards—and internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial aspects of an environment. Thus, for qualitative studies, context matters. The researcher can argue that the study must be conducted in the setting where all this complexity operates over time and where data on the multiple versions of reality can be collected. For a study focusing on individuals' lived experience, the researcher can also argue that human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning humans assign to those actions is understood. Because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptions are involved, the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction and observation in the natural setting.

An excellent strategy for justifying the use of qualitative methodology is demonstrating the limitations of quantitative, positivist approaches and critiquing their narrowly defined questions. The researcher might argue that the objective scientist, by coding the social world according to preordained operational variables, destroys valuable data by imposing a limited worldview on the subjects (a consideration for all studies, qualitative or otherwise, we would argue). The researcher might further critique experimental models by noting that policymakers and practitioners are sometimes unable to derive meaning and useful findings from experimental research and that the research techniques themselves have affected the findings. The lab, the questionnaire, and so on have become artifacts that interfere with natural sentiments and behaviors. Subjects are suspicious and wary. Sometimes they are aware of what the researchers want and try to please them. And the researcher could describe the ways quantitative methods mask or, worse, displace the stories—complex narratives of personal experience.

In short, the strengths of qualitative studies should be demonstrated for research that is exploratory or descriptive and that stresses the importance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference. A well-reasoned and convincing explanation for qualitative methods should include a concise but strong rationale that is firmly grounded in the study's conceptual framework and that justifies the specific data collection methods. The rationale should show how the selection of methods flows from the research questions. Three examples illustrate this. For Glazier's (2004) ethnographic study on the ability of the collaborative work of Arab and Jewish teachers in Israel to influence understanding of the Other, the compelling argument was that triangulation of qualitative data allows for multiple perspectives. Mishna (2004) also made a strong argument that a study about bullying that uses interviews with children and parents needs a qualitative methodology to capture context, personal interpretation, and experience. As Mishna pointed out,

> qualitative data . . . privileges individuals' lived experience. . . . Increasing our understanding of the views of children and adults is key to developing effective interventions. . . . We know surprisingly little about the dynamics of school bullying relationships. . . . It is vital to have children's perspectives when trying to identify the processes involved in problematic peer relations. (p. 235)

This researcher presented first what was already known and then what was still needed, and this quote explains why the topic needed a qualitative approach. In an ethnography by Wasserman and Clair (2010), they asserted that “to deal with homelessness we must first know it” (p. 221), and they began by demonstrating that narrowly conceived research, policy, and programs have never captured the wide range of the meaning of homelessness.

■ The Qualitative Genre and Overall Approach

Although acceptance of qualitative inquiry is currently widespread, at times it is necessary to provide a rationale for the particular genre in which a study is situated. Recall the discussion in Chapter 2 in which we argued that the many nuanced traditions of qualitative research can be categorized into those focusing on (a) *individual lived experience,* (b) *society and culture,* and (c) *language and communication.* The most compelling argument emphasizes the unique strengths of the genre for research that is exploratory or descriptive, that accepts the value of context and setting, and that searches for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon under study.

One assumption common to all genres is that people express meaning about some aspect of their lives. This follows Thomas's (1949) classic proposition that in the study of human experience, it is essential to know how people define their situations: "If men [*sic*] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 301). When a proposal presents the logical and compelling connections—the epistemological integrity—among the genre, the overall strategy, the research questions, the design, and the methods, this is quite convincing.

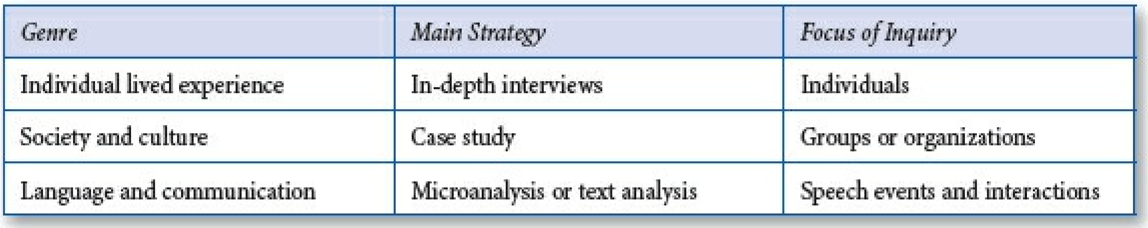
Overall Strategies

Qualitative research embraces a rich diversity of overall design, as discussed in Chapter 2. We can, generally, identify three distinct strategies, as displayed in Table 5.1.

Qualitative Genre and Overall Strategy

A study focusing on individual lived experiences typically relies on an **in-depth interview strategy**. Although this is often supplemented with other data (e.g., journal writing by the participants), the primary strategy is to capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants' own words.

Table 5.1 Qualitative Genre and Overall Strategy



Genre	*Main Strategy*	*Focus of Inquiry*
Individual lived experience	In-depth interviews	Individuals
Society and culture	Case study	Groups or organizations
Language and communication	Microanalysis or text analysis	Speech events and interactions

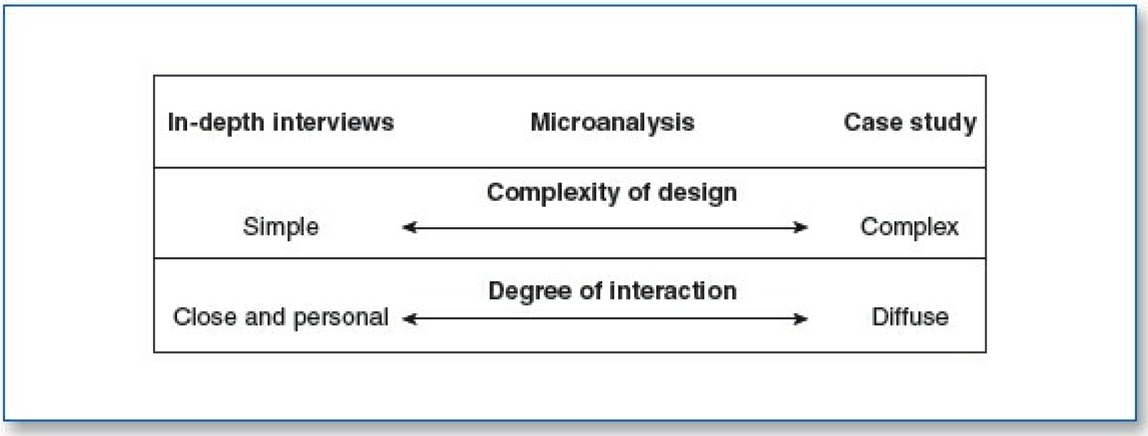
Studies focusing on society and culture in a group, a program, or an organization typically espouse some form of **case study** as a strategy. This entails immersion in the setting and rests on both the researcher's and the participants' worldviews.

Research focusing on language and communication typically involves **microanalysis**, **discourse analysis**, or **textual analysis**, through which speech events, including text, and subtle interactions are recorded (often on videotape) and then analyzed. Directly linked to the qualitative genre and research questions, each strategy stipulates the focus of the inquiry (individual, group, interactions) and the overall approach to collecting data.

These three broad strategies are distinct from one another in the **complexity of design** and the **closeness of interaction** between researcher and participants. In-depth interview strategies are elegant in design, relying on a seemingly simple method for gathering data. Microanalyses frequently encompass more of the complexities of context than do in-depth interview strategies, relying on some form of observation often complemented by interviews. Case study, the most complex strategy, may entail multiple methods—interviews, observations, historical and document analysis, and even surveys. Following the same logic, interview strategies require close, personal interactions between researcher and participants, often over long periods of time. Case studies may be less intimate than those involving participant observation (discussed in Chapter 5), which fosters close relationships. With their focus on observation, microanalyses tend to lie somewhere in the middle of this continuum. These continua are presented in Figure 5.1.

The strategy is a kind of road map, a proposed plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest; the research methods are the specific tools for conducting that exploration. In-depth interview strategies stipulate a primary data collection method—interviewing. In case studies and microanalyses, the combination of methods proposed for collecting data may be quite complex. A study of the impact of welfare reform, for example, could be a case study of agencies in several cities and could rely on an array of methods, such as in-depth interviewing and document analysis of employment records over time. A study of student engagement in math lessons could employ the strategy of microanalysis of classroom interactions, perhaps including direct observation (through videotape) supplemented by interviews of teachers and students and by analysis of student work. The strategy frames the study by placing boundaries around it, identifying the analytic focus. The researcher, by choosing a strategy, is making many major decisions, using her judgment of the best approach to focus in on the questions posed in the conceptual portion of her proposal.

Figure 5.1 Complexities of Design and Interaction



In developing the strategy, the researcher needs to consider these questions: Will I have adequate data? Will I be efficient? Have I considered the array of ethical challenges? To discern the adequacy of the strategy, ask whether it is likely to foster responses to the research questions thoroughly and thoughtfully. Will this strategy elicit the information one seeks? (See questions of the study's do-ability in Chapter 1.) Does this plan allow adequate data to be collected, given the constraints of time, financial resources, **access**, and cost to participants and researcher? To these, we would add ethical considerations: Can this research design be carried out without harming people or significantly disrupting the setting? Will the proposed strategy violate the participants' privacy or unduly disrupt their everyday worlds? Are they putting themselves in danger or at **risk** by participating in the study? Will the study violate their human rights in some way? (We address these ethical issues more fully later in this chapter.) The range of possible qualitative strategies is small. Which is chosen depends on the research questions, the genre, ethics, and the time frame possible for the study.

In addition to developing a strong, supported rationale for the genre and strategy, this section of the proposal should assert and preserve the right to modify aspects of the design as the research proceeds. Early investigations of a phenomenon can also demonstrate the benefits of maintaining some flexibility. We like Geer's (1969) phrase, "**first days in the field**," to describe the qualitative researcher's immersion in the setting. Beginning with some analytic concepts from previous research and a theoretical framework helped her determine what situations to observe, whom to interview, and what to ask. Any more precise focus of the research will emerge only after those first days in the field, when new insights begin to reveal patterns. And they will probably shift! In proposals, this need for flexibility must be asserted, but it may result in frequent check-ins with a dissertation committee chair. Major changes may require a new review by the **institutional review board** (IRB).

Demonstrating the Traditions

Research design sections have to show that the researcher is capable of conducting qualitative research. Thus, the design section should have embedded quotes to demonstrate, through precedents and reflections from other qualitative researchers' publications, that the proposed design is following a long tradition. The quotations and citations are not used merely to impress readers but to provide solid evidence that the researcher has entered into the critical conversation about methodology. This demonstrates knowledge of the historical and ongoing methodological discourse about qualitative inquiry, and of the specific genre in which the study is situated. An increasing number of researchers have provided descriptions of the rationale for an evolving research design; both classical and newer works are referenced at the end of this chapter. Those that provide appendices on methodology are particularly useful.

Once the overall approach and supporting rationale have been presented, the proposal outlines the setting or population of interest and plans for more specific sampling of people, places, and events. This outline provides the reader with a sense of the scope of the proposed inquiry and whether the intensity, amount, and richness of the data will encourage full responses to the research questions. The researcher may devise a chart showing questions to explore, potential rich settings, and specific data collection strategies to display the logic of the design.

Piloting

Pilot studies can be useful, not only for trying out strategies but also to buttress the argument and rationale for a genre and strategy. When the researcher proclaims that she is capable of conducting the proposed research and provides a description and assessment of a qualitative pilot study with intriguing preliminary data, doubters are often persuaded. As Sampson (2004) notes,

> While pilots can be used to refine research instruments such as questionnaires and interview schedules, they have greater use still in ethnographic approaches to data collection in foreshadowing research problems and questions, in highlighting gaps and wastage in data collection, and in considering broader and highly significant issues such as research validity, ethics, representation, and researcher health and safety. (p. 383)

Pilot interviews help the researcher understand herself. Piloting also helps the researcher find ways to eliminate barriers such as resistance to tape recorders and mistrust of the researcher's agenda, as Smith (1999) describes in his research on the fears of social workers. Even without a pilot study, the researcher can demonstrate her ability to manage qualitative research by describing initial observations or interviews. These experiences usually reveal fascinating questions and intriguing patterns. Piloting will yield a description of initial observations useful to demonstrate not only one's ability to manage this research but also the strengths of the genre for generating enticing research questions. Thus, describing a pilot study or initial observations strengthens a proposal.

■ Getting Concrete: The Setting, Site, Population, or Phenomenon

Unless a study is quite narrowly construed, researchers cannot study all relevant circumstances, events, or people intensively and in depth. Instead, they select samples. The first and most global decision—choosing the setting, site, population, or phenomenon of interest—is fundamental to the design of the study and serves as a guide for the researcher. This early, significant decision shapes all subsequent ones and should be clearly described and justified.

Site-Specific Research

Some research questions are **site specific**. Other questions, however, can be pursued in many sites throughout the world. A study that asks, “By what processes do women’s studies programs become incorporated into universities?” must focus on a setting where this takes place. In contrast, research that asks, “By what processes do innovative units become incorporated into educational organizations?” has a choice of many sites and many different substantive programs. There are many sites for studying the question, “By what processes have Peace Corps volunteers been able to effect long-term health improvements in communities?” The decision to focus on a specific setting (e.g., the University of Massachusetts or a neighborhood in Cincinnati) is somewhat constraining; the study is defined by and intimately linked to that place. Choosing to study a particular kind of population (e.g., faculty in university women’s studies programs or members of urban street gangs) is somewhat less constraining; the study can be conducted in more than one place. Studying a phenomenon (e.g., the socialization of new faculty or adolescents’ need for affiliation) is even less constrained by either place or population. In these latter instances, the researcher determines an appropriate sampling strategy given the purpose of the study.

If the study is of a specific program, organization, place, or region, some detail regarding the setting must be provided. A rationale should outline why this specific setting is more appropriate than others for the conduct of the study. What is unique? What characteristics of this setting are compelling and unusual? Justify this early and highly significant decision. Where possible, identify “backup” settings that could suffice if access to the preferred setting is denied or delayed. The smart researcher will identify research questions in ways that allow choices. For example, when Kanter (1977) wanted to study “how consciousness and behavior are formed by positions in organizations, to show how both men and women are the product of their circumstances” (p. xi), she could have chosen from thousands of settings for her ethnography. She focused on one, pseudonymed Industrial Supply Corporation (Indsco), because she had access already and her prior observations and ponderings about organizational theory had given her a sense that she would have plentiful opportunity for data collection from ranges of behaviors and positions over time at that site. Her questions, and her research design, were not limited to Indsco, or even to corporations. Still, her design and her site allowed her to discover and describe how people’s behaviors, aspirations, and likely career mobility are shaped by their access to “opportunity positions.”

Research in Your Own Setting

What about **research in your own setting**, where you work or live? While access to the site is automatic, since you are native to it, the following concerns are associated with such access: the expectations of the researcher based on familiarity with the setting and the people, the transition to researcher from a more familiar role within the setting, ethical and political dilemmas, the risk of uncovering potentially damaging knowledge, and struggles with closeness and closure (Alvesson, 2003). There are also positive aspects: relatively easy access to participants, reduced time expenditure for certain aspects of data collection, a feasible location for research, the potential to build trusting relationships, and, as Kanuha (2000) puts it, “being drawn to study ‘my own kind’” (p. 441).

Closeness to the people and the phenomenon through intense interactions provides subjective understandings that can greatly increase the quality of qualitative data (Toma, 2000). A realistic site is one where (a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present; (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; (d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and (e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured.

Although this ideal is seldom attained, the proposal nonetheless describes what makes the selection of a particular site especially sound. A site may be perfect for its representativeness and interest and for providing a range of examples of the phenomenon under study, but if the researcher cannot gain access to it or to a range of groups and activities within it, the study cannot succeed. Likewise, if the researcher is very uncomfortable or endangered in the site, or if the data gathering or findings of the research would do harm, then that site will be full of risk and the research process hampered. Gaining access where the researcher was previously employed creates advantages and disadvantages. The problem of access should be less difficult, and the researcher should easily be able to establish **rapport** with the participants—the researcher can pass as a colleague, and the interconnectedness between the researcher and participants can contribute to a mutual understanding that might lead to more accurate interpretations (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Disadvantages include researcher bias and subjectivity and the inability to separate oneself from the research.

Entry Letters and Scripts

Asking someone, “May I watch you?” or “May I interview you?” is actually very difficult! The research design must include explicit plans. Getting permission to ask people to open up to a researcher or to enter a setting to collect data often requires approaching the organization’s *gatekeeper*s, either in a letter, via e-mail, or over the phone. When asking, the request should include the elements of who, what, when, where, and why, as well as what will be gained and what specifically is requested. Table 5.2 shows one e-mail example.

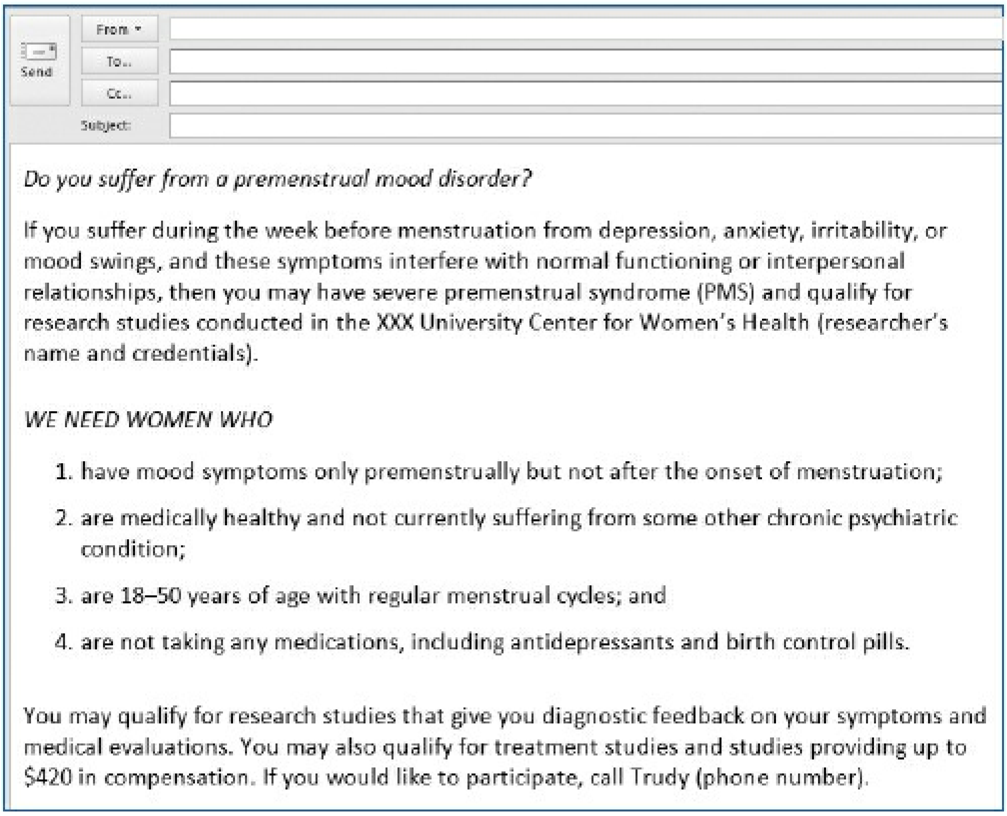
Recipients of this e-mail get a sense of whether they are right for the study and whether the benefits outweigh any discomfort if they participate. E-mail requests are cheap and simple but quite impersonal and so very easy to delete! More personalized requests will receive larger and more committed responses from potential participants.

Large organizations may have review boards that will require much more information and even legal reviews of researchers’ requests. Whether the gatekeepers are school superintendents or gang leaders, research cannot proceed without a good letter or script, prepared and piloted carefully to anticipate any hesitations or concerns. Writing a draft of such a script or letter helps researchers clarify their next steps. Later, this chapter addresses entry and role in greater depth.

Entry: Into Which Sites and How Many Sites?

One cannot study the universe—every thing, every place, all the time. Instead, the researcher makes selections of sites and samples of times, places, people, and things to study. When the focus of the study is a particular population, the researcher should present a strategy for sampling that population. For example, in her study of forced terminations of psychotherapy, Kahn's (1992) strategy was to post notices in multiple local communities, asking for participants. At her proposal hearing, much discussion ensued about the feasibility of this strategy. Given assurances about previous uses of this method of soliciting participants, the committee's worries were placated; the strategy was ultimately successful.

Table 5.2 An Example of an E-Mail Entry Letter



Do you suffer from a premenstrual mood disorder?

If you suffer during the week before menstruation from depression, anxiety, irritability, or mood swings, and these symptoms interfere with normal functioning or interpersonal relationships, then you may have severe premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and qualify for research studies conducted in the XXX University Center for Women's Health (researcher's name and credentials).

WE NEED WOMEN WHO

1. have mood symptoms only premenstrually but not after the onset of menstruation;
2. are medically healthy and not currently suffering from some other chronic psychiatric condition;
3. are 18–50 years of age with regular menstrual cycles; and
4. are not taking any medications, including antidepressants and birth control pills.

You may qualify for research studies that give you diagnostic feedback on your symptoms and medical evaluations. You may also qualify for treatment studies and studies providing up to $420 in compensation. If you would like to participate, call Trudy (phone number).

Sample size in qualitative research depends on many complex factors. Case studies may be of a single person, such as the classic *The Man in the Principal's Office* (Wolcott, 1973), or of one organization, as in Kanter's (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation*, where a typical or representative example was selected for long-term participant observation. In "It's Sweeter Where the Bruise Is," the case study of Delilah was used as illustrative of people transitioning out of homelessness (Sandy, 2014), where Delilah's salvaging of discarded produce symbolized the inventiveness of homeless populations in creating temporary solutions for their daily existence. Sampling over time in the same site—for example, in a bar, as in *The Cocktail Waitress* (Spradley & Mann, 1975)—reveals roles, interactions, and sentiments, and uncovers much more than just aspects of that particular site.

In health research (which is likely to be well funded), recent qualitative case studies and mixed-methods studies averaged one to four informants. Ten groups was the average in focus groups; 16 to 24 months of fieldwork was the norm in observational studies (Safman & Sobal, 2004). *Ambiguous Empowerment: The Work Narratives of Women School Superintendents* (Chase, 1995) is based on 92 tape-recorded interviews with policymakers, selection consultants, school board members, and superintendents, as well as observations in work settings.

While funding and time constraints affect sample size, the weightier concerns center on the question of research purpose. An unknown culture or profession studied in depth over time may be composed of one case study or ethnography. With good funding and a large research team, a study of new mothers' receptivity to training for breast-feeding could have a huge sample, in a vast array of settings and a diverse population. A small sample would be useful as thick cultural description. A large sample in disparate and varied settings with diverse participants would also be seen as more useful, since the ease of transferability and utility of the findings would be enhanced.

Sampling Affects Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Transferability

In the proposal, the researcher should anticipate questions about the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings; poor sampling design decisions may threaten these findings. To justify a sample, one should know the universe of the possible population and its variability, and then sample according to all the relevant variables. Since this is an impossible task, the best compromise is to include a sample with reasonable variation in the phenomenon, settings, or people (Dobbert, 1982).

Long ago, scholars in community studies dealt with sampling issues. When the famous Yankee City study seemed to demand a parallel study of the Deep South, Warner (reported by Gardner in Whyte, 1984) pondered identifying a city representative of the Deep South. After selecting several cities that fit the criteria of size and history, he met with leaders and established contacts in the communities, eventually selecting Natchez, Mississippi, as the site for *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Davis, Gardner, & Gardner, 1941). Natchez would work for negotiating access to various levels of the caste system. The use of two wife–husband teams, one black and one white, also eased access. Because they were all raised in the South and familiar with appropriate behavior within the caste system, they could observe, interview, and participate in activities, interactions, and sentiments representing all levels of the Natchez community.

The reports demonstrated that Natchez, although not exactly like all other Southern communities, was not atypical. Setting abstract criteria, checking out sites in advance, and carefully planning entry ensured that Natchez was accessible and was not an unrepresentative pocket of the research universe. Researchers had identified the site that would maximize comparability and permit access to a wide range of behaviors and perspectives. Clearly, the selection of site and sample are critical decisions.

Some research teams have immersed themselves as members of a community, following traditions developed for community studies: gaining access to parents and institutional functionaries, spending time in informal settings with young people, and seeing events before they started their daily research activities and throughout the day and year. They realized that “the observational technique of being with them as often as possible and not criticizing their activities, carrying tales, or interfering overcame the initial suspicion in a few weeks” (Hollingshead, 1975, p. 15).

Site and sample selection should be planned around practical issues, such as the researcher’s comfort level, ability to fit into some role during participant observation, and access to a range of subgroups and activities. In some proposals, particularly those for multisite studies conducted with several researchers or for studies of organizations, it is wise to make even finer-grained decisions about sampling. This aspect of sampling is discussed next.

■ Selecting a Sample of People, Actions, Events, and/or Processes

Some ethnographies are meant to portray an entire community. Still, think about trying to gather all-encompassing data within a community—that is impossible. So researchers choose a small group that represents that community or population. They select a sampling frame, derived from their research purpose.

> Selection is a conceptually or theoretically informed process by which researchers become interested in studying a particular issue, phenomenon, or group of people and then go about establishing a set of criteria for identifying and bounding that issue, phenomenon, or group for an actual research project. (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 232)

Once the initial decision has been made to focus on a specific site, population, or phenomenon, waves of subsequent sampling decisions are made. The proposal describes the plan, as conceived before the research begins, that will guide sample selection, the researcher being always mindful of the need to retain flexibility. As Denzin (1989) says, "All sampling activities are theoretically informed" (p. 73). Thus, the sensitizing concepts from the literature review and the research questions provide the focus for site and sample selection; if they do not, the researcher at the very least makes the procedures and criteria for decision making explicit. She should be able to answer, when asked, why go there but not other places? Why them? Why not more or others? Her potential readers should be able to discern the logic and judge for themselves whether that logic builds a case that this was not random meandering and that it has, at least, sampled enough to provide a useful view into a cultural phenomenon.

Sampling Within a Population and Focusing Within a Site

Well-developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study's soundness. Making logical judgments and presenting a rationale for these decisions go far in building the overall case for a proposed study. Decisions about sampling people and events are made concurrently with decisions about the specific data collection methods to be used and should be thought through in advance. (Chapters 6 and 7 will provide an array of choices for data collection.) When faced, for example, with the complexity of studying the meaning that women managers attach to computer-mediated communications, Alvarez (1993) had to decide what individuals and events would be most salient for her study and, at the same time, what her data might be and the various ways she might collect them (see Vignette 10).

Vignette 10 Focusing on People and Events

The general question guiding Alvarez's (1993) study was in what ways computer-mediated communications, specifically electronic mail, alter human communications within an organizational context. She was interested in the power equalization potential of e-mail communications among persons of unequal status within the organization and in the socioemotional content of messages sent and received in a medium of reduced social cues.

The sampling strategy began as a search for information-rich cases to study individuals who manifested the phenomenon intensely. A related concern was to have both men and women participants in the study, given that the theoretical literature suggested that there are significant differences between men and women in ease of computer use. Once she had identified participants and they had agreed to engage in the study with her, Alvarez had to make decisions about which specific events she wanted to observe or learn more about. She reasoned that observing the sending or receiving of a message would yield little; she therefore asked participants to share sets of correspondence with her and to participate in two in-depth interviews. The first request proved quite sensitive, because Alvarez was asking people to share their personal and professional mail with her. She reassured them of the confidentiality of the study and also showed them how to send copies of e-mail directly to her without revealing the direct recipient of the message. This reassured them sufficiently and she was able to obtain a substantial set of messages that could then be content analyzed.

Logical and Systematic Sampling

Often, at the most exploratory phases of research, the sampling strategies can only be guessed. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Geer (1969) demonstrated that, in the first days in the field, one does not know enough about the site, the people, the behaviors, the rhythms, or even the most interesting research focus. Then, the research design section is full of **"it depends"** and assertions of the need to maintain flexibility. When pressed, research designers provide best guesses of the locations where data will be collected, the duration and intensity of the study, and the data collection devices to be used.

However, once the research becomes more focused on particular sites, populations, and questions, it becomes possible and important to collect data according to a logical and systematic schema. The research project's final credibility and transferability will be greatly enhanced if future readers can find, in the research report, an account of the sites and sampling procedures (more on this in Chapters 9 and 10).

Also, in designing studies with multiple sites, with a team of researchers, or with both, plans for systematic sampling are crucial. Researchers who follow an agreed-on schema for collecting data can then increase the likelihood that, for example, when comparing observations from many sites or interviews with many people, their comparisons are logical. Miles and Huberman (1994) provide excellent examples of schemas and guidance for such planning. Vignette 11 and Table 5.3 illustrate a sound **multisite sampling** plan for a study involving more than one researcher. This plan is taken from a study of teacher professional development (Rallis, Keller, & Lawrence, 2013) and depicts extensive thinking, first, about the specific topics derived from the literature that would focus the research and, second, about where best to gather data to inform the research questions.

Data Collection: Sampling Plan

The sampling design described in Vignette 11 and represented in Table 5.3 tried to ensure that key individuals would be interviewed and/or observed at each site. Purposive and theoretical sampling, which is guided by the theoretical framework and concepts, is often built into qualitative designs. For example, research on professional development activities and student outcomes would suggest that the researcher should sample individual teachers and leaders, professional learning events, classroom practices, and student work or other assessment data. Often, however, researchers' site selection and sampling begin with accessible sites (convenience sampling) and build on insights and connections from early data collection (snowball sampling).

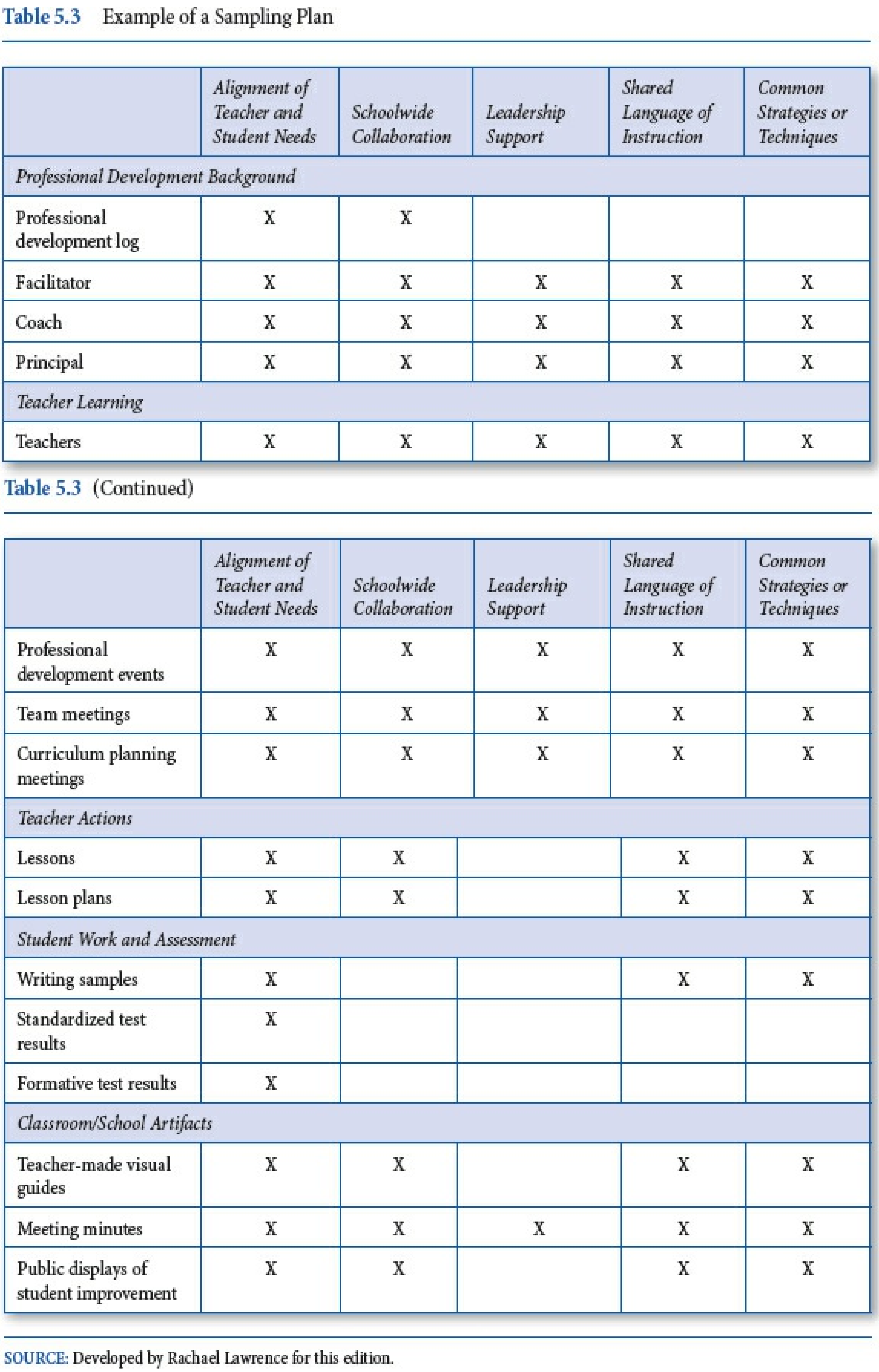


Table 5.3 Example of a Sampling Plan

	Alignment of Teacher and Student Needs	*Schoolwide Collaboration*	*Leadership Support*	*Shared Language of Instruction*	*Common Strategies or Techniques*
Professional Development Background					
Professional development log	X	X			
Facilitator	X	X	X	X	X
Coach	X	X	X	X	X
Principal	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Learning					
Teachers	X	X	X	X	X
Professional development events	X	X	X	X	X
Team meetings	X	X	X	X	X
Curriculum planning meetings	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Actions					
Lessons	X	X		X	X
Lesson plans	X	X		X	X
Student Work and Assessment					
Writing samples	X			X	X
Standardized test results	X				
Formative test results	X				
Classroom/School Artifacts					
Teacher-made visual guides	X	X		X	X
Meeting minutes	X	X	X	X	X
Public displays of student improvement	X	X		X	X

SOURCE: Developed by Rachael Lawrence for this edition.

SOURCE: Developed by Rachael Lawrence for this edition.

Traditional and experimental research designs assume that a large sample, encompassing a wide range of variables, will reveal findings that are representative of a truth. Qualitative research designs do not flagrantly defy those assumptions but, rather, assert a range of options: even the one case or $N = 1$.

Miles and Huberman (1994) usefully describe different approaches to sampling in Table 5.4. Although such plans are often subject to change, given the realities of field research, at the proposal stage, the wise researcher has thought through some of the complexities of the setting and has made some initial judgments about how to deploy her time. The researcher can assert, for example, that her initial sampling will be *maximum variation* when she is trying to see the variety of behaviors or types of people but that she will then proceed to *stratified purposeful* sampling once enough data have been analyzed to identify subgroups. Or the researcher may start with *theory-based*, *criterion* sampling (e.g., when social justice leadership theory directs the researcher to interview two people who fit definitions derived from that literature). She may then proceed to *snowball* sampling by seeking interviews with people suggested from those first two interviews, but she would make sampling design decisions after analyzing those first two cases. If they are quite different, this might suggest a move to stratified purposeful sampling. Most often, some combination of sampling strategies is deployed. Quite often *convenience* sampling is the first choice, but that could become stratified purposeful sampling when initial analysis reveals groupings that can then be used for the next stage of sampling.

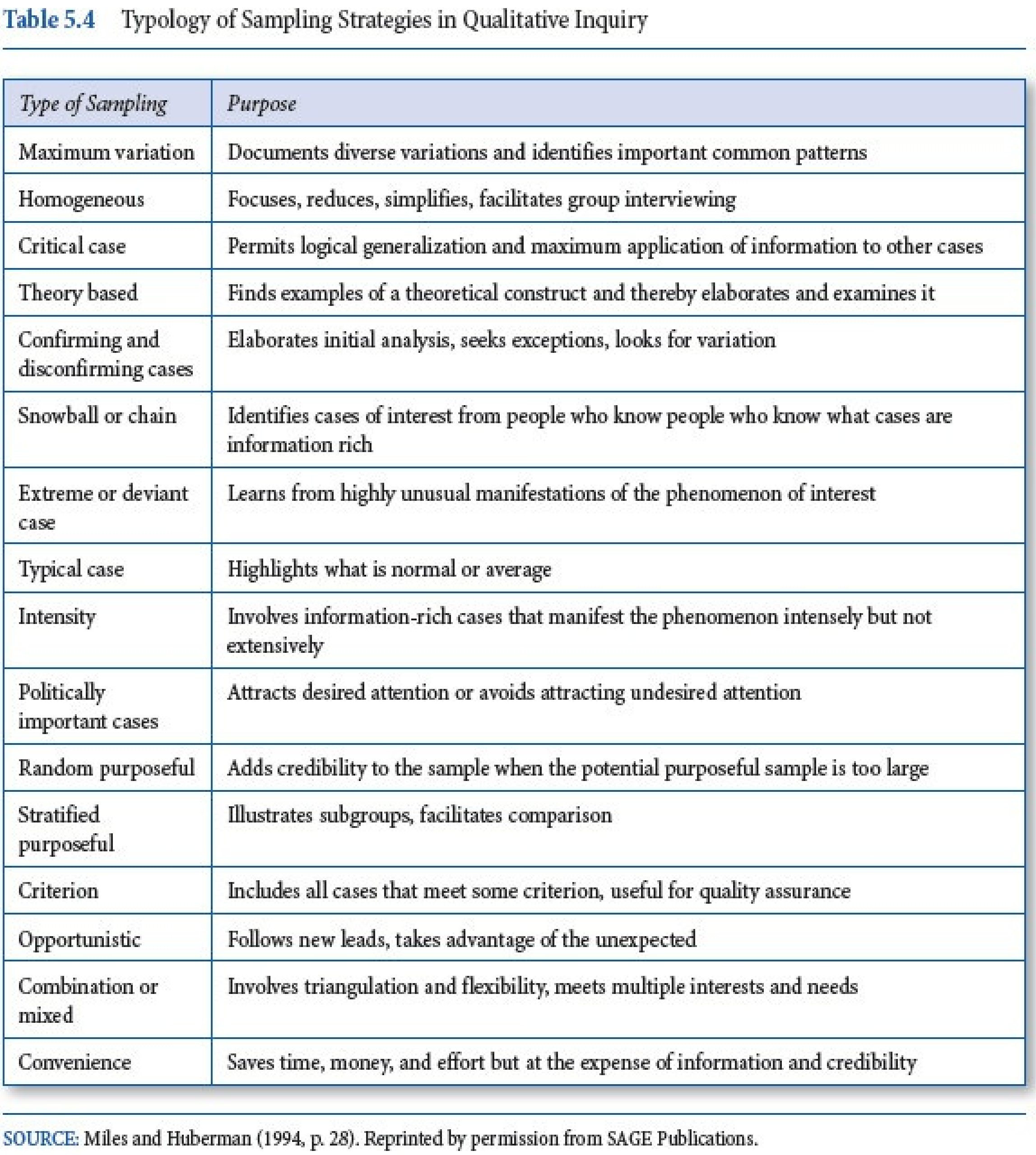


Table 5.4 Typology of Sampling Strategies in Qualitative Inquiry

Type of Sampling	*Purpose*
Maximum variation	Documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns
Homogeneous	Focuses, reduces, simplifies, facilitates group interviewing
Critical case	Permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases
Theory based	Finds examples of a theoretical construct and thereby elaborates and examines it
Confirming and disconfirming cases	Elaborates initial analysis, seeks exceptions, looks for variation
Snowball or chain	Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich
Extreme or deviant case	Learns from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest
Typical case	Highlights what is normal or average
Intensity	Involves information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extensively
Politically important cases	Attracts desired attention or avoids attracting undesired attention
Random purposeful	Adds credibility to the sample when the potential purposeful sample is too large
Stratified purposeful	Illustrates subgroups, facilitates comparison
Criterion	Includes all cases that meet some criterion, useful for quality assurance
Opportunistic	Follows new leads, takes advantage of the unexpected
Combination or mixed	Involves triangulation and flexibility, meets multiple interests and needs
Convenience	Saves time, money, and effort but at the expense of information and credibility

SOURCE: Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28). Reprinted by permission from SAGE Publications.

SOURCE: Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28). Reprinted by permission from SAGE Publications.

Such plans should also indicate that the researcher has considered both the **informational adequacy** and the **efficiency** of these methods.

Keep in mind, though, that veering toward the principles of quantitative inquiry (as in the term *random purposeful sampling*) should be used cautiously, as qualitative inquiry does not seek random samples. The sites/sampling decisions have important implications for the study's potential utility. For example, an *extreme or deviant case* sample is tremendously useful for identifying the elements that make someone become the world's number one tennis player or a serial killer, but that has implications for future transferability. What goes into the making of Rafael Nadal or Son of Sam may not be all that transferable to the design of physical education classes or determining if kids who squash insects are likely to become horrible criminals. And *homogenous* sampling can yield deep description of a subgroup of preteen leukemia patients, but one would question how transferable or useful that would be to programming and treatment for men with prostate cancer. Mixed or progressive sampling is very common, as Vignette 12, reflecting on Marshall and Dalyot's (2014) study, illustrates.

Of course site and sampling decisions have to be intertwined with practical considerations such as efficiency, resources, access and entry, and the ethical issues of the researcher's role with participants.

Vignette 11 Negotiating Site Selection

By Rachael Lawrence

In 2013, I was part of a research team from UMass Amherst (Rallis, Keller, & Lawrence, 2013) that set out to investigate possible connections between teacher professional development activity and student achievement outcomes in Capitol City, New England (pseudonym). We were interested in exploring this relationship because of a study conducted previously by some of the team members that examined Capitol City Schools' professional development policy for efficacy and satisfaction. This policy had been implemented in the teachers' contract and linked participation in professional learning to salary advancement. In this previous study, teachers provided anecdotes that indicated they believed that the system enabled them to learn skills that helped them improve student-learning outcomes. In addition, some literature indicated that targeted professional development for teachers would lead to student achievement gains. With this in mind, we returned to Capitol City to see if systematically collected interview and observational data would support the linkage of teacher professional learning and student learning gains. In planning for the study, we discussed ways of "opening the black box" of the connections between teacher learning, changes in instruction, changes in student response, and then improved testing outcomes. This would take careful design and planning for data collection.

As we planned for data collection, we met with district and union leadership—those who had been instrumental in creating the original policy. We explained the intended purpose of our study and asked for their guidance in identifying sites for study—after all, we not only wanted to answer the questions on our mind, but we also wanted to work collaboratively with these leaders to answer questions they might have about their policy in action. Right away, they offered us access to the professional development database, where every professional learning activity of the teachers was recorded and logged. Next, as we discussed specific sites for study, we narrowed to four elementary schools—two demographically matched pairs. Finally, the district and union leadership wanted to know if teachers who engaged specifically in professional development related to "language and literacy acquisition" had different student learning outcomes than those who did not.

We began by systematically coding the professional development activities of the classroom teachers in all four of the schools for both the type of activity (college course or district-provided course, for example) and topic of the course (language and literacy acquisition or math, for example). We noticed interesting patterns emerge at two of the schools—from there, we decided to go into the schools to gain a clearer picture of what was happening in the "black box." Two of the schools had teachers who participated in several courses together in cohorts from the schools. Were teachers who took certain professional development courses together more likely to work collaboratively and share instructional techniques and resources with one another? If so, what did this look like in action? District and union leadership then directed us to the principals and literacy coaches at both schools, to help us identify teachers who would be likely participants in our study.

From there, teachers were excited to talk about the professional learning activity and describe how they used their learning to improve instruction. They had engaged in professional development around a specific curriculum, which provided specific instructional strategies and ideas for reaching students in the classroom—and they wanted us to know how exactly it worked for them. They provided specific, concrete examples of learning strategies and skills they had learned, and they invited us into their classrooms to see evidence of their use of their knowledge in planning and creating classroom materials. We witnessed the use of their knowledge as they taught. The walls of the schools were lined with student work that showed the specific learning goals and strategies they had learned.

Although the shape of our study may not have been perfectly clear at the outset, through constructive conversations with strategic partners at the district and union level, we were able to find open and willing participants at the school level to provide evidence to support what had been asserted in teachers’ anecdotes.

Vignette 12 Progressive Sampling to Explore a Puzzle

By Catherine Marshall and Keren Dalyot

The puzzle was this: Why haven't government policies put an end to sexual harassment? We narrowed that broad question, deciding on intensive sampling of one population and asking: How do college women experience sexual harassment and define it? Then, using convenience and snowball sampling and some effort at maximum variation, we chose four accessible but very different colleges and made extra efforts to get a variety of interviewees—from differing family backgrounds, college majors, and races. Concepts from feminist critical policy analysis led us to come at the puzzle from women's perspectives, not from traditional survey and policy analyses, which had already been done over and over, resulting in no new ways to solve the problem.

With our three-person research team, we generated an interview protocol and used the team to examine the data separately and then together, always asking questions such as, Within the main themes, do we see variation? And how are we informed by negative instances? So focused, intensive interviewing allowed us to identify the common themes among 19 cases—for example, wide-ranging, nebulous, ambiguous definitions of harassment; little to no knowledge of college policies; and self-blame.

The sampling did create tradeoffs, though. Questions could be raised—Why not sample men? What about other colleges? How do you know you didn't just get extreme cases? How can you see this as transferable to harassment in other environments? Still, this sampling frame elicited findings that were reflections of women's existence in college cultures, where policies had done nothing to alter whether they felt safe. Intensive sampling was fruitful, especially since the extensive policy surveys had offered no sense of the cultural embeddedness of accepting harassment as "the way things are."

■ The Researcher’s Role: Issues of Personal Biography, Positionality, Entry,

Researcher Identity, Voice, and Biases

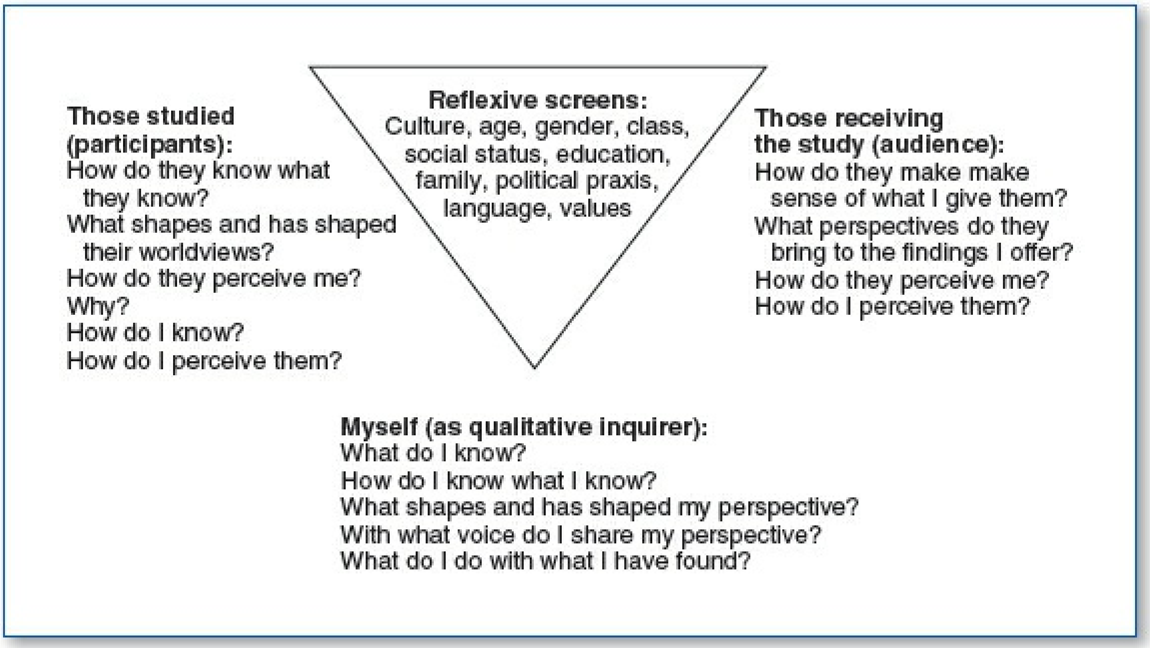
Research designs should include reflection on one's **identity** and one's sense of **voice** and perspectives, assumptions, and sensitivities. These are key elements in a proposal's discussion of the choice of the research questions, as mentioned in Chapter 4. Recall that, in Chapter 4, we spoke of the passion and excitement and insight that can stimulate a research project and come from one's identity, experience, and values (also known as **biases**). But they should be articulated as elements of the researcher role, access, ethics, entry (addressed later in this chapter), and also data management, analysis, and reporting (to be addressed in Chapters 8–10). When they are out in the open, they are more manageable and the reader of the final report can assess how those elements of identity affected the study. The schema presented in Figure 5.2 usefully portrays the range of questions to consider, both for proposals and for final reports. This figure can serve as a guide for a proposal section where researchers "come clean" with assumptions, any prior observations or associations that might influence the research, and any personal connections and histories that could be useful or, conversely, could be seen as a harmful bias.

Whether the presence of the researcher in the setting is sustained and intensive, as for long-term ethnographies, or relatively brief but personal, as for in-depth interview studies, the researcher enters the lives of the participants. Even the brief interview disrupts participants' daily routines. For qualitative research designs, then, this brings a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues that do not attend quantitative approaches (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000). The research proposal should include an extensive discussion of a plan for dealing with issues before they present dilemmas and also as they may arise in unanticipated ways in the field, using the advice and experience of previous scholars. The issues range from technical ones that address entry and efficiency in terms of role to interpersonal ones that capture the ethical and personal dilemmas that arise during the conduct of a study. Clearly, the considerations overlap and have reciprocal implications. For clarity, however, we address each set of issues in turn, and we recommend that proposal writers do the same.

Field Notes

Once the research begins, this written section of the research design can guide the researcher's **field notes** devoted to **self-reflections**. These notes will be reflections on what worked (or not) in gaining access or entry, maintaining access and ethics, and gathering data. They will assist in the maintenance of the research instrument. They will include things as simple as "Next time, make sure to bring a bottle of water and a clean shirt” or “The anger and mistrust I felt while conducting that interview should give me caution as I assess the quality of the interview data, but they might also give me insight when I analyze the data that seemed to hit at others’ repressed anger toward this person who has power over them.” Thus, **emotions**, passions, and biases are turned into research tools (Copp, 2008; Kleinman & Copp, 1993).

Figure 5.2 Reflexive Questions: Triangulated Inquiry


Those studied (participants):
How do they know what they know?
What shapes and has shaped their worldviews?
How do they perceive me?
Why?
How do I know?
How do I perceive them?
Reflexive screens:
Culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, political praxis, language, values
Those receiving the study (audience):
How do they make make sense of what I give them?
What perspectives do they bring to the findings I offer?
How do they perceive me?
How do I perceive them?
Myself (as qualitative inquirer):
What do I know?
How do I know what I know?
What shapes and has shaped my perspective?
With what voice do I share my perspective?
What do I do with what I have found?

SOURCE: Patton (2014, p. 72). Reprinted with permission from SAGE Publications.

Bracketing of the researcher’s personal experiences—recognizing where the personal insight is separated from the researcher’s collection of data—is important because it allows her to perceive the phenomenon “freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Still, it is difficult to fully bracket one’s experiences as a qualitative researcher. The proposal should have a section devoted to the **positionality** of the researcher herself, establishing how she discovered the importance of the research questions, how she has experienced them personally or professionally, and how even her very appearance could affect the research.

In qualitative studies, the **researcher is the instrument**. Her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study is fundamental to the methodology. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, the genre in which a study is situated may include postmodern or more traditional assumptions affecting the researcher’s role and position. A more traditional qualitative researcher learns from participants’ lives but maintains a stance of "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 2002, p. 49) to collect data and provide descriptive representations. Critical and postmodern genres, though, assume that all knowledge is political and that researchers are not neutral, since their ultimate purposes include advocacy and action.

Role Considerations

At the proposal stage, technical considerations include her assertions of her guidelines about the deployment of her time, positionality, and other resources, and about negotiating access.

Situating the Self

Patton (2002) develops a series of continua for thinking about one's role in planning the conduct of qualitative research. This section relies on that work considerably. First, the researcher may plan to have a role that entails varying degrees of **participantness**—that is, the degree of actual participation in daily life. At one extreme is the full participant, who goes about ordinary life in a role or set of roles constructed in the setting. At the other is the complete observer, who does not engage in social interaction and may even shun involvement in the world being studied. Of course, all possible complementary mixes of these roles along the continuum are available to the researcher. Our experience is that some sort of direct and immediate participation in the research environment usually becomes important to building and sustaining relationships. The researcher may help out with small chores (or large ones), learn more about a particular activity (and hence enter into that activity), or feel compelled to engage in daily activities to meet the demands of reciprocity. Such interaction is usually highly informative while remaining informal. Researchers should consider their degree of participantness.

Second, the researcher's role may vary as to its **revealedness**, or the extent to which the participants know that there is a study going on. Full disclosure lies at one end of this continuum, complete secrecy at the other. Patton (2002) advises "full and complete disclosure. People are seldom deceived or reassured by false or partial explanations—at least not for long" (p. 273). Still, revealing exact purposes tends to cue people to behave in unnatural ways, undermining qualitative purposes and principles. The researcher should discuss in the proposal the issues concerning revealing or concealing the purpose of the study and lay out a plan for making decisions. Those decisions are about initial entry—that is, getting permission to observe and collect data in a setting—but they are also for later stages, as when people ask questions such as, "Are you finding out about such-and-such scandal?" or "How much do you want to know about the other things you didn't ask me?"

The ethical issues surrounding covert research can be reduced to one fundamental question: Is the potential advancement of knowledge worth deceit? (See Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, Chap. 3, for a provocative discussion of this topic.) Many researchers follow Taylor and Bogdan's advice to be "truthful but vague" (p. 25) in portraying a research purpose to participants. The researcher should discuss in the proposal the issues concerning revealing or concealing the purpose of the study.

Third, the dimensions of a researcher's **role intensiveness** and **role extensiveness** may vary—that is, the amount of time spent daily in the setting and the duration of the study. Various positions on both dimensions demand certain role considerations by the researcher. For example, an intensive and extensive study requires the researcher to devote considerable time early on to developing trusting relations with the participants. Gathering pertinent data is secondary at that point. On the other hand, when the researcher will be minimally intrusive and present for a short period of time, she will need to practice and find ways to quickly build bridges and create trusting relations, since this mostly occurs in the first minutes of an interview and is crucial for gathering good data. In our view, this is especially difficult for novice (or shy) researchers.

Finally, the researcher's role may vary depending on whether the focus of the study is specific or diffuse. When the research questions are well developed beforehand and data appropriate to address those questions have been identified, the researcher's role can be managed efficiently and carefully to ensure good use of the available time (both the researcher's and the participants'). Even when well specified, however, sound qualitative design protects the researcher's right to follow the compelling question, the nagging puzzle that presents itself once in the setting. When the research questions are more diffuse and exploratory, the plan for deploying the self should ensure access to a number of events, people, and perspectives on the social phenomenon chosen for study.

We emphasize this, too: Leave yourself time and role flexibility to follow serendipitous leads (whether in an interview planned for 20 minutes but needing 2 hours or a setting planned for 1 day and turning into a 1-year study). A sample of 560 qualitative PhD studies using interviews showed a mean sample size of 31 (Mason, 2010). With grounded theory, a marker for sampling adequacy has been the idea of collecting data until one achieves theoretical saturation of data/thematic saturation. We expand on this in Chapter 8, but the proposed plan for site and sample must be tied to the plan for data analysis and the ways of buttressing the credibility, transferability, and utility of the study.

Fortunately, some researchers who have used participant observation have provided extensive descriptions of their plans, rationales, and actual experiences. Notable among these are researchers who have engaged in significant reflection on the research endeavor and their lives as researchers. References to these works are listed under "Personal Reflections" at the end of this chapter.

Negotiating Entry, Easing Tensions, and Role Maintenance

The research design section of a proposal should contain plans for negotiating access to the site and/or participants through formal and informal gatekeepers in an organization, whether an urban gang or an Ivy League university. Tensions are eased by a simple, honest self-introduction and reminder of the project, a way of conveying that the participant is particularly important for the project, a request to get in writing the participant's approval to be tape-recorded, and some culturally appropriate small talk. We recommend that, rather than trying to be inauthentic by adopting a contrived role, qualitative researchers be themselves, true to their social identities and their interests in the setting and/or topic.

The energy that comes from a researcher's high level of personal interest (called bias in traditional research) is infectious and quite useful for gaining access. Entry, access, and role will be continuous challenges when the researcher moves around in various settings within an organization. The researcher should reveal sensitivity to participants' testing of her and their reluctance to participate, unquestionably respecting their right not to participate in a study. Further discussions of access issues can be found in the general texts about qualitative research referenced at the end of this chapter.

Long-Term Ethnography and Role Maintenance.

Those proposing long-term ethnographic studies of particular groups face unique challenges. At times, the best entry is one where an insider provides sponsorship and helps the researcher seem nonthreatening. There are circumstances, however, when sponsorship can backfire, setting the researcher up for difficulties in accessing other groups within the organization. For those conducting studies of organizations, negotiating access may require perseverance and persistence with formal leaders within the organization, as Vignette 13 depicts. This vignette is based on the work of Berger (2003).

Tensions do arise whether researchers are involved over the long term or the short term. We recommend that researchers anticipate such tensions and plan strategies for preventing or easing them if they arise from relationships with research participants. A few anthropologists have written amusing accounts of how they muddled through such tensions. A carefully guarded bottle of gin and planned retreats to the city helped Bowen (1964) maintain some status and stability as she dealt with mamba snakes in the outhouse and the resistance of chiefs to her presence in a village in West Africa. And Rabinow's (1977) descriptions of maintaining access within the intertwinings of marital traditions, lineage, rank, and rituals he encountered in Moroccan culture are probably quite informative for the researcher planning participant observation in any complex cultural setting.

Researchers need to devise strategies to maintain themselves (remember that the researcher is the research instrument). Research designs should include strategies to protect the physical and emotional health and safety of the researcher by providing plans for quiet places where she can write notes, reassess roles, retreat from the setting, or question the directions of the research. Several strategies for dealing with sometimes overwhelming emotional involvement include journal writing, peer debriefing, and personal counseling, as these are ways to maintain balance when data collection “can break your heart” (Rager, 2005, p. 23).

In some settings, the researcher’s planning may go well beyond considerations of comfort and stress relief. In “street ethnography” one must set up plans to stay safe. Unfamiliar settings where strangers are unwelcome, where illegal activities may be observed, or where the researcher’s race or gender makes her unwelcome require careful sensitivities (Lee, 1995; Warren, 2001). In anticipating such potential difficulties, proposals should cite the experiences of previous researchers and apply them to the current research to think through role strategies; some excellent sources are provided at the end of this chapter.

Vignette 13 Negotiating and Maintaining Access With a Transient, Vulnerable Population

A study of socially marginalized women (former crack cocaine users and sex workers who became politically active after contracting HIV/AIDS) required great sensitivity on the part of the researcher. Berger (2003) found that negotiating access to such a vulnerable population required conversations with people in agencies such as homeless shelters, courthouses, the Department of Health, and substance abuse facilities. Gatekeepers in these agencies didn't always agree readily to participate in the study. They were often protective of their clientele (as well they should be) and of their own views of the relevant issues. Thus, when Berger spoke of her desire to understand the complexities of drug-related behaviors and of the lives of sex workers, the gatekeepers were reluctant to cooperate. Their expressed views were that drugs explain most of the women's behaviors and that prostitution is dangerous and degrading. To them, learning about the subtleties and complexities of this social world had no immediate use. Although they were accustomed to survey research, they simply could not see the value (to them) of long hours of oral histories. Yet these gatekeepers' assistance was essential. What was Berger to do?

With a new approach and a new set of gatekeepers, Berger introduced her study this way: Eliciting the women's stories would confirm what the gatekeepers knew about the challenging lives of these women, who frequently felt victimized by larger social structures and often felt at the mercy of their drug addiction. As she recounts, "A hook is better when it is short and simple . . . it's helpful to try to categorize the type of rejection . . . [and to] plan ahead to counter or redirect assumptions" (p. 67).

Although they still regarded Berger as quite strange, the gatekeepers eventually perceived her as a "nice black girl" (p. 67) who reminded them of some distant cousin. This fictive kin status served well, so she began to purposefully incorporate the naive fictive kin performance to maintain access, to encourage participants to help her get the record straight and help her tell outsiders how their real stories differed from televised stereotypes.

Sensitivity in Gaining Access.

Gaining access to sites—receiving formal approval, such as a gatekeeper's sponsorship or a principal's consent—requires time, patience, and sensitivity to the rhythms and norms of a group. At the proposal stage, the researcher should, at least, have a draft **entry letter** or script or, even better, demonstrate that negotiations have begun and formal approval is likely and that she has knowledge about the nuances of entry and a healthy respect for participants' likely concerns. Vignette 14 gives a frank view of just how thoughtfully one must prepare for what may happen even after careful entry and scripting.

Practice piloting interviews and try role-playing with friends to prevent these kinds of shocks, which are hard to deal with in the moment.

Vignette 14 Role and Ethics in Sexual Harassment Research

By Keren Dalyot

At her invitation, I was involved with Catherine Marshall's research project on college women's perceptions of and experiences with sexual harassment. We conceived the project and especially the data collection with a notion that, although we were dealing with a topic that has the potential to be sensitive, we were eliciting information from volunteers. Our proposal pretty much sailed through the IRB process and didn't raise any alarms.

Now it was time for data collection! We advertised and solicited participation from college women in different disciplines. We thought of everything: location, recording device, parking, and timing. What we didn't really anticipate, given the questions in our protocol, were the kinds of details the stories of these young women would include.

My first interview was scheduled smoothly, and the young woman seemed very enthusiastic to participate and share her thoughts and experiences. About halfway through the interview, we talked about her reactions to other women she knew who were sexually harassed and about the university atmosphere in general, and she shared a personal experience. My field notes read:

> An intimate moment came when I asked her if people ever told her "that's just the way things work" and she revealed that her brother told her that after she told him that she was sexually assaulted. She said he was on the rowing team as well. She said that this was the climate. She did not talk about this further and I did not ask. I thanked her for sharing with me.

I was speechless and shocked. I had not expected this! I wasn't sure how to react. The IRB process did not provide any tools. Later, when we debriefed in our research team, I talked about this experience and we brainstormed some ideas on how best to react and also support the courageous young women who participated in our study. We compared that case with the one of the graduate student who looked to the only female professor in her field for guidance in confronting harassment. The powerful male professor's quid pro quo proposition was all the more problematic since he was key to her future career. The female professor told her not to cause a ruckus because it would only jeopardize her future!

These were not the last times we encountered sensitive information and details from participants in the research. But for me, when a junior talked about her experiences in high school with boys and sex and how that influenced her, at least by then I was better prepared, having practiced my "**empathy**" face and my “not-too-shocked” face.

Efficiency

In qualitative studies, the researcher should think through how she will deploy the resources available for the study to ensure full responses to the research questions. Although this consideration overlaps directly with decisions about data gathering, issues of role also arise here. The researcher should think carefully about how she can deploy the self, as it were, to maximize the opportunities for gathering data. This consideration should be balanced against the resources available for the study —most notably, time and energy.

One should design the study to be “reasonable in size and complexity so that it can be completed with the time and resources available” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 51). In other words, one makes judgment calls. Researchers who are not well versed in qualitative traditions put aside 3 months and naively assert that they will conduct 10 one-hour interviews, collect some documents, analyze and write, and then finish. Such a proposal should not be approved, for oh so many reasons!

On the other hand, we do caution the novice to create some boundaries. Once a study is begun, tantalizing puzzles and intriguing questions mushroom. Even though the researcher reserves the right to pursue them, she should remain mindful of the goal of the project. Doctoral students often need to be gently prodded back into a structure for the completion of the work. Deciding on a priori but tentative statements about boundaries will help: A discussion of goals and limitations (e.g., planning for five life histories or for observations in one school for 1 year) and reminders of practical considerations (e.g., speaking of the limits of dwindling funds, the need to get a “real” job) will serve as admonitions that the research cannot go on forever. In Chapters 9 and 10, we will also discuss the techniques for making sure that data collection and analysis go hand in hand and that the researcher knows how to progress with data analysis in ways that support the final report.

Rapport and Interpersonal Considerations

One could argue that the success of qualitative studies depends primarily on the interpersonal skills of the researcher. In general qualitative research texts, this caveat is often couched as building trust, maintaining good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity, and sensitively considering ethical issues. These issues entail an awareness of the **politics** of organizations as well as sensitivity to human interaction. Because the conduct of the study often depends exclusively on the relationships the researcher builds with participants, interpersonal skills are paramount. We would go so far as to dissuade a would-be qualitative researcher from using a qualitative approach if she cannot converse easily with others—being an active, patient, and thoughtful listener, and having an empathetic understanding of and profound respect for the perspectives of others. Researchers can lose great opportunities for data if they feel compelled to fill in silences, offer their own opinions, or show off how much they know. It is important to acknowledge that it is difficult for some people to become good qualitative researchers, despite sensitive and thoughtful training in courses and through pilot studies.

Furthermore, some of the traditions of social science create a kind of **academic armor** that prevents the intimate emotional engagement often required in qualitative research (Lerum, 2001). The use of obscure academic language (linguistic armor), professional clothing and demeanor (physical armor), assumptions of theoretical privilege (ideological armor), and the effort to avoid “going native” (to be objective and detached), all create this academic armor. Dropping the academic armor allows richer, more intimate acceptance into the ongoing lives and sentiments of participants; it is a visceral way of moving beyond seeing to understanding (Denzin, 1997). In his study of college football, Toma (2000) found that in the give-and-take of interviews, rapport helped participants see new and deeper meanings as they responded to him. Closeness, engagement, and involvement can enhance the richness of the research.

Still, the researcher needs protection at times. Researchers planning their roles and their degree of engagement—whether for research on sex workers, snake handlers, or professions where sexual harassment is allowed—will want to plan for some deployment of academic armor at times (Lerum, 2001). Researchers’ respect and caring for participants can, if unguarded, go so far that they lose their ability to separate from personal entanglements (Wolcott, 2002). (We discuss this notion of having an exit strategy later in the chapter.)

In the research design section, discussions of one’s role in the setting and consideration of how participants’ willingness to engage in thoughtful reflection may be affected help provide evidence that the researcher knows enough about the setting and the people, their routines, and their environments to anticipate how she will fit in. Researchers benefit from carefully thinking through their own roles, because most participants detect and reject insincere, inauthentic people.

In addition, research designs may need plans to educate the participants about the researcher's role. Participants may be uneasy about their presence, may see them as spies or evaluators or even new volunteer help! Researchers should prepare to describe their likely activities while in the setting, what they are interested in learning about, the possible uses of the information, and how the participants can engage in the research. Norms of reciprocity suggest that the researcher cannot be simply a spongelike observer in some settings. For example, Thorne (1983) describes in compelling detail, in her reflections on studying war resistance in the 1960s, how many people will not respond to or trust someone who will not take a stand. Providing further illustration of these ideas, Vignette 15 describes how Rosalie Wax (1971) went about the complex task of building trust in her study of Native Americans.

Vignette 15 demonstrates that researchers should allow time and be sensitive to the need for time to pass, for flexibility in their roles, and for patience, because confidence and trust emerge over time through complex interactions. Roles and relationships do emerge in the field. At the proposal stage, however, the researcher should demonstrate a logical plan that respects the need for time to build relationships. It is not enough to throw in a statement asserting that trust and relationships are important. The researcher should also display the skills and sensitivities to deal with complexities in the relationships that will inevitably emerge during her fieldwork.

Vignette 15 Building Trust

Speaking of researchers' initial contacts with members of the society or group chosen for study, anthropologist Rosalie Wax (1971) found that they can result in a reciprocal relationship between host and field-worker, which can help in avoiding foolish, insulting, and potentially dangerous behavior. She advised: Make valuable contacts and seek information to understand the customs regarding acceptance and repayment of obligations. “The most egregious error that a field-worker can commit,” according to Wax (p. 47), is assuming that tolerance by hosts also implies their high regard and inclusion.

In her ethnographic community study of Native American reservation society, Wax found the women embarrassed and hesitant to open their poor, bare homes to the scrutiny of a researcher. Their trust and cooperation were essential to her study because Wax sought to understand the relationship between cultural patterns expressed in the home and poor adjustment and underachievement by the children at school. In her account of the slow uncovering of answers, Wax reveals her method of making others comfortable with her presence. She permitted children to play with her typewriter. She employed some of the women as interviewers. Avoiding the social worker or Bureau-of-Indian-Affairs do-gooder image, Wax interacted woman to woman, always exploring but doing so with an interest in the welfare of the women's children.

Reciprocity

A thorough research proposal also demonstrates a plan for managing the researcher's intrusions into settings. As people adjust to the researcher's presence, they are deciding whether to give their time to be interviewed or to help the researcher understand group norms. When people adjust their priorities and routines to help the researcher, or even to help get others to tolerate the researcher's presence, they are giving of themselves. Having a plan to reciprocate for their willingness is part of the proposal. The researcher is indebted and should be sensitive to this.

Reciprocity may entail helping out with small tasks, providing informal feedback, making coffee, being a good listener, or tutoring. Of course, reciprocity should fit within the constraints of research and personal ethics and of maintaining one's role as a researcher. Research design sections should include an array of possible tokens of appreciation: cookies, books, gift cards, the offer of an hour of leaf raking or babysitting. Recently, organizations such as school districts have wanted to see how the research will contribute to a school's mission or whether books or equipment might be donated. A word of caution: Think ahead about **role boundaries**. Prior planning can ward off uncomfortable situations where the researcher is asked for an undeserved job recommendation letter, for gossip, or for a date. Proposals should demonstrate awareness of the need to set guidelines to follow and boundaries to maintain.

Ethics

The research design should demonstrate awareness of qualities that make a successful qualitative researcher, including an exquisite sensitivity to the ethical issues surrounding any human interactions. As introduced in Chapter 3, ethical considerations are much more than just ensuring **informed consent** and protecting participants' anonymity. The research design anticipates the array of ethical challenges that will occur. As Lerum (2001) says, emotionally engaged researchers must continuously evaluate and construct their behavior. If anticipated ahead of entry into the field, then that emotional engagement will be more manageable. Planning ahead, in the research design section, may help the challenges in the field be less dilemmatic and provide opportunities for ways to negotiate dilemmas when they do arise.

Role, reciprocity, and ethical issues must be thought through carefully in all settings but especially in those that are particularly sensitive or taboo. In developing the section of the proposal that addresses role and reciprocity issues, the qualitative researcher should draw on the advice and experience of her predecessors who have written their experiences and advice. When being honest, many—even most—authors reveal that they have encountered unanticipated role and **ethical dilemmas** as they actually collected data.

The competent research proposal, then, anticipates issues of negotiating entry, reciprocity, **role maintenance**, and receptivity, and, at the same time, adheres to ethical principles. The researcher must demonstrate awareness of the complex ethical issues in qualitative research and show that the research is both feasible and ethical. If the researcher will be playing a deceptive role, she should demonstrate that this will not be harmful to the participants. If she will require people to change their routines or donate their time, doing so must be voluntary for them. But what is routine and acceptable in one setting may be harmful in another; what is volunteered in one may be withheld in another. She should have calculated how she will respond if asked for a $5 loan. She should demonstrate awareness that people might want to use her for access, say, to the university. She should plan so that, if her questioning stumbles onto highly emotional revelations, she will be capable of providing appropriate responses.

The researcher cannot anticipate everything, but she must reveal an awareness of, an appreciation for, and a commitment to ethical principles for research. Several authors have explored these issues in the general texts and articles referenced at the end of this chapter (especially in the "Personal, Political, and Ethical Dilemmas" section) as well as in the studies described in Vignettes 16 and 17.

Was Soloway taking advantage of his friendship with Mario? Is the participant observer a friend to participants? Can the researcher be both observer and friend? How does one juggle the objectivity of the stranger and the desire for the well-being of a friend? “The bind on the ethnographer’s personal ethic,” according to Soloway and Walters (1977), “is that his total integrity cannot be maintained in either role” (p. 166).

What represents a researcher’s ethical response when observing or possibly becoming involved in criminal activity? To study adult criminals in their natural settings, the researcher must “make the moral decision that in some ways he will break the law himself,” according to Polsky (1969, pp. 133–134).

In the exchange with Mario, the researchers attempted to strike a balance by employing the principle of **relativism**. According to this principle, ethnographers are not expected to renounce their own culturally formed consciences, nor are they to project those values on their subjects. “Relativism operationally guards against two dangers, the ethnographer’s own **ethnocentrism** and an equally dangerous inverted ethnocentrism—that is, going native and personally identifying with the studied value system” (Soloway & Walters, 1977, p. 168).

Manning (1972) recounted his experience advising a student designing research on police. He noted that the student could walk the beat with the police officer, ride in the patrol car with the police officer, and even tag along when an arrest was about to be made. But he could not be a police officer, wear the uniform, take the risks, make the arrests, or adopt the police officer’s perspective. How do researchers go about courting the cooperation of individuals whose social ecology is so very different from their own? Must researchers assume identities other than their own? According to Westley (1967), a critical norm among law enforcement personnel is the maintenance of secrecy:

> It is carefully taught to every rookie policeman. . . . The violator is cut off from vital sources of information and the protection of his colleagues in times of emergency. Secrecy means that policemen must not talk about police work to those outside the department. (p. 774)

So this student had to consider whether it was ethical to encourage police officers to talk about their work and what he would do if he should observe an incidence of police brutality. Complying with the law and turning the officer in would risk the destruction of the study. Remaining silent would gain the trust of those he was observing, along with some leverage. He planned ahead, deciding to opt for the benefits of silence.

Not all qualitative studies present such extreme ethical dilemmas. It is, however, quite difficult to maintain the role of researcher when caught in the middle of events that seem to call for action. Researchers must anticipate more routine ethical issues and be prepared to make on-the-spot decisions that (one hopes) follow general ethical principles (see, especially, Christians, 2000, 2005; Welland & Pugsley, 2002). Reading other researchers' discussions of ethical problems and using case material to prepare for hypothetical situations can illuminate so-called standard ethical considerations and refine the researcher's abilities to reason through moral arguments. Vignette 17 draws from the work of a Chicana ethnographer as she struggled with the challenges of conducting research to fulfill her own goals while respecting those participating in the study. The political and ethical dilemmas she confronted were acute, as she found herself co-opted by the dominant Anglo leaders in the community where she conducted her research.

Vignette 17 shows that a researcher's role can be co-opted by people in positions of **power**. Although the intent of the research may be to show the positive aspects of a culture, it is easy for an inadequately self-reflexive researcher to be appropriated by and become complicit in the process by which marginalized groups are negatively depicted as a problem.

Vignette 16 Ethics and Ethnographic Fieldwork

Ethnographic research has traditionally been undertaken in fields that, by virtue of the contrast between them and the researcher's own culture, could be described as exotic. The researcher's goal is to describe the symbols and values of such a culture without passing judgment based on her cultural context. Soloway and Walters (1977), however, point out that when a researcher studies those whose acts are considered criminal, profound ethical dilemmas arise: "When one decides to attempt to enter their world and to study it, the field-worker arrives at a true moral, ethical, and legal existential crisis" (p. 161).

One option is to carry out studies of criminal subcultures from within institutions such as prisons or treatment centers. Critical of such a procedure, Soloway and Walters note that "if addicts are studied at Lexington [a federal hospital], then the result is a study of patients. If addicts are studied in jail, the result is a study of prisoners" (p. 163).

To understand addiction, Soloway chose to enter the addicts' natural habitat. Entry was aided by his affiliation with a methadone treatment program and the location of his research, the neighborhood where he had spent his childhood. One of his contacts during observation of the weekly distribution of methadone was Mario, an old neighborhood friend and a patient at the treatment center.

Mario saw this relationship as a source of status both within the program and on the street. He chose to test this relationship at one point, coming in "high" for his weekly dose. When he was refused the methadone because of his condition, he sought out his friend the ethnographer to intercede with the nurses. Not only did the researcher refuse to intercede, he rebuked Mario, saying, "I'm no lame social worker from the suburbs; you're high and everybody knows it" (p. 165). Even though he risked jeopardizing the researcher-informant relationship, the risk paid off because Mario eventually introduced Soloway to other addicts. This involvement with urban heroin addicts enabled him to observe them in the context of their total social milieu, where "junkie" was only part of their identity.

Vignette 17 Ethics, Power, and Politics

Hispanic herself, with excellent conversational Spanish skills, Sofia Villenas (1996) designed research on immigrant Hispanic mothers with an overly simplistic assertion that the women would volunteer their experiences in expansive interviews and welcome her observing them. Her proposal sailed through the IRB and the dissertation committee approvals. Later, reflecting on her study, Villenas described being caught between her role as a Chicana ethnographer, the marginalized Latino community she studied, and the Anglo groups in power within the community. She examined the educational histories of Latina mothers who were recent immigrants in the small rural community of Hope City, North Carolina. She focused on telling the women's stories about how they created educational models for raising their children, and she worked to overcome the Latino community's perception of her as a privileged ethnographer from an elite university. However, she found herself being co-opted by the dominant, English-speaking community, who spoke of Latino family education and child-rearing practices as problematic and "lacking." By using and not challenging the language of the community leaders, she was complying with this negative representation.

Concerned about gaining access to community leaders, she censored herself when she spoke to them and did not point out their racist language and demeaning depictions of the Latino community. In addition, the community leaders assumed that she shared their fear of poor persons and people of color and that she also saw the Latino community as a "problem." Because there were no Latinos/as in the community in leadership positions with whom Villenas could align herself, she became the sole Latina accepted by the community leaders. In this role, she was accepted as an insider in the Anglo community while, at the same time, being seen as an outsider by the Latino community.

To counter this co-opted role, she started "to engage in small subversive strategies and acts of resistance" (p. 725). For example, she used speaking opportunities in meetings to present a positive depiction of the Latino community and chose not to sit at the head table with the community leaders, instead sitting in the audience with friends she had made in the Latino community.

Planning the Exit

The logical, but often forgotten, extension of entry, access, role, reciprocity, and ethics is the researcher's **exit strategy**. A plan is needed, whether it is the thank you and goodbye after a 20-minute interview or the array of separations from roles played in a 1-year immersion in an organization. For all respondents, the initial negotiation of access should have, at the very least, some explanation of what the final product will look like and, by implication, the stated expectation that the relationship is temporary. Still, with intense interaction and over time, with sharing, proffering of assistance, gifts, and confessions, this exit expectation fades. Researchers must decide. Some choose to maintain some relationship in small ways, such as birthday cards, or more fully, as consultants, friends, and even employees.

Whether the researcher chooses to end the relationships or continue them in some way, being respectful of people and relationships is essential for being an ethical researcher. One does not grab the data and run. At the very least, for participants who have provided access and have opened up their daily lives and their views, the researcher should plan a gradual exit, talking about the completion of the project, providing samples of how the report will look, and leaving gifts or offers of assistance as tokens that supplement words and notes of gratitude. Asking to be kept on a mailing list and taking time to send articles of interest or photos from the setting and other personal notes ease potential resentments or a sense of abandonment. Also, after intense commitments of time and focus, the researcher most likely will, on leaving the field, have strong feelings of separation, loneliness, and loss. Anticipating these feelings is especially important for researchers with very social, relationship-oriented natures. Some never get over the transition to the lonelier phases of analysis and writing.

Finally, researchers' plans for role management have to include self-care strategies to deal with fatigue, "compassion stress," and other powerful emotions (Rager, 2005). Knowing how to anticipate the emotions of fieldwork is part of the research design, to be addressed in proposal sections on role, entry, and ethics. Knowing how to view one's own emotions as valuable researcher tools (rather than "bad subjectivity") is a leap ahead in qualitative thought. As Copp (2008) says, "abundant literature on obtaining and maintaining research rapport chronicles the critical importance of role-taking emotions, such as trust and empathy" (p. 251). Knowing how to reflect, in field notes, on a feeling of anger or dislike or a feeling of skepticism can increase the trustworthiness of data and ward off jumping to conclusions.

Moving on to another site is sometimes the best way to manage—politically and ethically—a difficult situation: There are times when, even with the best planning, the researcher cannot gain entry to a site, so abandoning that effort and moving on will be best, as Vignette 18 shows.

Sometimes, sensitivities in one setting make entry, role, and ethics quite dilemma laden, so researchers should change the plan. At some point, they decide that the efforts to get around the barriers to entry are excessive, and they must respect the needs of key actors in the setting. With topics that are politicized and sensitive, the researcher should identify several potential sites so he can move to an alternative site with little delay if need be.]

Vignette 18 Moving On

Wanting to explore the interaction between the political demands of a community and access to leadership in a school district by women and people of color, Marshall (1992) designed comparative case studies and identified two sites—two cities in the same region of the country with similar political cultures, demographic composition, and comparatively large numbers of women and people of color in leadership positions. The sites were chosen for comparability along those dimensions but with one significant difference: “Change City” showed evidence of a political structure undergoing substantial change, whereas “Avondale” represented a more placid political climate.

At Avondale, Marshall encountered no more than the typical bureaucratic barriers to gaining access: letters to gatekeepers, meetings with district research directors, assurances of compliance with district monitoring of the research. Pleased with this response, she began the access process in Change City by subscribing to the local newspaper to learn about local politics and by placing phone calls to the superintendent, a newly hired African American man from another state. Weeks passed. Months passed. Her politely persistent calls resulted in a telephone relationship with the secretary only! She devised other strategies: letters flattering to the superintendent, reassurances of the value of the research for the district, name-dropping, emphasizing the university letterhead in her written correspondence and the study’s connection to a national center on school leadership. Still no response.

Searching for insights behind the scenes, Marshall learned that this new superintendent was extremely careful about controlling information as he dealt with an explosive dispute about resources, people of color in administrative positions, and political maneuvers to support incumbent white administrators. Intrigued, Marshall tried one last tactic: the “chance” meeting. With a little help from the superintendent’s secretary, she got herself invited to a conference that the superintendent planned to attend and was able to engage him in conversation during a coffee break. In the context of conference-related talk, she mentioned casually that she hoped to talk with him about doing research in the district. Gracious, interested, and promising to talk at length at the next break, the superintendent appeared open.

Much to Marshall’s chagrin, however, his assistant apologized that the superintendent had been called back to the office to manage some emergency. Foiled again!

It was time to face facts. The political controversy about people of color in leadership positions—the very question that she wanted to study—was the tense and difficult issue that kept this superintendent from risking exposure in this political maelstrom. Marshall realized she should respect that and move her study to another site.

■ Anticipating Reviewers' Concerns

Researchers should anticipate proposal **reviewers' concerns**. Will this design work? Will this researcher be able to handle the anticipated ethical dilemmas? How will the researcher know where and how to collect data? Will she get people to speak and act authentically? Will she be able to make any meaningful sense of the voluminous data that will be amassed? One's research design section should draw supporting evidence for the decisions from the relevant quotations of researchers who have written about these issues, thereby allaying fears that dilemmas encountered in the field will be unmanageable.

Making reference to particularly sensitive researcher ethics concerning participants, such as Krieger's (1985) experience studying a lesbian community, is useful and compelling. Or the researcher can cite Chaudhry's (1997) example of handling complex **role dilemmas** as she studied Pakistani Muslim immigrants. Or the researcher can use the example of Lifton (1991) as he calculated how to approach survivors of the Hiroshima bombing. He demonstrates ethical sensitivity, saying, "In making the arrangements for the interviews, I was aware of my delicate—even Kafkaesque—position as an American psychiatrist approaching people about their feelings considering the bomb" (p. 8). He continues with details of the excruciatingly careful and gradual negotiation of access, aided by intermediaries, and convincing people that

> rather than loose impressions and half-truths, systematic research was needed; and hope that such research might make some contribution to the mastery of these weapons and the avoidance of their use, as well as to our general knowledge of man. (p. 9)

Then researchers can use concepts from their conceptual framework and citations from their literature review to suggest possible categories or themes for data analysis. Finally, when possible, it is useful to include, in the research design section, a list of preliminary or tentative interview questions as well as observation and coding categories. Many IRB committees in universities require these. Funding agencies will find them useful in assessing the quality of the proposal. These can be developed from a pilot study or from the literature review. Such an outline demonstrates that the researcher has the ability to make connections between sensitizing concepts, from the literature review to the research design. It also emphasizes that the researcher understands how to start gathering data as she begins the study and that she has an initial approach to analyzing the data. As one illustration, Vignette 19 is derived from Basit's (2003) recounting of planning for data analysis in her study of the aspirations of British Muslim girls.

When a proposal is peppered with concrete plans for managing design decisions, it provides reassurance that the researcher has leaned on qualitative research traditions for advice, has anticipated a range of issues to be handled, and will be able to know what to do "in the field." One must include good statements of the overall approach in the proposal. Once this grounding is established, the proposal continues with the more focusing design decisions.

The preceding discussions have taken the reader through the recursive process of deciding on an overall approach to the study, building a rationale around it, discussing the sites and participants, and thinking about your role, your access, your ways of reciprocating for access and help, and the ethical issues in the conduct of the study. The next two chapters describe primary and secondary data collection methods. They provide choices to help find the concrete answers to the question, "How will I actually collect data and what will my data look like?"

Vignette 19 Anticipating the Initial Coding Categories

Anticipating the arduous, yet creative, dynamic process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorizing, Tehima Basit (2003) knew that prior planning for data coding was crucial. She read all the warnings and advice of Miles (1979), Gough and Scott (2000), and Delamont (1992), who cautioned against shortcuts. As she prepared to describe how she would handle “data condensation” and “data distillation” (Tesch, 1990), she knew that she must provide some concrete examples of how she would proceed. She recalled that “category names can come from the pool of concepts that researchers already have from their disciplinary and professional reading, or borrowed from technical literature, or are the words and phrases used by informants themselves” (Basit, 2003, p. 144). From her interviews with adolescent girls, parents, and teachers, she elicited 67 codes and themes: ethnicity, language, freedom, control, gender, family patterns, marriage and career, further education, homework, unrealistic aspirations, and so on.

With these as a start, she referred to her literature review for concepts to elicit deeper connections. Thus, her coding categories had evolved from her literature review but also from the interviews, which provided context and ways of altering, distilling, and refining themes.

Plunging into data collection and analysis with a good sense of **initial themes** and the need to value the unstructured, nonnumerical nature of qualitative data provided Basit (and her reviewers) with needed guidance and reassurance. With confidence, she answered the questions, “How are such voluminous rich data managed?” and “Which parts of your literature review frame your analysis?”

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Catherine:* I have found that, when I show students examples of my own studies’ field notes, they can finally imagine ways those notes can include data as well as all that self-reflection and the analytic notes that will facilitate and anticipate data analysis insights. They see how they can use these notes during data analysis as monitors of the quality of their data and their interpretations. Nothing like a good concrete example, eh?

Gretchen: Yes, concrete works nicely. Same thing with positionality and role. I can always find concrete examples of research reports that have little or no exposition of these, and can lead the class into a long list of doubts of the credibility of the study. These sorts of things were just buried, or assumed to be unnecessary in the past.”

Dialogue Between Learners

“Karla,

Taking up our conversation on the process of doing and writing qualitative research, I was thinking about how much we have to be self-reflexive. Like you said, we need to create space for ourselves to think, rethink, and re-rethink our work—from designing our research to writing it up. However, I often find myself so wrapped up in my theories and research that it “spills over” to other aspects of my life. Most of my friends don’t really enjoy my mini lectures on feminist theory and/or gender equality in education.

Do you think that being so reflexive and personally engaged with your research is a unique feature of qualitative research? I do think that in some disciplines using qualitative methods requires justifications and explanations that are not required from those doing research using quantitative methods.

Another related issue that has been on my mind is my positionality and role as a researcher. Because I am so engaged with and in my research and also with and in my theoretical lens I have to be careful to keep some academic distance to avoid taking a role that is too much participatory.

How do you approach these issues? It’s been a while since I discussed these with my peers.

Hope all is proceeding well with your writing,

Keren

Hey, Keren!

Your comment about “spillover” made me laugh out loud! That totally resonates with me, too! I think part of it is because the nature of qualitative research can be such a lonely process.

I also find the issue you raise about reflexivity to be particularly salient. I’ve been negotiating the identity of outsider/insider throughout the research process. My own values, as well as my attention to postcolonial theory, have also made me particularly sensitive about my role within the larger context of power and northern domination. For this reason, I found it useful to bring in my own voice when relevant. Similarly, I even refer to my husband from time to time, as his own experiences often serve as confirming anecdotes of what I was seeing at the site. This seemed a bit inappropriate to me at first, but I think it really provides additional depth to my work—in identifying supporting opinions as well as providing the reader with more information about my positionality.

I also want to mention the review board and informed consent. During my data collection period, I was amazed at how research participants seemed disinterested in informed consent. They were happy to speak with me and seemingly waved off my attempts to institutionalize our interactions. For me, this simply accentuated my attentiveness to ethics in how I handled their contributions.

Enough for now—take care!

Karla”

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Key Concepts

academic armor
access
biases
case study
closeness of interaction
complexity of design
discourse analysis
efficiency
emotions
empathy
entry
entry letter
ethical dilemmas
ethics
ethnocentrism
exit strategy
field notes
first days in the field
identity
in-depth interview strategy
informational adequacy
informed consent
initial themes
institutional review board
“it depends”
microanalysis
multisite sampling
participantness
pilot studies
politics
positionality
power
rapport
rationale
reciprocity
relativism
research in your own setting
researcher as instrument
revealedness

reviewers' concerns
risk
role
role boundaries
role dilemmas
role extensiveness
role intensiveness
role maintenance
sampling
self-reflections
site selection
site specific
textual analysis
trustworthiness
voice
vulnerable population

Chapter 6 Basic Data Collection Methods

Qualitative researchers typically rely on four primary methods for gathering information: (1) participating in the setting, (2) observing directly, (3) interviewing in depth, and (4) analyzing documents and material culture, with varying emphases. These form the core of their inquiry—the staples of the diet. This chapter provides a brief discussion of these basic methods to be considered in designing a qualitative study. Most studies use a combination of data collection methods. Several secondary and somewhat more specialized methods of data collection supplement them; these are discussed in Chapter 7. This discussion does not replace the many excellent, detailed references on data collection (we refer to many at the end of this chapter). Its purpose is to guide the proposal writer in stipulating the methods of choice for his study and in describing for the reader how the data will inform the research questions. At the end of these discussions, as appropriate, we provide a short narrative on the salient **ethical issues** that may arise. How the researcher plans to use these methods, however, depends on several considerations.

Chapter 1 presented an introductory discussion of the assumptions that shape qualitative methods. As the grounding for a selection of methods, we extend that discussion here, using Brantlinger's (1997) useful summary of seven categories of crucial assumptions for qualitative inquiry. While the discussion below suggests that these are binary positions, this is not the case. These sets of assumptions are more usefully grappled with as continua, which is how they are depicted in Table 6.1.

The first assumption concerns the researcher's views of the *nature of the research*: Is the inquiry attempting to be technical and neutral, intending to conform to traditional research within his discipline, or is it controversial and critical, with an explicit political agenda? Second, how does he construe his location, his *positioning relative to the participants*? Does he view himself as distant and objective or intimately involved in their lives? Third, what is the *"direction of gaze"*? Is it outward, toward others—externalizing the research problem—or does it include explicit inner contemplation?

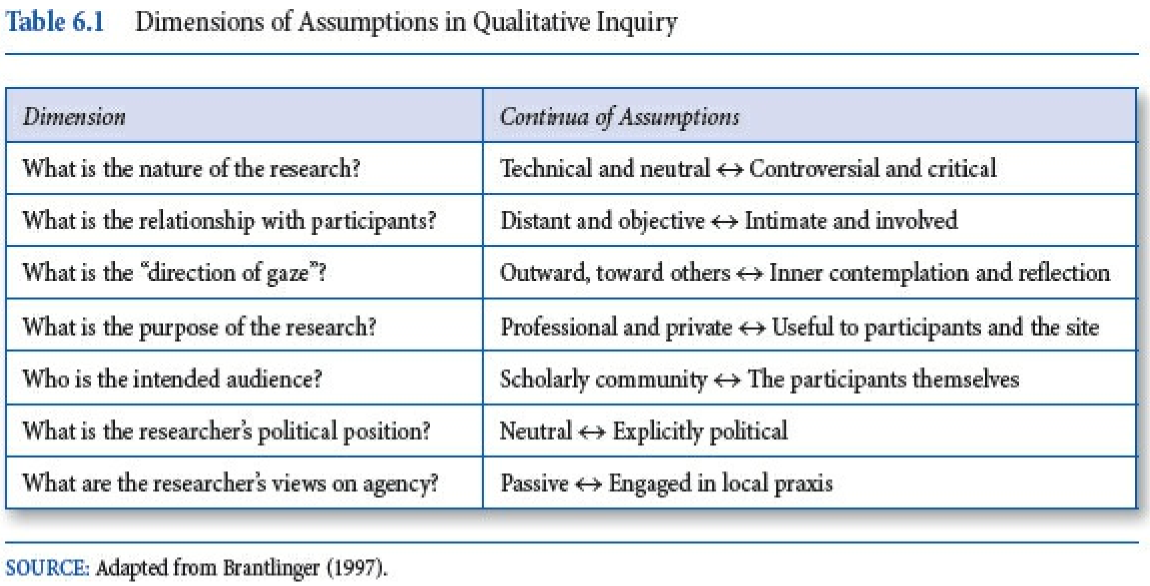


Table 6.1 Dimensions of Assumptions in Qualitative Inquiry

Dimension	*Continua of Assumptions*
What is the nature of the research?	Technical and neutral ↔ Controversial and critical
What is the relationship with participants?	Distant and objective ↔ Intimate and involved
What is the "direction of gaze"?	Outward, toward others ↔ Inner contemplation and reflection
What is the purpose of the research?	Professional and private ↔ Useful to participants and the site
Who is the intended audience?	Scholarly community ↔ The participants themselves
What is the researcher's political position?	Neutral ↔ Explicitly political
What are the researcher's views on agency?	Passive ↔ Engaged in local praxis

SOURCE: Adapted from Brantlinger (1997).

SOURCE: Adapted from Brantlinger (1997).

Fourth, what is the *purpose of the research*? Does the researcher assume that the primary purpose of the study is professional and essentially private (e.g., promoting his career), or is it intended to be useful and informative to the participants at the site? Related to the fourth category is the fifth: Who is the *intended audience of the study*—the scholarly community or the participants themselves? Sixth, what is the researcher's *political positioning*? Does he view the research as neutral, or does he claim an explicitly political agenda? Finally, the seventh assumption has to do with how the researcher views the *exercise of agency*: Does he see himself and the participants as essentially passive or as "engaged in local praxis" (Brantlinger, 1997, p. 4)? Assumptions made in these seven categories shape how the specific research methods are conceived and implemented throughout a study. At the proposal stage, some judicious and explicit discussion of assumptions strengthens the overall logic and integrity of the proposal.

The many books and articles describing the various ways a qualitative researcher might use the four primary methods (as well as secondary ones) are typically silent about the researcher who is deaf or has hearing loss, the researcher who is visually challenged, the researcher who uses a wheelchair, and other researchers who have physical or sensory challenges. In the discussion below, we try to be sensitive to differences in the ways qualitative researchers might interact in a setting as they draw on their perceptual and kinesthetic strengths. At this point, we emphasize that in the proposal, the researcher would have to outline the specific challenges in conducting the proposed research, as well as strategies to build on his strengths to ensure that sound, reliable data are gathered.

■ Observation

Observation is central to qualitative research. The term captures a variety of activities, including both hanging around in the setting—getting to know people and learning the routines—and using strict time sampling to record actions and interactions and a checklist to tick off preestablished actions. Whether enacted informally (as "hanging around" suggests) or formally (as using a checklist suggests), observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, interactions, and **artifacts** (objects) in the social setting. It is crucial that these observations be recorded—written down or voiced into a tape recorder. This record is frequently referred to as **field notes**—detailed, nonjudgmental (as much as possible), concrete descriptions of what has been observed. Few studies rely exclusively on observation (but see the discussion of interaction analysis in Chapter 7), as researchers have come to appreciate how difficult it is to base interpretations of actions and interactions only on observations or insights from participant interviews (whether formal or informal). Qualitative researchers have also come to acknowledge the power inherent in proffering interpretations made from the researcher's ideological standpoint.

Observation can be accomplished not only visually (as the discussion above suggests) but also through the other senses. A researcher with visual challenges could draw on his considerable auditory skills, his sense of touch, and his sense of smell to provide new and insightful descriptions of a particular setting.

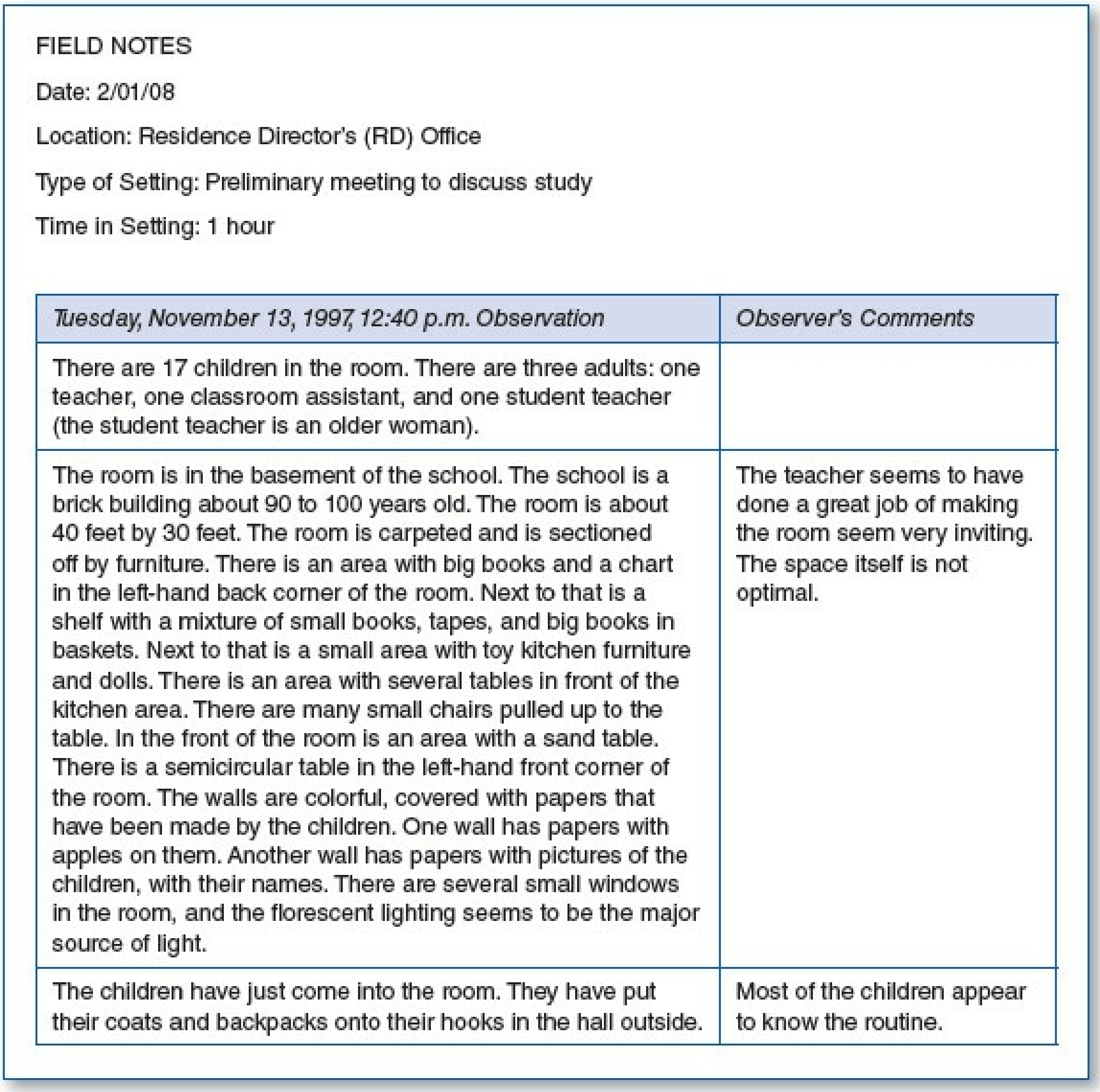
In the early stages of qualitative inquiry, the emphasis is on discovery. The researcher may enter the setting with broad areas of interest but without predetermined categories or strict observational checklists. As noted in Chapter 3, this stance captures the degree to which the study is prefigured or open-ended. Through a more open-ended entry, the researcher is able to discover the recurring patterns of behavior, interactions, and relationships. After these patterns are identified and described through early analysis of field notes, checklists might become more appropriate and context sensitive. Focused observation may then be used at later stages of the study, usually to see, for example, if analytic themes explain behavior and relationships over a long time or in a variety of settings.

Observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry. It is used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings. Even in studies using in-depth interviews, observation plays an important role, as the researcher notes the interview partner's body language and affect, tone of voice, and other paralinguistic messages, in addition to words. When the researcher-as-observer depends on senses other than sight, observations about movement and tone of voice become generative sources of insights. It is, however, a method that requires a great deal of the researcher. Discomfort, uncomfortable ethical dilemmas, and even danger; the difficulty of managing a relatively unobtrusive role; and the challenge of identifying the big picture while finely attending to huge amounts of fast-moving and complex behavior are just a few of the challenges.

Focused observations go beyond just “hanging out.” Planful and reflexive observers use observation systematically (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2001). At the proposal stage, the researcher should describe the purpose of the observing, the phase of the study in which it is likely to be most fruitful, and how data recorded in field notes might be analyzed to respond to the research questions.

Sometimes when researchers want observational data, they can review literature and refine extant coding schemes that capture key elements of their study. For example, Schoenfeld (2013) found an array of such schemes for observing classrooms. His team also wanted it to be workable in a large-scale project and efficient for converting observation notes quickly into quantified scores for what takes place in mathematics classrooms. Qualitative research typically employs such prefigured observation schema when much is already known, either from previous research or from earlier explore-to-discover observation.

Figure 6.1 Sample Field Notes



FIELD NOTES

Date: 2/01/08

Location: Residence Director's (RD) Office

Type of Setting: Preliminary meeting to discuss study

Time in Setting: 1 hour

Tuesday, November 13, 1997, 12:40 p.m. Observation	*Observer's Comments*
There are 17 children in the room. There are three adults: one teacher, one classroom assistant, and one student teacher (the student teacher is an older woman).	
The room is in the basement of the school. The school is a brick building about 90 to 100 years old. The room is about 40 feet by 30 feet. The room is carpeted and is sectioned off by furniture. There is an area with big books and a chart in the left-hand back corner of the room. Next to that is a shelf with a mixture of small books, tapes, and big books in baskets. Next to that is a small area with toy kitchen furniture and dolls. There is an area with several tables in front of the kitchen area. There are many small chairs pulled up to the table. In the front of the room is an area with a sand table. There is a semicircular table in the left-hand front corner of the room. The walls are colorful, covered with papers that have been made by the children. One wall has papers with apples on them. Another wall has papers with pictures of the children, with their names. There are several small windows in the room, and the florescent lighting seems to be the major source of light.	The teacher seems to have done a great job of making the room seem very inviting. The space itself is not optimal.
The children have just come into the room. They have put their coats and backpacks onto their hooks in the hall outside.	Most of the children appear to know the routine.

Field notes are not scribbles, although they may begin that way. The simple term “jottings” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 19) can be used to indicate the on-the-spot notes that a researcher might take. These are then elaborated into full field notes to be useful for subsequent analysis. To help in planning the observation process, the proposal writer should describe some explicit note-organizing and note-management strategies, indicating to the reader that he is capable of noting events and interactions and transforming them into usable field notes (Nespor, 2006).

Figure 6.1 provides an example of edited and “cleaned-up” field notes for a study of kindergarten teachers. For example, O’Hearn-Curran (1997) has formatted descriptive notes in a column on the left while reserving a second column on the right for her comments, which include her emerging analytic insights about the observed behavior. Observers’ comments are often a quite fruitful source of analytic insights and clues that focus data collection more tightly (more on this in Chapter 8). They may also provide important questions for subsequent interviews.

Also, the researcher should use them for self-critique and caution. For example, as he monitors, with cautions about the trustworthiness of his study, he should ask himself, “When my notes say the space is not optimal, is that my judgment? Should I pursue this as a line of inquiry, getting teachers’ thoughts on ‘optimal’?”

Participant Observation

Developed primarily from cultural anthropology and qualitative sociology, **participant observation** (as this method is typically called) is both an overall approach to inquiry and a data-gathering method. To some degree, it is an essential element of all qualitative studies. As its name suggests, participant observation demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study—the researcher is both a participant (to varying degrees) and an observer (also to varying degrees). Immersion in the setting permits the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do. Should any of these senses be a challenge for the researcher, he can draw on others to describe, for example, a cacophony of sounds in a classroom, the subtle ways people seek approval from superiors through eye contact, and the like. Ideally, the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life there. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from his own experience. Personal reflections are integral to the emerging analysis of a cultural group, because they provide the researcher with new vantage points and with opportunities to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Glesne, 2010).

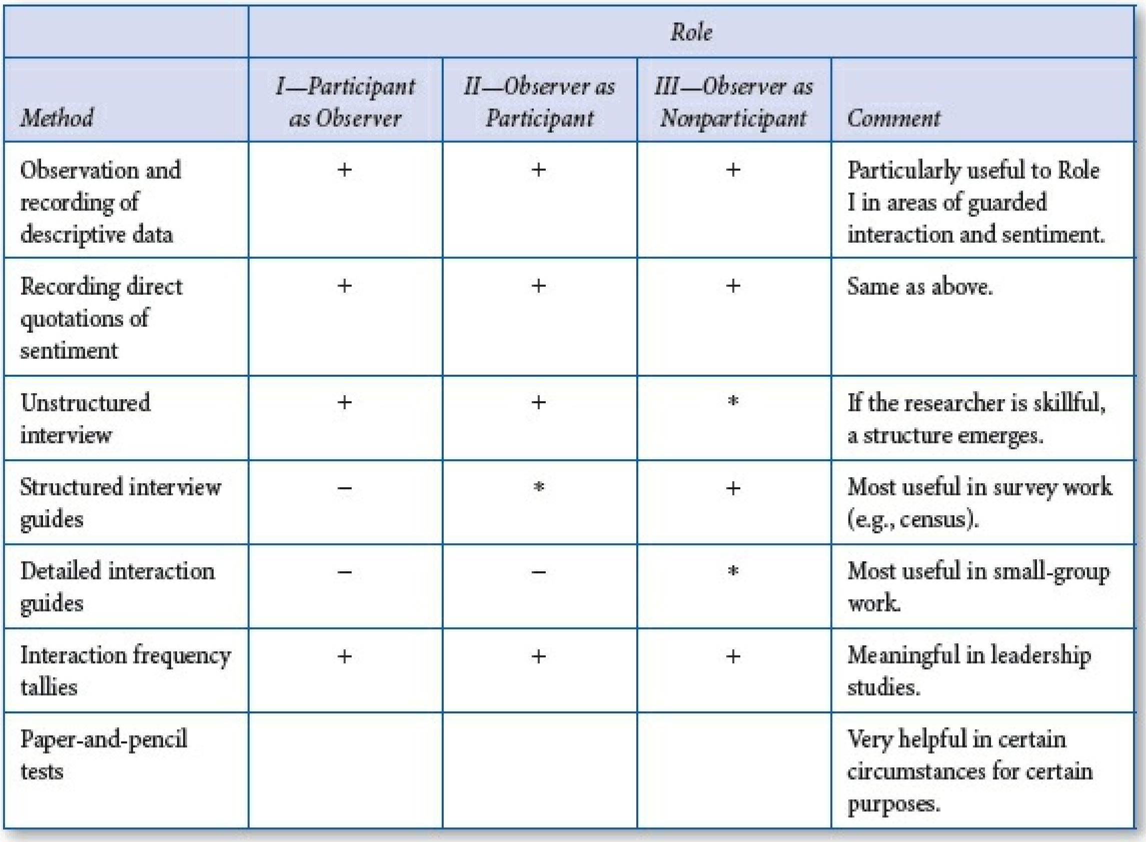
This method of gathering data is basic to all qualitative studies and invites consideration of the role or stance of the researcher as a participant observer—his **positionality**. This consideration links back to the assumption articulated by Brantlinger (1997), presented in Table 6.1, regarding the researcher's relationship with participants. At the proposal stage, it is helpful to elaborate on the planned extent of participation: what the nature of that involvement is likely to be, how much about the study's purpose will be revealed to the people in the setting, how intensively the researcher will be present, how focused the participation will be, and how ethical dilemmas will be managed. In addition, it would be important for the researcher to describe how any physical differences would provide a unique perspective. In the proposal, the researcher should be specific as to how his participation will inform the research questions. He will have laid out a plan for fashioning a role that, given his appearance and background, will help him be a participant, and for how, conversely, he will compensate for any barriers to his participating naturally. (Recall the discussion of role in Chapter 5.) Table 6.2 displays the relation between the researcher's chosen role and data collection methods.

Ethical Issues in Observation and Participant Observation

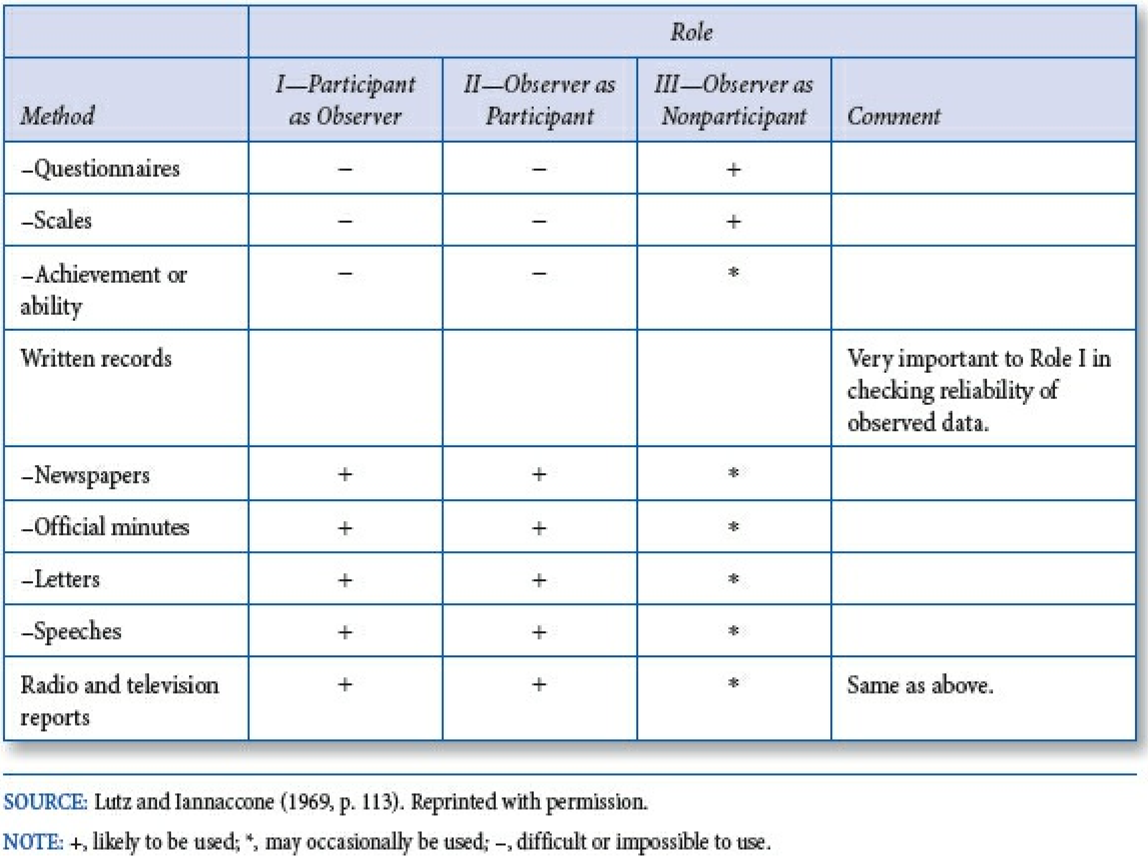
The ethical issues that arise in observation and participant-observation studies center on the principle of respect for persons. Are the research participants aware that a study is going on and that they are part of it? Are they agreeable to this? And, as the research unfolds, is their consent to participate continually renegotiated? The researcher must be diligent about confirming that the participants are aware and willing. The practice of informed consent can be complex and, as noted in Chapter 1, it is not a one-time event but an ongoing process.

Other complexities can arise when the study focuses on a group setting. Rossman recalls a dissertation that was an action research project on human rights awareness in an elementary school classroom. All but one child's parents agreed that their children could participate. How should the researcher handle observations that, quite naturally, included the one child whose parents did not approve his or her participation? How should he write field notes focusing on interactions among the children when that one child was present? Also subsumed under the principle of respect for persons is the relationship that builds with participants. Ethical practice would suggest that these relationships be benign, nonmanipulative, and mutually beneficial. Such considerations would appropriately be discussed in the proposal's laying out of a plan for role, entry, participation, and ethics.

Table 6.2 Data Collection Methods Related to Observation Role



	Role			
Method	*I—Participant as Observer*	*II—Observer as Participant*	*III—Observer as Nonparticipant*	*Comment*
Observation and recording of descriptive data	+	+	+	Particularly useful to Role I in areas of guarded interaction and sentiment.
Recording direct quotations of sentiment	+	+	+	Same as above.
Unstructured interview	+	+	*	If the researcher is skillful, a structure emerges.
Structured interview guides	–	*	+	Most useful in survey work (e.g., census).
Detailed interaction guides	–	–	*	Most useful in small-group work.
Interaction frequency tallies	+	+	+	Meaningful in leadership studies.
Paper-and-pencil tests				Very helpful in certain circumstances for certain purposes.



	Role			
Method	*I—Participant as Observer*	*II—Observer as Participant*	*III—Observer as Nonparticipant*	*Comment*
–Questionnaires	–	–	+	
–Scales	–	–	+	
–Achievement or ability	–	–	*	
Written records				Very important to Role I in checking reliability of observed data.
–Newspapers	+	+	*	
–Official minutes	+	+	*	
–Letters	+	+	*	
–Speeches	+	+	*	
Radio and television reports	+	+	*	Same as above.

SOURCE: Lutz and Iannaccone (1969, p. 113). Reprinted with permission.

NOTE: +, likely to be used; *, may occasionally be used; –, difficult or impossible to use.

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NOTE: +, likely to be used; *, may occasionally be used; –, difficult or impossible to use.

■ In-Depth Interviewing

Qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on **in-depth interviewing**. Kvale (1996) describes qualitative interviews as “a construction site of knowledge” (p. 2), where two (or more) individuals discuss a “theme of mutual interest” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2). In any qualitative study, this method may be the overall strategy or only one of several methods employed. We live in a society where interviewing is ubiquitous; so we must distinguish the qualitative interview from a news article. But a journalistic or television talk show interview is often brief, quick, and edited for audience appeal. In contrast, the qualitative research interview goes in depth and is using researchers’ standards of quality (Wengraf, 2001).

Interviewing as a research strategy differs from interviews on a television talk show, or as part of a dating game, but all interviewing has some a priori structure and assumptions about the latitude the interview partner has in responding to questions or in creating them himself. The typical and historical stance is that the researcher has control over the interview questions, but researchers can be creative. Brown and Durrheim (2009) argue for “mobile interviewing”—that is, interviewing “while on the move (walking and/or driving)” (p. 911). These less structured and less formal venues disrupt deeply ingrained norms about “how to conduct an interview,” “what the interviewer’s role is,” and “what the interviewee’s role is.”

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe researchers’ stances toward the interview as those of a miner or traveler (pp. 47–50). The miner approach assumes that ideas and knowledge exist within the interview partner; the interviewer’s responsibility is to “dig nuggets of knowledge out of a subject’s pure experiences” (p. 48), identifying the kernels or seams of priceless ore and mining them. The traveler is on a journey “to a distant country” (p. 48) with interview partners, either into “unknown terrain or with maps” (p. 48). The traveler is more intimately involved in coconstructing knowledge, whereas the miner tends to assume that his role is more distant and objective (see Table 6.1).

One of the most important aspects of the interviewer’s approach is conveying the attitude that the participant’s views are valuable and useful. The generativity of the interview depends on both partners and their willingness to engage in a deep discussion about the topic of interest. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) note, “an interview is literally an *inter view*, an interchange of views between two persons” (p. 2). However, the qualitative researcher should bring some skills and sensibilities to the interview. Preparation is crucial, as is anticipating how he may be received and what ethical issues may arise, as discussed in Chapter 3 and at the end of this chapter.

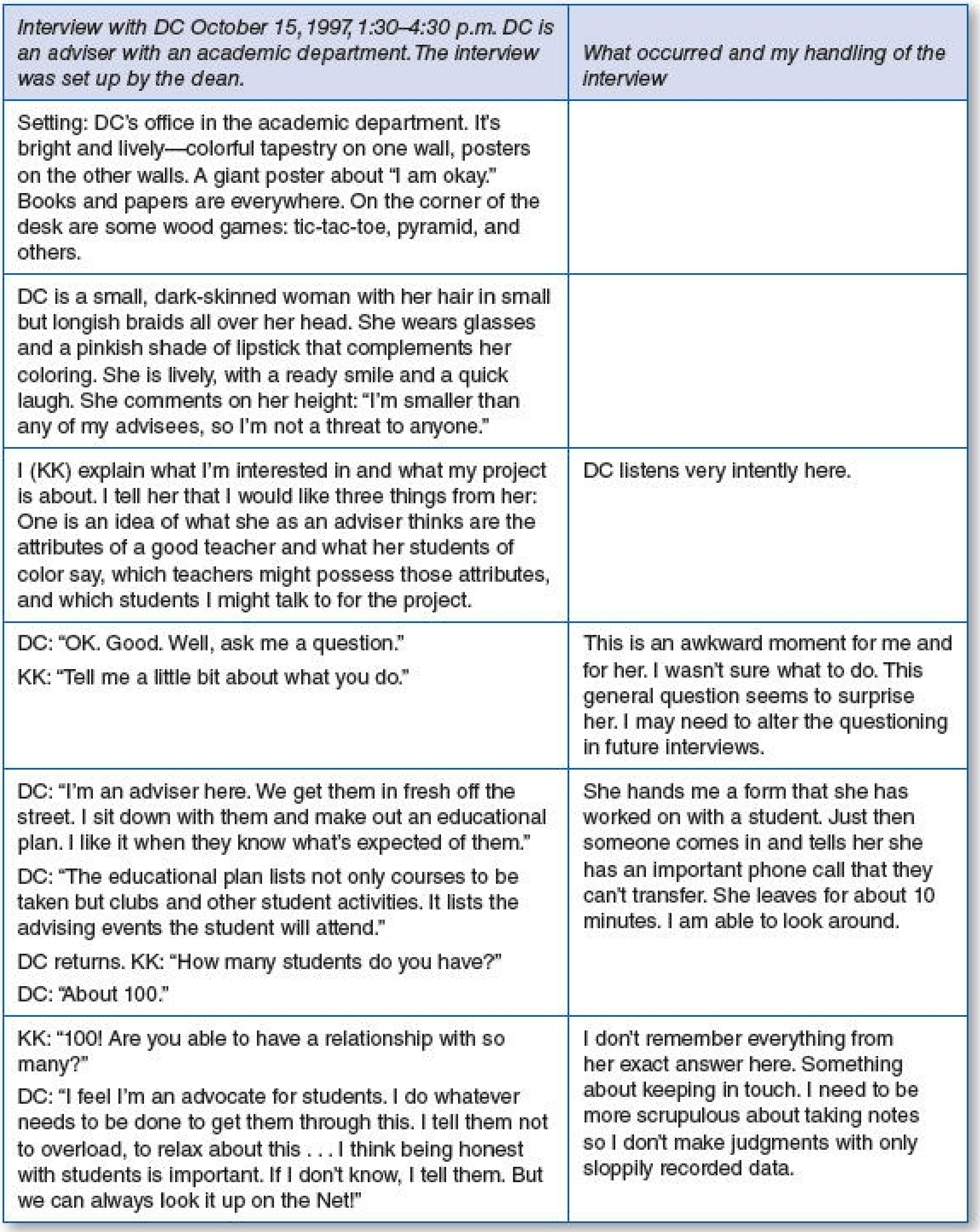
This engagement between the interviewer and interviewee can also be framed as a kind of relationship. Seidman (2013) discusses some do's and don'ts when developing this unique relationship. "Interviewers can try to craft relationships with their participants that are like islands of interchange separate from the world's definitions, classifications, and tensions. However, individual interviewing relationships exist in a social context" (p. 97). He advocates an approach that treads the thin line between being friendly and developing a friendship. In his words:

> I try to strike a balance, saying enough about myself to be alive and responsive but little enough to preserve the autonomy of the participant's words and to keep the focus of attention on his or her experience rather than mine. (p. 98)

Seidman uses the words *respect*, *interest*, *attention*, and *good manners* to define his understanding of this relationship.

Researchers should set up a strategy to keep themselves disciplined about reflection on their data gathering. Figure 6.2 provides field notes from an interview conducted for a study of advisors' encounters with students of color in a community college. Note how this researcher reflects on details; these can be anything that might have interfered with the data quality or might be shading later interpretations.

Figure 6.2 Sample Interview Field Notes



Interview with DC October 15, 1997, 1:30–4:30 p.m. DC is an adviser with an academic department. The interview was set up by the dean.	*What occurred and my handling of the interview*
Setting: DC's office in the academic department. It's bright and lively—colorful tapestry on one wall, posters on the other walls. A giant poster about "I am okay." Books and papers are everywhere. On the corner of the desk are some wood games: tic-tac-toe, pyramid, and others.	
DC is a small, dark-skinned woman with her hair in small but longish braids all over her head. She wears glasses and a pinkish shade of lipstick that complements her coloring. She is lively, with a ready smile and a quick laugh. She comments on her height: "I'm smaller than any of my advisees, so I'm not a threat to anyone."	
I (KK) explain what I'm interested in and what my project is about. I tell her that I would like three things from her: One is an idea of what she as an adviser thinks are the attributes of a good teacher and what her students of color say, which teachers might possess those attributes, and which students I might talk to for the project.	DC listens very intently here.
DC: "OK. Good. Well, ask me a question." KK: "Tell me a little bit about what you do."	This is an awkward moment for me and for her. I wasn't sure what to do. This general question seems to surprise her. I may need to alter the questioning in future interviews.
DC: "I'm an adviser here. We get them in fresh off the street. I sit down with them and make out an educational plan. I like it when they know what's expected of them." DC: "The educational plan lists not only courses to be taken but clubs and other student activities. It lists the advising events the student will attend." DC returns. KK: "How many students do you have?" DC: "About 100."	She hands me a form that she has worked on with a student. Just then someone comes in and tells her she has an important phone call that they can't transfer. She leaves for about 10 minutes. I am able to look around.
KK: "100! Are you able to have a relationship with so many?" DC: "I feel I'm an advocate for students. I do whatever needs to be done to get them through this. I tell them not to overload, to relax about this . . . I think being honest with students is important. If I don't know, I tell them. But we can always look it up on the Net!"	I don't remember everything from her exact answer here. Something about keeping in touch. I need to be more scrupulous about taking notes so I don't make judgments with only sloppily recorded data.

Also crucial for a fruitful interview are the researcher's skills in asking follow-up, elaborating questions. We argue that the richness of an interview is heavily dependent on these follow-up questions (often called, quite infelicitously, "probes"). Rossman and Rallis (2012) discuss three main types: (1) open-ended elaborations, (2) open-ended clarifications, and (3) detailed elaborations (p. 184).

Patton (2002) categorizes interviews into three general types: (1) the informal, conversational interview; (2) the interview guide or topical approach; and (3) the standardized, open-ended interview (pp. 341–347). To these we would add the coconstructed, or dialogic, interview (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The informal, conversational interview takes place on-the-spot, as casual conversations are entered into with individuals and/or small groups; it is spontaneous and serendipitous. The interview guide is a bit more structured: The interview is scheduled, and the interviewer comes prepared with a list of topics or questions (which may or may not have been shared with the interview partner beforehand); this is the most typically used type of interview in qualitative studies.

Semistructured and standardized interviews are more carefully “scripted,” asking specific questions in a specific sequence, sometimes without follow-up. This type of interview is often used in multisite case studies or with larger sample sizes. Finally, dialogic interviews may be scheduled, but both the interviewer and the interview partner generate new meaning together. Think of these types in terms of “talk time” (which is revealed, often quite dramatically, in transcripts): Informal and dialogic interviews show shared talk time; interviews that are topical or guided show more “talk” from the interview partner, as do standardized interviews.

With the more typical type—the topical or guided interview—the researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects the way the participant frames and structures the responses. This method, in fact, is based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: The participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective). As noted previously, a degree of systematization—a tighter prefiguring with more structure—in questioning may be necessary, for example, in a multisite case study or when many participants are interviewed, or at the analysis and interpretation stage, when the researcher is testing findings in more focused and structured questioning. Semistructured interviewing allows a systematic and iterative gathering of data where questions are arranged in a protocol that evokes rich data but is also focused for efficient data analysis (Galletta, 2013).

Interviews have particular benefits. An interview yields data in quantity quickly. Immediate follow-up and clarification are possible. Combined with observation (looking, hearing, smelling, or touching), interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people. When more than one person participates (e.g., focus-group interviews, discussed below), the process takes in a wider variety of information than if there were fewer participants—the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth. When conducted by a person who has challenges with hearing, an interview can be accomplished through the use of a signing interpreter or by writing questions and responses—both of which allow for immediate and direct follow-up questions.

Interviewing has limitations, however. Interviews are often intimate encounters that depend on trust; building trust—albeit time bound—is important and a main feature of the interviewer–interviewee relationship described above. In some cases, interview partners may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore. They may be unaware of recurring patterns in their lives. They may not be able to find the words that convey their thoughts. Furthermore, the interviewer may not ask questions that evoke long narratives from participants because of a lack of fluency in or familiarity with the local language or because of a lack of skill in expressing himself. By the same token, he may not be able to understand sensitively and to interpret responses to the questions or various elements of the conversation. And, at times, interview partners may have good reason not to be truthful (see Douglas, 1976, for a discussion of such instances).

Interviewers should have superb listening skills (or language skills, e.g., in local languages, symbols, abbreviations, or signs) and be skillful at personal interaction, question framing, and gentle probing for elaboration.

Volumes of data can be obtained through interviewing, but it is time-consuming to analyze them. Also worth considering is the issue of the quality of the data. When the researcher is using in-depth interviews as the sole way of gathering data, he should demonstrate in the conceptual framework of the proposal that the purpose of the study is to uncover and describe the participants' perspectives on events—that is, that the subjective view is what matters. He should use the continua in Table 6.1 in the proposal to describe the nature of research. For example, if his study is making more neutral and technical assumptions, he might triangulate interview data with data gathered through other methods. Finally, because interviews, at first glance, seem so much like natural conversations, researchers sometimes use them thoughtlessly, in an undertheorized manner, as if the interview partner is surely providing "an unproblematic window on psychological or social realities" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 1).

Mobile ethnography (Brown & Durrheim, 2009) entails conducting ethnographic research while following participants in their activities and, as such, is a novel approach to interviewing when a constantly changing, visually and aurally demanding environment makes a scheduled question-and-answer interview inappropriate or too formal for developing rapport. It allows free-association responses. This "bimbling" functions as "an active trigger to prompt knowledge recollection and production" (Anderson, 2004, p. 254). When the researcher is walking and conversation is somewhat haphazard, this will facilitate the production of authentic data.

This stretching of roles for the researcher makes him more fully a participant-observer and also explores the power relations in the research. In their study of professional identities, James and Busher (2006) used asynchronous e-mail interviewing to overcome the distance and time zone differences that made face-to-face or telephone interviews challenging. They could encourage participants to explore and revisit their insights and perceptions, and to move back and forth through their narratives. Through some of these alternative modes of gathering data, qualitative research allows inventive strategies.

This flexibility does not mean that the researcher goes into the interview without a set of general questions to guide it. Providing a preliminary set of interview topics or guides helps reassure the proposal reviewer that the researcher has direction and focus for the study. Moreover, research proposals should indicate what the researcher has learned through pilot studies and small-scale explorations, as well as other fully developed studies, all of which lead to reflection on and learning about the design, conduct, analysis, and representation of interviews.

Proposals may need revision if they stipulate relying on interviews but provide little evidence that the researcher has appropriate skills and experience with methods and has begun to develop the necessary sensitivities. Not everyone is automatically adept at such things. Roulston (2010) provides practical advice such as considering interviewees' time constraints and making plans for note taking or audio-recording, which can augment a proposal.

In addition to generic in-depth interviewing, there are several more specialized forms, including ethnographic interviewing, phenomenological interviewing, and focus-group interviewing, as well as life histories, narrative inquiry, and digital storytelling. Given the complexity of these methods, we recommend that researchers who are depending on these approaches review books devoted exclusively to them. There are also special considerations when interviewing specific populations, such as elites or children and youth, and when interviewing across social group identities. (Emergent strategies for interviewing that include the Internet and computer applications are discussed in Chapter 7.) We describe each of these below.

Ethnographic Interviewing

Grounded in the genre of cognitive anthropology, **ethnographic interviewing** elicits the cognitive structures that reveal participants' worldviews. Described in the classic work of Spradley (1979) as "a particular kind of speech event" (p. 18), ethnographic questions are used by the researcher to gather cultural data. Ethnographic interviewing is an elaborate system of a series of interviews structured to elicit participants' cultural knowledge. Spradley identifies three main types of questions: descriptive, structural, and contrast. Descriptive questions are often quite broad, allowing the researcher to learn about the participants' views on "their experiences, their daily activities, and the objects and people in their lives" (Westby, Burda, & Mehta, 2003). Structural questions discover the basic ways the participants organize their cultural knowledge into categories that are important to them (rather than those important to the interviewer). The ones found to be most generative are "strict inclusion, rationale, and means-ends questions" (Westby et al., 2003). Strict inclusion questions put boundaries around salient categories of meaning; rationale questions focus on the participants' reasons for certain events or circumstances; and means-ends questions capture what leads to what, from the participants' perspectives. Finally, contrast questions provide the ethnographer with the meaning of various terms that elaborate what something is like and what it's not like.

The value of the ethnographic interview lies in its focus on culture—broadly construed—from the participants' perspectives and through firsthand encounters. This approach is especially useful for eliciting participants' meanings for events and behaviors and for generating a typology of categories of meaning, highlighting the nuances of the culture. The method is flexible in formulating working hypotheses and avoids oversimplification in description and analysis because of its rich narrative descriptions. Spradley (1979) recommends a series of interviews, starting with one inviting the participant to describe her day, and then follow-up interviews asking contrast questions, such as, "How is one day good and another not?" and structure questions, such as, "In the general category of good day, what must happen, and what must not?" After identifying domains of culture, the next interview might ask listing questions, such as, "What are the kinds of things that people think of as 'doing good' in your neighborhood?"

There are shortcomings to this method, however. As with any method, the ethnographer can impose his values through the phrasing of questions or the interpretation of data. If the member of the cultural group chosen to participate does not represent that culture well, the subsequent analysis might be impoverished. The generativity of this method, as in all interviewing, depends highly on the researcher’s interpersonal skills and patience.

Phenomenological Interviewing

Phenomenological interviewing is a specific type of in-depth interviewing grounded in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which is the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview. It rests on the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated. The purpose of this type of interviewing is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share.

As elaborated by Seidman (2006), three in-depth interviews compose phenomenological inquiry. The first focuses on past experience with the phenomenon of interest; the second focuses on present experience; and the third joins these two narratives to describe the individual's essential experience with the phenomenon. Prior to interviewing, however, the researcher using this method may have written a full description of his own experience, thereby bracketing off his experiences from those of the interview partners. This phase of the inquiry is referred to as *epoché.* The purpose of this self-examination is to permit the researcher to gain clarity from his own preconceptions, and it is part of the "ongoing process rather than a single fixed event" (Patton, 1990, p. 408).

The next phase is called *phenomenological reduction*; here, the researcher identifies the essence of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990). The researcher then clusters the data around themes that describe the "textures of the experience" (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). The final stage, *structural synthesis*, involves the imaginative exploration of "all possible meanings and divergent perspectives" (p. 150) and culminates in a description of the essence of the phenomenon and its deep structure. The primary advantage of phenomenological interviewing is that it permits an explicit focus on the researcher's personal experience combined with those of the interview partners. It focuses on the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals, assuming that these meanings guide actions and interactions. It is, however, quite labor-intensive and requires a reflexive stance on the part of the researcher. Phenomenological interviews have been quite successfully used in studies of teacher socialization (Maloy, Pine, & Seidman, 2002) and the challenges of identity development for refugees (Mosselson, 2010).

Focus-Group Interviews

Interviewing participants in focus groups originated as marketing research but has been widely adapted to include social science and applied research. The groups are typically composed of 7 to 10 people (although groups range from as small as 4 persons to as large as 12 persons) who are unfamiliar with one another and have been selected because they share certain characteristics relevant to the study's questions. The interviewer/facilitator creates a supportive environment, asking focused questions to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and points of view. A research partner is essential for taking field notes on interactions and recording emotions, freeing the interviewer to ask questions, follow up, ensure that all participate, and intervene to facilitate the group. These **focus-group interviews** may be conducted several times with different individuals so the researcher can identify trends in the perceptions and opinions expressed, which are revealed through careful, systematic analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2008). As with many methods, focus-group discussions can be conducted on a dedicated Internet blog that, in effect, creates a "virtual" focus group, not limited by time or location, such that many participants from all over the world can join in.

This method assumes that an individual's attitudes and beliefs are socially constructed: They do not form in a vacuum. People often listen to others' opinions and understandings in forming their own. Often, the questions in a focus-group setting are deceptively simple; the trick is to promote the participants' expression of their views through the creation of a supportive environment.

One strength of focus-group interviews is that this method is socially oriented, studying participants in an atmosphere more natural than artificial experimental circumstances and often more relaxed than a one-to-one interview. When combined with participant observation, focus-group interviews can be especially useful for gaining access, focusing site selection and sampling, and even for checking tentative conclusions. As with other types of interviews, the format allows the facilitator the flexibility to explore unanticipated issues as they arise in the discussion.

The results will be seen as having high face validity: Because the method is readily understood, the findings appear believable. Furthermore, the cost of focus-group interviews is relatively low, they provide quick results, and they can increase the sample size of qualitative studies by permitting more people to be interviewed at one time (Krueger & Casey, 2008). In action research and in program design and evaluation, focus groups are especially useful. They were effective tools, for example, in data gathering to design a program for working on the employment issues of persons with HIV/AIDS, based on their answers to questions about specific needs, such as stress and availability of health care to family, spirituality, and hopes for the future (O'Neill, Small, & Strachan, 1999).

Focus-group interviews have also been found to be especially useful for fostering social support networks. For their discussion of the benefits and challenges of focus-group interviewing strategies, Peek and Fothergill (2009) analyzed three distinct research projects: (1) a study of teachers, children, and parents in urban day care settings; (2) an examination of the responses of Muslim Americans (born in the United States of immigrant parents) to the events and aftermath of 9/11; and (3) a collaborative project on children and youth following Hurricane Katrina. In all three cases, the researchers found that focus-group interviewing eased access and, perhaps more important for the participants, fostered the development of social ties that superseded the research projects.

There are, however, certain challenges to this method as well. First and foremost is the issue of power dynamics in the focus-group setting. Should the researcher choose to use this method, he should be exquisitely aware of power dynamics and be able to facilitate well; these are crucial skills. In addition, the interviewer often has less control over a group interview than over an individual one. Time can be lost while irrelevant issues are discussed; the data are difficult to analyze because context is essential to understanding the participants' comments; the method requires the use of special room arrangements (or dedicated discussion sites) and highly trained facilitators. The groups can vary a great deal and can be hard to assemble, and logistical problems may arise from the need to manage a conversation while getting good-quality data.

We should also note that with relatively inexpensive and easy-to-use technology such as video recorders, focus-group discussions are increasingly videotaped. As with interaction analysis (see Chapter 7), using this technology creates a more-or-less "permanent record" of the data, which in turn facilitates analysis. Using video recorders (and any pictorial medium), however, raises important ethical issues about the protection of participants' identities.

Ethical Issues in Focus-Group Interviews

As just noted, the primary ethical issues that may arise in conducting focus-group interviews center on the dynamics of power and influence that may play out in any group (whether physically together or on an Internet blog). The researcher must be exquisitely sensitive to these dynamics (e.g., "Is Robert dominating the discussion?") and be skilled at facilitating the process. Should the discussion be videotaped, the privacy of individuals and protection of their identities become paramount. We are aware of institutional review boards that, quite appropriately, require additional statements on informed consent forms that specifically address using video clips or still photographs in any ensuing research reports. Their use can immediately identify participants and therefore requires a more complex statement about the use of the data to ensure that the participants are fully informed. In fact, we would argue that using photographs or video clips of individuals or groups abrogates the respect for persons’ consideration of anonymity. This is a thorny ethical issue that, in this digital age, will continue to be debated.

These issues, and others, arise in life history methodologies. This family of methods focuses explicitly on the stories individuals tell about their lives and includes narrative inquiry, digital storytelling, and the use of memoirs.

■ Life Histories, Narrative Inquiry, and Digital Storytelling

Life histories and narrative inquiry are in-depth interview methods that gather, analyze, and interpret the stories people tell about their lives. They have different research traditions, but they all begin with the assumption that people live "storied" lives and that telling and retelling one's story helps one understand and create a sense of self. The story is important, but so is how the story is told (Riessman, 1991). The researcher, working closely with the participant, explores a story and records it. Life histories and narrative inquiry are used across the social science disciplines and are particularly useful for giving the reader an insider's view of a culture or era in history; as such, they represent the application of the principles of biography to the social sciences. A related approach is **digital storytelling**, in which an individual (or possibly a group) tells a story using digital content—images, sound, and perhaps videos. Digital storytelling may or may not involve interviewing; we include it here because it fits well with the focus of life histories and narrative inquiry on narrating stories. Each is discussed below.

Life Histories

Life histories seek to "examine and analyze the subjective experience of individuals and their constructions of the social world" (Jones, 1983, p. 147). They assume a complex interaction between the individual's understanding of his world and that world itself. They are, therefore, uniquely suited to depicting and making theoretical sense of the socialization of a person into a cultural milieu (Dollard, 1935). Thus, one understands aspects of a culture through seeing how the culture has shaped the history of one person's development or life within it, a history told in ways that capture the person's feelings, views, and perspectives. The life history is often an account of how an individual enters a group and becomes socialized into it. That history includes learning to meet the normative expectations of that society by gender, social class, or age peers. Life histories emphasize the experience of the individual—how the person copes with society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals.

Life histories can focus on critical or fateful moments. Indecision, confusion, contradiction, and irony are captured as nuanced processes in a life (Sparks, 1994). These histories are particularly helpful in defining socialization and in studying aspects of acculturation and socialization in institutions and professions. Their value goes beyond providing specific information about events and customs of the past—as a historical account might—by showing how the individual creates meaning within the culture. Life histories are valuable in studying cultural changes that have occurred over time, in learning about cultural norms and transgressions of those norms, and in gaining an inside view of a culture. They also help capture the way cultural patterns evolve and are linked to the life of an individual. Often, this point of view is missing from standard ethnographies (Atkinson, 1998).

One strength of life history methodology is that because it pictures a substantial portion of a person's life, the reader can enter into those experiences. Another is that it provides a fertile source of intriguing research questions that may be generative for focusing subsequent studies. And yet a third strength is that life histories depict actions and perspectives across a social group that may be analyzed for comparative study. This kind of research requires sensitivity, caring, and empathy by the researcher for the researched (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Life histories are often used in feminist research as a way of understanding, relatively free of androcentric bias, how women's lives and careers evolve (Lawless, 1991). They are powerful for uncovering immigrant experiences and also for discovering how critical, dramatic events (e.g., floods, draft notices, pregnancy tests, losing a job, winning a scholarship, deportation) affect individuals within a culture. Sometimes they focus on a figure who defies or challenges his culture (e.g., Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr.) because their lives reveal cultural norms as they stand in opposition to them.

Jones (1983, pp. 153–154) offers five criteria for life histories. First, the individual should be viewed as a member of a culture; the life history “describe[s] and interpret[s] the actor’s account of his or her development in the common-sense world.” Second, the method should capture the significant role that others play in “transmitting socially defined stocks of knowledge.” Third, the assumptions of the cultural world under study should be described and analyzed as they are revealed in rules and codes for conduct as well as in myths and rituals. Fourth, life histories should focus on the experience of an individual over time so that the “processual development of the person” can be captured. And fifth, the cultural world under study should be continuously related to the individual’s unfolding life story.

The major concerns with the life history are that it is difficult to demonstrate the transferability of one life to the larger cultural interpretations, sample sizes are by definition quite small, and there are few concepts to guide analysis. Once the researcher acknowledges the possible challenges with the method, however, he can address them, perhaps by supplementing in-depth interviews—“storying”—with other sources. For example, official records may provide corroborating information or may illuminate aspects of a culture absent from an individual’s account. In addition, the researcher might substantiate meanings presented in a history by interviewing others in a participant’s life. Before publishing *The Professional Thief*, for example, Sutherland and Conwell (1983) submitted the manuscript to four professional thieves and two police detectives to assess possible bias and to ensure that their interpretations resonated with the understandings of other professional thieves and those who come in contact with them.

A life history account can add depth and evocative illustration to any qualitative study. As with any qualitative genre, however, the abundance of data collected in a life history should be managed and reduced so that analytic headway can be made. Instead of using chronological order to present the story, the researcher might focus on (a) critical dimensions or aspects of the person’s life, (b) principal turning points and the life conditions between them, and (c) the person’s characteristic means of adaptation (Mandelbaum, 1973).

Narrative Inquiry

Closely related to life history is **narrative inquiry**, an interdisciplinary method that views lives holistically and draws from traditions in literary theory, oral history, drama, psychology, folklore, and film philosophy (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The method assumes that people construct their realities through narrating their stories. The researcher explores a story told by a participant and records that story. Narrative inquiry can be applied to any spoken or written account—for example, to an in-depth interview. As noted on the homepage of the journal *Narrative Inquiry*, this method "give[s] contour to experience and life, conceptualize[s] and preserve[s] memories, or hand[s] down experience, tradition, and values to future generations" (www.clarku.edu/faculty/mbamberg/narrativeINQ/).

Narrative inquiry requires a great deal of openness and trust between participant and researcher: The inquiry should involve a mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences. It demands intense and active listening and giving the narrator full voice. Because it is a collaboration, however, it permits both voices to be heard.

This method is criticized for its focus on the individual rather than the social context. Like life histories, however, narrative inquiry seeks to understand sociological questions about groups, communities, and contexts through individuals' lived experiences. Like any method that relies on participants' accounts, narrative may suffer from recalling selectively, focusing on subsets of experience, filling in memory gaps through inference, and reinterpreting the past. There is a difference between life as told, and life as lived. Furthermore, narrative inquiry is also time-consuming and laborious, and requires some specialized training (Viney & Bousefield, 1991). Several researchers have articulated criteria for good narrative inquiry (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Riessman, 1993).

Narrative inquiry is a relative newcomer to the social sciences and applied fields, but it has a long tradition in the humanities because of its power to elicit voice. Narrative inquiry values the signs, the symbols, and the expression of feelings in language and other symbol systems, validating how the narrator constructs meaning. It has been particularly useful in developing feminist and critical theory (Eisner, 1991; Grumet, 1988; Riessman, 1993). And it is especially effective when exploring issues of social change, causality, and social identity (Elliott, 2005) and when studying participants' experiences of violence, trauma, or genocide (Keats, 2009).

Narrative inquiry may rely on journal records, photographs, letters, autobiographical writing, e-mail messages, and other data. Typically, the field notes or interview transcriptions are shared with the narrator, and the written analysis may be constructed collaboratively. In the conduct of narrative inquiry, there is open recognition that the researcher is not just passively recording and reporting the narrator's reality. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) say, researchers need to "follow their nose and reconstruct their narrative of inquiry after the fact" (p. 7). This becomes, in effect, the recounting of methodology.

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is an approach to narrating stories that draws on the power of digitized images to support the content of the story. It has been developed to enable ordinary people to tell their stories. It thus has an empowering and/or emancipatory ideology, seeking to encourage people to give voice (and image and sound) to their life experiences. "Digital storytelling is fundamentally the application of technology to the age-old experience of sharing personal narratives. What's new is the growing availability of sophisticated tools" (Educause, 2007).

Supported by video-editing computer applications, such as iMovie (for Macs) or Movie Maker (for PCs), the storyteller first constructs a narrative (the story) by writing a script or outline, then enhances this with still images, video clips, sound clips, and the like. These digitized elements may come from the storyteller's own archives or could be taken from the Internet as publicly available. Blending the storyline with these other elements represents the craft and art of digital storytelling. Fundamental for such storytelling is first seeing a story, assembling it, and then sharing it. Lambert (2013) provides a step-by-step approach with plentiful illustrations.

Digital storytelling has been widely used in public health, international and community development projects, and educational settings. It has great appeal to young people who are very comfortable with software and willing to "hack around" to figure out how to create a compelling story. However, the open-ended nature of this highly creative process can be intimidating to some, and the costs of equipment may be prohibitive. Several universities and community-based organizations offer workshops on digital storytelling, creating a supportive group environment for experimentation and learning. The final product—the digital story—is often quite short, typically between 4 and 8 minutes long, with all the advantages of pictures and stories for enhancing attention to the report. As a data collection strategy, it could be considered a device or process that is one part of a final qualitative research report, or it could stand alone in such fields as communication and marketing.

Ethical Issues in Life Histories, Narrative Inquiry, and Digital Storytelling

The ethical issues that may arise in life history research or narrative inquiry, as with many types of interviewing, center on the relationship with the participants. Especially when focusing on one individual, the researcher must be exquisitely sensitive to disclosing more about a person than that person is comfortable with.

This demands a more collaborative approach to the research, as noted previously, where the participant and the researcher coconstruct the history or narrative. This stance will help avoid the ethical problems associated with revealing more than the participant cares to have revealed. A related ethical issue is the challenge to fully protect the individual's identity and facts of his private life. This is a delicate matter, one that should be fully addressed in the proposal. Quite often, seemingly neutral topics are, in actuality, quite sensitive and emotion laden, so the researcher must be prepared to make in-the-moment decisions about whether to continue that part of the interview.

Digital storytelling represents somewhat different ethical challenges, since the production of the story is under the control of the storyteller. The issues that may arise here center on unauthorized uploading of highly personal digital stories to the Internet. This is a challenge that anyone using this method should discuss in the proposal, laying out a procedure for managing decisions. Given the visual elements of such stories, and the scholar's power in shaping the story, ethical standards often require careful attention to possible harm and violations of confidentiality (Gubrium, Hill, & Flicker, 2014).

We now turn to a discussion of specific populations that the qualitative researcher might want to gather data from, or with: elites, children, and those with different social identities than those of the researcher.

Interviewing Elites

Interviewing elites—individuals in positions of power and influence—has a long history in sociology and organizational studies. An interview with an "elite" person is a specialized case of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of interview partner. Elite individuals are considered to be influential, prominent, and/or well informed in an organization or community; they are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research and for their perspectives on, for example, an organization, a community, or specialized fields such as the economy or health policy. Citing the work of several organizational scholars, Delaney (2007) identifies various types of elites: philanthropic elites—often quite wealthy and known for major contributions or endowments to individuals, organizations, or causes; political elites—those elected or appointed to political office; ultra-elites—for example, Nobel Laureates or Olympic athletes; and organizational elites—CEOs or presidents of companies, for example. Elites have attained that status through extreme wealth and social responsibility (philanthropists); through success in attaining political office (politicians); through recognition of their scientific or scholarly accomplishments or extreme athletic achievements (awardees); or through rising to senior positions in organizations. One can well imagine other types, especially in political science.

Elite interviewing has many advantages. Valuable information can be gained from these participants because of the positions they hold in social, political, financial, or organizational realms. Taking organizational elites as an example, these individuals can provide an overall view of a company or its relationship to other companies, albeit from their own experiences and standpoints. They may be quite familiar with legal and financial structures. Elites are also able to discuss an organization's policies, histories, and plans, again from a particular perspective, or have a broad view on the development of a policy field or social science discipline. Bennis and Nanus's (2003) study of 90 corporate executives is a strong example of the former; Stephens's (2007) study of macroeconomists and the changing conception of their field shows how elite and ultra-elite scholars understand their field. Many studies of political elites have been conducted. Other elites, such as religious leaders, could be generative participants, as could leaders of gangs or cults, union bosses, or tribal chiefs.

Elite interviewing also presents challenges. It is often difficult to gain access to elites because they are usually busy people operating under demanding time constraints; they are also often difficult to contact initially. We should note that this is also a consideration in other circumstances: busy school teachers, rural village women who have substantial work responsibilities, health care workers, and so on.

With elite individuals particularly, the interviewer may have to rely on sponsorship, recommendations, and introductions for assistance in making appointments and getting around gatekeepers.

Another challenge in interviewing elites is that the interviewer may have to adapt the planned structure of the interview, based on the wishes and predilections of the person being interviewed. Although this is true with all in-depth interviewing, elite individuals who are used to being interviewed by the press and other media may well be quite sophisticated in managing the interview process. (Sophistication and political astuteness are not exclusively the domain of elites, and we do not mean to suggest that they are.) They may want an active interplay with the interviewer. Well practiced at meeting the public and being in control, an elite person may turn the interview around, thereby taking charge of it. When there are considerable (and obvious) status differentials between the interviewer and the elite interview partner, this may become more of an issue. As Delaney (2007) asks, under these circumstances, “who controls the interview?” She offers the principle from *jujitsu* of “using your opponent’s momentum to your own advantage” (p. 215). Elites often respond well to inquiries about broad areas of content and to open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination.

Working with elites often places great demands on the ability of the interviewer to establish competence and credibility by displaying knowledge of the topic or, lacking such knowledge, by projecting an accurate conceptualization of the problem through thoughtful questioning. The interviewer’s hard work usually pays off, however, in the quality of information obtained. Elites may contribute important insight about the topic of the study through their specific perspectives. On the other hand, elites (just like other interview partners) may well have only vague understandings of a setting that are limited by a narrow viewpoint.

Elites’ power and the shifting power relations create difficult moments in interviewing. These challenges are multiplied when the cultural norms of the researcher are very different from those of the elites, as shown in the study by Figenschou (2010), a young female from the West, when she sought data by interviewing Al Jazeera officials. The term *ultra-elite* might also be used, as in Zuckerman’s (1977) study of Nobel Prize winners in economics and Stephens’s (2007) study of renowned macroeconomists. Both Zuckerman and Stephens actually found these ultra-elites willing to participate in 1- to 3-hour interviews, once they were assured of comfort (e.g., in their own offices or homes) and could establish rapport.

Conducting Research With Children and Youth

Many of the materials available from publishers and on the Internet about interviewing and conducting research with children and youth are written for counselors, psychologists, police, health care workers, forensic experts, and lawyers. The issues covered include sexual abuse, parental abuse, custody issues, and the like. This is a very sad commentary on U.S. society today. However, our focus here is neither pathological nor legalistic; we are interested in those circumstances where the qualitative researcher may be interested in **interviewing children and youth** to learn about how they see some aspect of their worlds—a considerably more beneficent focus than those just described.

Thus, children or youth may be the primary focus of a study or one of many groups the researcher wants to interview or learn from more broadly. Increasingly, there are calls for including children's and youth's perspectives as relevant and insightful in learning more about aspects of their worlds. These arguments draw support from the "new sociology of childhood" (Ajodhia-Andrews & Berman, 2009, referencing Greene & Hill, 2005), which calls for "listening to the voices of children when conducting research about their lives" (Ajodhia-Andrews & Berman, 2009, p. 931). This is especially true in education, where all too often, those most affected by educational policy and programmatic decisions—the students—are absent from inquiry. There are special considerations, however, when the qualitative researcher proposes a study that involves children and other young people.

One such consideration might be the children or youth's dominant or preferred mode of communication. Children and youth who use sign language to communicate or whose medium of communication is pictures or music at times require specialized tools for communicating. In their study with "Ian," a child who communicates primarily through "physical movements, gestures, and vocalizations," Ajodhia-Andrews and Berman (2009, p. 933) found it generative to use tools with pictures to elicit Ian's perspectives on schooling. The demand here, whatever the circumstances, is that all attempts be made to respect the child or youth—through whatever media—to better understand her life world.

Also important are age considerations. Interviewing preschoolers, for example, is quite different from interviewing early adolescents. Young children are often active; early adolescents are frequently very self-conscious. Three-year-olds, exploring their emerging language skills, can drive one to distraction with their incessant questions (often quite sophisticated ones!), whereas early adolescents may be taciturn. It is unrealistic to expect young children to sit still for long, but joining them in some activity can create a climate for focused talk. One might use the projective technique of "play" with younger children, as is often done in psychotherapeutic settings. Once one views children as active agents continually constructing their own places in the world, interactive methods such as book discussions, art, child-led place tours, informal interviews, and puppets help children take the lead (Green, 2012; Phelan & Kinsella, 2013; Warin, 2011).

In contrast, some adolescents may feel more comfortable with their peers in a focus-group interview, whereas others may prefer the intimacy of one-to-one interviews. Decisions about how to gather data with various age groups requires sensitivity to their needs, awareness of their developmental issues, and flexibility. Creating a natural context is crucial, but what constitutes "natural" will depend on the age of the participants.

Another consideration is that of role, with associated power dynamics. The roles an adult researcher assumes when studying children vary along two dimensions: "(1) the extent of positive contact between adult and child, and (2) the extent to which the adult has direct authority over the child" (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988, p. 14). Roles of supervisor, leader, observer, and friend can be appropriate. The role of friend is the most fruitful, because the researcher interacts with children in a way that creates trust and a nonauthoritative relationship. He should remember Lerum's (2001) advice to "speak simply, dress casually, and profess emotional vulnerability" (p. 474) and to "continuously evaluate and construct the behaviour best suited for each person" (p. 475). However, age and power differences between adults and children are always salient.

Ethical Issues in Interviewing Children and Youth

The ethical issues in interviewing children and youth center on protecting them from harm as a result of participating in the study, protecting their identities and privacy, and being diligent to ensure that they are willingly participating in the study. The injunction of *primum non nocere*—first, do no harm—is especially important for the researcher to be scrupulous about. Children receive special consideration in the principles and practices for the protection of human subjects because of their relative vulnerability. Thus, the researcher proposing a study that involves children and youth must assure the reviewers of the proposal that he is exquisitely sensitive to the power dynamics between himself and the children, that he will make extra effort to protect the children from harm (physical or psychological), and that parents or guardians continuously support the children's participation. Signing an informed consent form is necessary but not sufficient.

Interviewing Across Differences in Social Identities

Since the publication of the fifth edition of this book, much has been written about the complexities of conducting **research across differences in social identities** between researcher and participants. The research and theorizing about differences in race, ethnicity, first language, gender, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, and so on have taken up a central place in the qualitative inquiry discourse. A few stances have emerged. There are those who take the position, for example, that only women should interview women and men just won't be effective. And there are others who argue that interviewing those with the same or similar social identities risks the researcher's assuming too much tacit knowledge. And there are yet others for whom this issue is complex and nuanced, believing that taking a single position doesn't contribute to thoughtful qualitative research. This latter position is the one we take.

That said, there are considerations at the proposal stage that should be addressed. A short discussion of some of the issues that might be encountered in the proposed research, depending on the research participants, will strengthen the reader's view that the researcher is sensitive to and thoughtful about these issues. There are two circumstances to be particularly aware of. When the researcher shares an aspect of social identity—gender, for example—with participants, he should be cautious about assuming that he understands the interview partner's experience *just because he's a man, too.* And he should guard against the interview partner's making the same assumptions. Conversely, he should not avoid research sites or participants just because he does *not* share some aspect of social identity. Both of these positions are problematic.

As an example of a related issue, sharing professional identity, Rossman recalls interviewing teachers about a reform effort in their school and shared that she, too, had been a classroom teacher. In response to a question about everyday work in the school, one teacher responded, "Well, you know what it's like. You've been here." Rossman had to think quickly and followed up with, "Yes, but each school is different; so tell me about what it's like here." If she had not followed up, she would have been left with few data.

Two examples are particularly illustrative of these issues. Foster's (1994) classic work explored issues of race, gender, geography, and age. She found that sharing the identity of being black Americans (her term) did not necessarily foster shared understandings. Gender, geography (living in the northern or southern United States), and age also shaped the ease—or difficulty—of conducting interviews with the participants. Thus, sharing one salient social identity—race—was not always sufficient for seamless interviews. The title of her chapter, "The Power to Know

One Thing Is Never the Power to Know All Things," captures the issue that differing social identities may complicate an interview, especially when the researcher assumes that sharing blackness, in this case, will be sufficient. Similarly, in a study focusing on women's experiences of divorce, Riessman (1991) used long life-history interviews. While both the researchers and participants shared the gender identity of being women, they varied in terms of social class, first language, and place of origin. The interviews with middle-class white women, conducted by middle-class white women, went relatively smoothly, while the interviews with working-class Latina women did not. Riessman's analysis focuses on the differing narrative styles that the women used in the interviews. The middle-class white researchers had difficulty understanding the narrative style of the Latinas, having assumed that gender would be enough. Recalling the discussion about queer theory, which articulates that identity is fluid, we cannot automatically assume we are "in" with a certain population. That two people drive the same type of car does not necessarily mean their experiences are the same or even somewhat similar!

Identity, feminist, and queer theory have emphasized the multiplicity of identities and how they interact and affect one another, challenging simplistic notions of shared identity categories. To plan for managing these nuances, in their proposals, researchers should state their own positionality and then demonstrate how they will reflexively monitor their approaches to entry, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, given the many differences between their own and their participants' identities. Proposals that demonstrate how they will use guidance from previous researchers will be more impressive. For example, citing Ojeda, Flores, Meza, and Morales's (2011) reflections on culturally competent protocols to integrate Latino cultural values or using the model and advice from research on South Asian people with asthma (Rooney et al., 2011), the proposer can write about planning to get past participants' wariness of pharmaceutical trials, the label "asthmatic," making information available in minority ethnic languages, and so on.

Ethical Issues in All Types of Interviewing

Perhaps the most obvious fact about interviewing is that it is an intervention. As Patton (2002) notes, "a good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience, not only to the interviewer but also to the interviewee" (p. 405). Thus, the ethical issues that may emerge in any interview center on the relationship between the researcher and the interview partner. Is that relationship nonmanipulative? Is there the potential for reciprocity? Is there the potential for pain and anguish when the person interviewed shares painful experiences? The ethical researcher will have to consider ways to manage such circumstances in his proposal. And, of course, the demand that the interview partner's identity be protected throughout the study and in its writing up is crucially important, and dilemma laden, as illustrated in Chapter 3. We turn now to a discussion of using artifacts of culture—documents, objects, songs, pictures, pottery, student art projects, even trash—as an integral part of a typical qualitative research study. At the proposal stage, the writer will need to argue why and how inclusion of such materials will help participants respond to his research questions and, ultimately, enrich his analyses and interpretations.

■ Documents and Historical Analysis

The artifacts that individuals, organizations, families, agencies, townships, or larger social groups produce take multiple forms: Some are documents. Others are material objects that reveal something about a culture—pictures, clothing, pottery, trash. We discuss these in the next section. Documents, in particular, often are drawn on in a qualitative study. Various kinds of documents can provide background information that helps establish the rationale for selecting a particular site, program, or population; this is very relevant for the proposal. For example, the researcher may gather demographic data or describe geographic and historical particulars to justify selection of a site for the research. When he reviews old property transactions, skims recent newspaper editorials, or obtains information about an organization from a website, he is collecting data, but these data are used in the proposal to demonstrate that a particular site or setting will be generative. Websites are another source of data, when they are viewed as documents that convey messages about organizations.

A different use of documents may be proposed as part of the in-depth data gathering for a study. For example, records of meetings, transcriptions of court cases, or personal letters may be identified in the proposal as useful sources of data to be gathered. In addition, the researcher may propose that participants generate documents: perhaps new journal entries reflecting on daily experiences, or a collection of writing samples or art. Both uses of documents are valuable. In addition to documents, however, the researcher may propose to gather and learn about objects in the setting.

Researchers often supplement participant observation, interviewing, and observation with gathering and analyzing documents produced in the course of everyday events or constructed specifically for the research at hand. As such, the analysis of documents is potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting. Minutes of meetings, logs, announcements, formal policy statements, letters, and so on are all useful in developing an understanding of the organization, setting, or group studied. Research journals and samples of writing, as mentioned above, can also be quite informative. For her dissertation research in composition studies, Rosenberg (2006) used writing samples of newly literate adults to guide her interviews; this was particularly evocative of deeper insights into the challenges of literacy for adults, some of whom were becoming literate in a second or third language.

Archival data—documents recording official events—are the routinely gathered records of a society, community, or organization. These may further supplement other qualitative methods. For example, marital patterns among a group of Mexicans, discovered through fieldwork in a community, could be tested through marriage records found in the offices of the county seat or state capitol. Descriptions of funding priorities by policymakers could be corroborated (or not) through an analysis of budgetary allocations. Public health, legal, and police records can provide evidence of trends, for example, in domestic violence, and market receipts can provide useful insights to assess different populations' spending on junk food. Now, governmental and nongovernmental agencies collect and store data that might even be coded and computer retrievable. Critical discourses analysis can usefully critique readily available governmental policy documents. For example, Brissett (2011) began with Jamaican education policy documents' assertions of liberatory goals, then identified unintended consequences of perpetuating the disempowerment of low-income Jamaicans. His qualitative content analysis of policy documents, framed with postcolonial theory, revealed that institutionalized ways of thinking are reflected in both state policy rhetoric and practice.

As with other methodological decisions, the decision to propose gathering and analyzing documents or archival records should be linked to the research questions developed in the conceptual framework for the study. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation of documents should be approached cautiously because the inferential span is long; that is, the meaning of the documents is never transparent. In the proposal, if arguing to gather and analyze documents, the researcher will want to indicate how he will seek corroboration of the meaning of the documents through other methods.

Often, case studies begin with a history—an account of some event or combination of events that occurred in the past—to provide background and context. Historical analysis is a method of analyzing and interpreting what has happened using records and accounts. It is particularly useful in qualitative studies for establishing a baseline or background prior to participant observation or interviewing. Sources of **historical data** are classified as either primary or secondary. Oral testimony of eyewitnesses, documents, records, and relics are primary. Reports of persons who relate the accounts of eyewitnesses and summaries, as in history books and encyclopedias, are secondary. For example, is the document written by a reporter who actually witnessed the faces of people fleeing from the collapsing World Trade Center? Or is it a collection of editorials written as commentary on the ramifications of the attack?

Historians' usual questions should be asked: Who created the documents and for what purpose? How reliable are the data? Have meanings changed since they were produced? Are these primary sources, generated at the time of an event by a participant in the event? Or are they collections of commentary about an event?

Historical analysis is particularly useful in obtaining knowledge about unexamined areas and reexamining questions for which answers were not as definite as desired. It allows for systematic and direct classification of data. Historical research traditions articulate procedures to enhance the credibility of statements about the past, to establish relationships, and to determine possible cause-and-effect relationships. Many research studies have a historical base or context; so systematic historical analysis enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of a study.

There is a dialectical tension in this kind of analysis between contemporary and historical interpretations of events, even though texts representing either perspective are influenced by the social contexts in which they are produced. Historical analysis cannot use direct observation, and there is no way to directly test a historical hypothesis. Moreover, there are challenges in analyzing and categorizing historical data. The research should keep in mind that documents may be falsified deliberately and that words and phrases used in old records may now have very different meanings. The meanings of artifacts, as we have noted before, are perceived and interpreted by the researcher. The researcher should retain a modest skepticism about such data.

Do you want to know about pediatric illness in Peru? A clinical staff might give you a sample of children’s health records. Want to know if sons inherit more than daughters, or the arrest patterns for commercial sex workers? Want to see whether there is a connection between the locations of abandoned buildings and homicides? Key informants may tell you of information sources and how to make proper contact to gain access. Data can be accumulated, even from disorganized filing cabinets. “Almost every aspect of human behavior has been surveyed” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 217); so an imaginative researcher can find appropriate data sets. He will find data from ministries of health, the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, and a vast array of other data sets that can serve as background to set the stage for a case study or as secondary data sources. These are particularly useful when following the adage, “Collect locally and compare globally” (p. 220).

When the researcher uses documents, he may use content analysis. The raw material for content analysis is typically text: textbooks, novels, newspapers, e-mail messages, political speeches. Historically, content analysis was viewed as an objective and neutral way of generating a quantitative description of the content of various forms of communication; thus, counting the number of times specific words and terms appeared was central to the method (Berelson, 1952). As this process has evolved, however, researchers now focus on “the presence, meanings and relationships of . . . words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages” (Busch et al., 2005). Thus, today, the process is viewed more generously as a method for describing and interpreting the written productions of a society or social group.

■ Objects and Artifacts of Material Cultures

Probably the greatest advantage of using documents and other artifacts is that it does not disrupt ongoing events: These materials can be gathered without disturbing the setting. One can see patterns about cultural values by simply observing collections of art, scrapbooks, or photographs. The researcher determines where the emphasis lies after the data have been gathered, often for nonresearch purposes. A potential weakness, however, is the span of inferential reasoning. That is, the analysis of written materials or photographs or clothing, for example, entails interpretation by the researcher, just as in the analysis of interactively gathered data: Minutes of meetings do not speak for themselves. Care should be taken, therefore, in displaying the logic of interpretation used in inferring meaning from the artifacts.

Still, think about how easy it could be! Just collecting things people leave behind or throw out—this is what archaeologists do! An analysis of other artifacts—those not encoded in text—can be fruitful for a qualitative study. In fact, classic ethnographic research focused on many such artifacts: religious icons, clothing, housing forms, food, and so on.

The researcher may well determine that focusing on some artifacts in the setting would add richness to the corpus of data to be gathered. For example, O'Toole and Were (2008) found that examining space and **material culture** in their study of a technology company added greatly to their insights about "power, identity, and status" (p. 616). As a further example, studies in classrooms might include student artwork, wall decorations, or clothing, for example. Photographs (discussed more in Chapter 7) might also be included. These kinds of data can be gathered unobtrusively, often without having to negotiation permission and without worry about disturbing the setting, especially when the site has been abandoned. Of course, one must gather other data, to avoid jumping to quick but erroneous conclusions.

Unobtrusive data collection might be looking for accretion—that is, looking for what has been piling up—as when campers leave behind layers of coals with evidence of the meals cooked there. Also, unobtrusively gathered data may be evidence of erosion, such as the eroded and worn tiles in front of a particularly popular art exhibit. Use your imagination, but never rely solely on unobtrusively collected data. Silly mistakes could come from leaps of inference about the number of people wearing Nike sneakers or the number of gin bottles in the bins in one neighborhood.

Ethical Issues in Using Documents and Artifacts

The ethical issues in relying on documents and artifacts center on how publically available these materials are. Using public materials might seem harmless, but the researcher should nonetheless consider how using them might harm the organization or individuals (even though not specifically identified). Would analysis and writing about these materials denigrate those who produced them? In what ways? Could the researcher be viewed as an artifact "lurker"? A spy? While being creative, searching beyond the documents typically kept in libraries and archives, the researcher's attention to documents could blossom into renewed and wider attention to matters that had been buried or laid to rest.

More private materials should be subjected to even closer ethical reasoning. Even if a research participant agrees to write a journal (for research purposes), what if he discloses troublesome information? What if there are embedded pleas for help? Revelations of criminal behavior? How should the researcher respond? The overall consideration here is for the researcher to ask, "Are the producers of these artifacts likely to feel exposed or that their privacy has been violated if these materials are used?" So seemingly unobtrusive data collection can bring up thorny ethical and role issues.

Some combination of these primary research methods is typical for in-depth qualitative inquiry. In Vignette 20, Shadduck-Hernandez (1997) articulates a complex design that incorporates several. The vignette is adapted from her proposal for research about CIRCLE (Center for Immigrant and Refugee Leadership and Empowerment), a participatory project involving newcomer undergraduate students, graduate students, and members from refugee and immigrant communities.

Note the discussion of the various sources of qualitative data—some generated as part of the CIRCLE project, others to be generated specifically for the dissertation. It is eloquently congruent with her assumptions about the nature of this work, its purpose and audience, and her political stance. Note that she plans to rely on several methods: documents in the form of journals, self-reflective writing, and papers written for courses or conferences (both her own and those of the student participants); a focus-group interview; in-depth interviews; and video and photography. (Videotaping and photography are discussed in Chapter 7 as specialized methods, although one could base an entire study on videos and pictures.)

This chapter has provided an overview of several basic methods for data collection that qualitative researchers typically use, as well as salient ethical issues that may arise with the various methods. At the proposal stage, the writer should consider how the selection of any particular method will inform the research questions, thereby extending and deepening knowledge on the topic. As a guide for assessing which of the basic methods will be useful, Tables 6.3 and 6.4 offer judgments about each method's strengths and challenges.

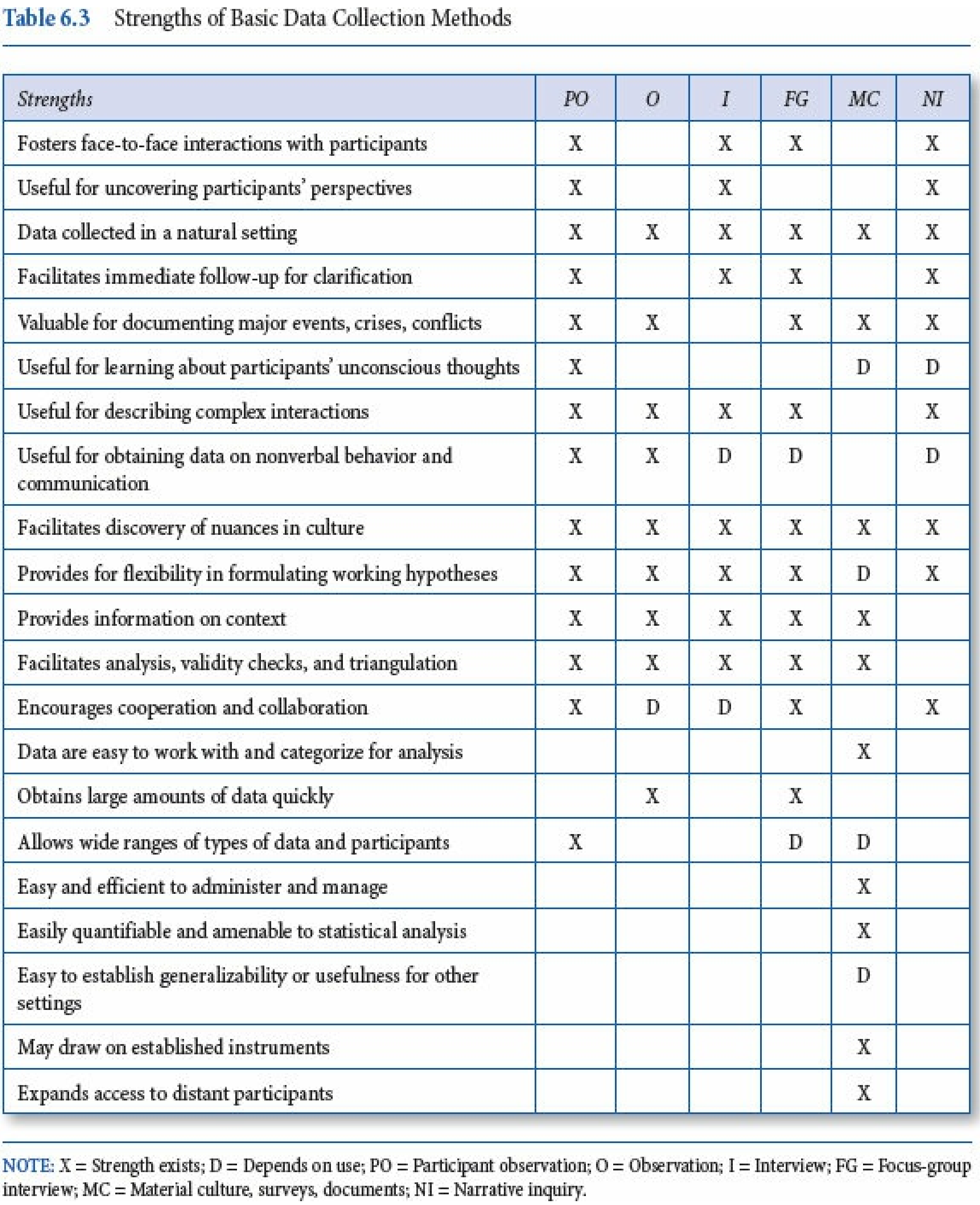


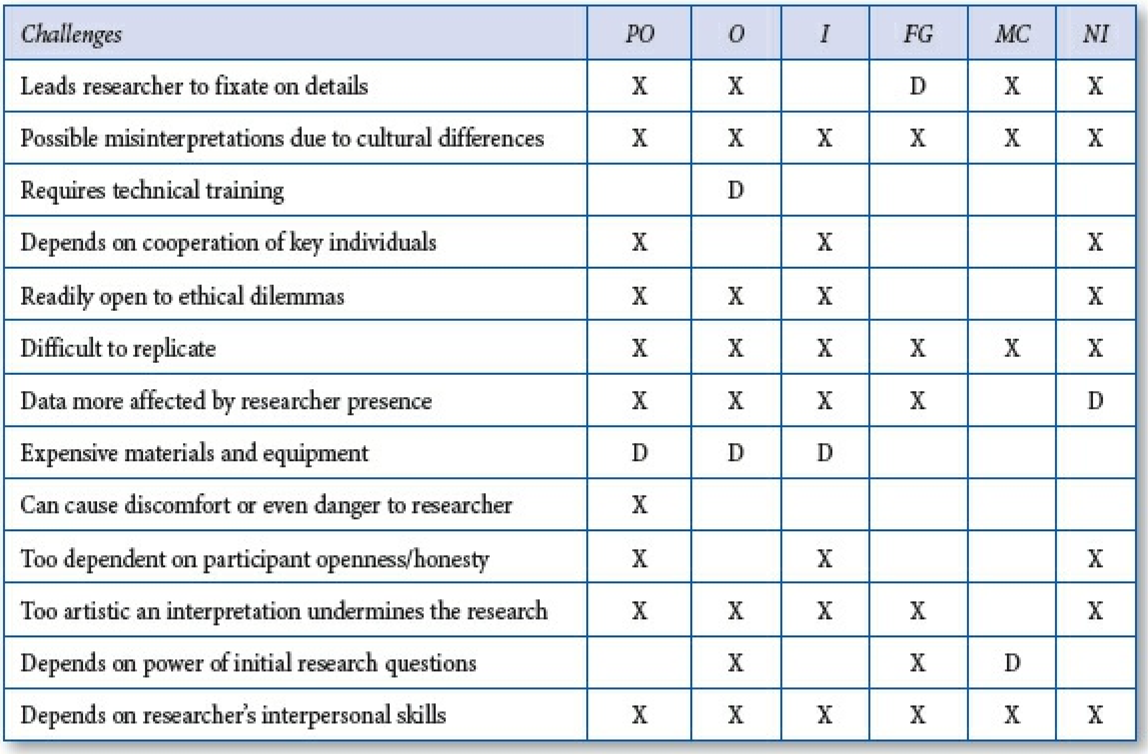
Table 6.3 Strengths of Basic Data Collection Methods

Strengths	*PO*	*O*	*I*	*FG*	*MC*	*NI*
Fosters face-to-face interactions with participants	X		X	X		X
Useful for uncovering participants' perspectives	X		X			X
Data collected in a natural setting	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facilitates immediate follow-up for clarification	X		X	X		X
Valuable for documenting major events, crises, conflicts	X	X		X	X	X
Useful for learning about participants' unconscious thoughts	X				D	D
Useful for describing complex interactions	X	X	X	X		X
Useful for obtaining data on nonverbal behavior and communication	X	X	D	D		D
Facilitates discovery of nuances in culture	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provides for flexibility in formulating working hypotheses	X	X	X	X	D	X
Provides information on context	X	X	X	X	X	
Facilitates analysis, validity checks, and triangulation	X	X	X	X	X	
Encourages cooperation and collaboration	X	D	D	X		X
Data are easy to work with and categorize for analysis					X	
Obtains large amounts of data quickly		X		X		
Allows wide ranges of types of data and participants	X			D	D	
Easy and efficient to administer and manage					X	
Easily quantifiable and amenable to statistical analysis					X	
Easy to establish generalizability or usefulness for other settings					D	
May draw on established instruments					X	
Expands access to distant participants					X	

NOTE: X = Strength exists; D = Depends on use; PO = Participant observation; O = Observation; I = Interview; FG = Focus-group interview; MC = Material culture, surveys, documents; NI = Narrative inquiry.

NOTE: X = Strength exists; D = Depends on use; PO = Participant observation; O = Observation; I = Interview; FG = Focus-group interview; MC = Material culture, surveys, documents; NI = Narrative inquiry.

Table 6.4 Challenges in Using Basic Data Collection Methods



Challenges	*PO*	*O*	*I*	*FG*	*MC*	*NI*
Leads researcher to fixate on details	X	X		D	X	X
Possible misinterpretations due to cultural differences	X	X	X	X	X	X
Requires technical training		D				
Depends on cooperation of key individuals	X		X			X
Readily open to ethical dilemmas	X	X	X			X
Difficult to replicate	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data more affected by researcher presence	X	X	X	X		D
Expensive materials and equipment	D	D	D			
Can cause discomfort or even danger to researcher	X					
Too dependent on participant openness/honesty	X		X			X
Too artistic an interpretation undermines the research	X	X	X	X		X
Depends on power of initial research questions		X		X	D	
Depends on researcher's interpersonal skills	X	X	X	X	X	X

NOTE: X = Challenges exists; D = Depends on use; PO = Participant observation; O = Observation; I = Interview; FG = Focus-group interview; MC = Material culture, including documents; NI = Narrative inquiry.

NOTE: X = Challenges exists; D = Depends on use; PO = Participant observation; O = Observation; I = Interview; FG = Focus-group interview; MC = Material culture, including documents; NI = Narrative inquiry.

A solid rationale for the choice of methods is crucial, as it indicates to the reviewer of the proposal that the choice of methods is grounded in the conceptual framework and builds on previous theoretical, empirical, and methodological knowledge. These same considerations apply for the somewhat more focused methods discussed in Chapter 7.

Vignette 20 Using Multiple Methods for Data Collection

Imagine 12 university students, on a chilly Saturday morning, sprawled out on a classroom floor formulating their thoughts for a proposal on scattered sheets of newsprint. Laughter, silence, and intense discussion highlight the writing process of these authors, who are first-generation refugee and immigrant (newcomer) students from China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Korea participating in an undergraduate seminar on cross-cultural experiences in community development.

This dissertation research acknowledges the real tensions that exist in any qualitative research endeavor. Certain models can be rigid, one-way streets if they seduce participants into a process of inquiry in which the researcher alone is the analyzer and interpreter of data. This study consciously tried to counter such situations by applying participatory research as the guide of the inquiry (Maguire, 2000; Reardon, Welsh, Kreiswirth, & Forester, 1993). Study participants have been involved in this inquiry as researchers and valued members of a learning team to produce knowledge that may help stimulate social change.

Stemming from my commitment to participatory processes, the research I am conducting is collaborative in nature, emerging from the students and the communities I work with. Collaboration and participation in developing critical learning environments produce pooled resources and shared expertise leading to integrated and collective activities. Collaboration, action, and reflection enhance the legitimacy of each participant’s knowledge (Brice Heath & McLaughlin, 1993) and set the stage for the sources of multilevel data collection employed in this study. These six sources of data have evolved as a complement to the development of CIRCLE courses and community outreach activities and support the concept of a pedagogy for affirmation, advocacy, and action. They include the following: (a) journal entries and self-reflection papers; (b) focus-group interviews with 8 undergraduate students; (c) in-depth interviews with 10 students; (d) video and photography documentation; (e) oral history interviews conducted by students and youth with each other; and (f) research field notes, reflections, and academic papers for courses and conferences over the 4 years of my involvement with and participation in the project. These latter data provide critical insights into my own theoretical development in relation to this research and my role as researcher in this study.

Dialogue Between Authors

"*Catherine:* Most people, me included, naturally love the social aspects of collecting interview data. But we so often forget the fun of discovering rich sources from census or other survey data, or freely available website data. I love focus-group data collection, but it sure is hard to manage the logistics. I've loved the challenge of elite interviews when I do research in state capitals. I am intrigued with ethnographic interviewing, but when I see what it is like when done right, it seems really complex! I've analyzed state codes of law, as in document analysis, and that was an especially dry and boring topic, but I'm starting a new project that is document analysis of presidential speeches and campaign platforms. What are your favorites?

Gretchen: I am becoming increasingly intrigued with what some call "alternatives" to the standard interviews, observations, and document reviews. Videos, pictures, and photo elicitation methods—several of my students have used these recently—are just fascinating for what they evoke. Reminds me of years ago when a group of us were trying to make the AERA annual meetings more lively. Skits, performance theatre all began to become more visible. I don't see so much of that now—maybe these will come back."

Dialogue Between Learners

“Dear Karla,

I know I’m starting my thinking about data collection methods from the starting point of what data are easily accessed, and then thinking, “Okay, what else do I need and how do I get it?” How did you start?

Keren

Hi, Keren,

The question that I always have around data collection methods is: How do you know how many methods you need for your research design? I guess it depends on the assumptions that are outlined early on in this chapter. As I’ve mentioned, for my own research, I used participant observation, semistructured interviews/focus groups, and document review as my primary methods. They seemed to complement each other nicely once I was in the fieldwork process. So interesting, though, how many different approaches and techniques there are!

As always, I look forward to your thoughts.

Karla”

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Key Concepts

artifacts
digital storytelling
ethical issues
ethnographic interviewing
field notes
focus-group interviews
historical data
in-depth interviewing
interviewing children and youth
interviewing elites
life histories
material culture
narrative inquiry
observation
participant observation
phenomenological interviewing
positionality
research across differences in social identities
unobtrusive data collection

Chapter 7 Specialized and Focused Data Collection Methods

In addition to the basic data-gathering methods outlined in Chapter 6, the researcher can choose to incorporate several somewhat more specialized or focused methods in the design of a study, as appropriate. Each of those described in this chapter is a full and complete method in and of itself and has a methodological literature explicating its nuances and subtleties. In some instances, the same terminology is used for data collection methods and for modes of reporting or presentation. For example, some speak of "doing case studies" as a way of collecting data, but more often an entire report, even a book, is a case study. Ethnographers talk of "doing an ethnography" to describe their approach to data collection, when, in fact, an ethnography is a written product—*ethno* = culture, *graphy* = writing—or an inscription. *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (Shostak, 1983) is a book that is the life history of one African woman, and the data collection method is called life history, consisting of long-term participant observation and in-depth and ethnographic interviewing. In addition, some methods discussed here could well be folded into one of the basic methods. Specifically, kinesics and proxemics can be categorized as examples of very focused observing. And using arts in data collection can be seen as a form of document analysis. Others could well be discussed as analysis strategies (e.g., grounded theory approaches). We separate them out here for heuristic reasons. Yes, this *is* confusing!

The discussions that follow are necessarily simplified and brief, as was the preceding, and the list is not exhaustive. The methods discussed, if used, should always be used with the understanding that observation, participant observation, interviewing, and analyzing documents and artifacts are the basic data collection methods for discovering context-laden patterns and understandings. These might well be supplemented by a variety of more specialized methods. Some of these are variations of the primary four. In this chapter, we discuss four areas for consideration: (1) using the Internet and digital applications; (2) multimodal inquiry, including use of videos, photographs, and the arts; (3) interaction analysis; and (4) dilemma analysis. Chapter 7 of the fifth edition of this book also included historical analysis. In this most recent edition, we briefly discussed historical approaches in Chapter 6 under "Documents and Historical Analysis"; the curious reader is referred to the previous edition for more detail on this approach. We have chosen here to focus on the Internet and applications, as well as the multimodal methods, as these are emergent and quite fascinating. Interaction analysis (including a focus on classroom analysis, kinesics, and proxemics) and dilemma analysis are not typically discussed in books such as this one; for that reason, we include them here once again. These categories represent just a sampling of specialized methods; there are many others that qualitative researchers might include. However, at the proposal stage, the researcher considering the use of any of these will have to convince the reader that she is knowledgeable about the method and capable of implementing it thoughtfully and ethically in her study.

■ Using the Internet and Digital Applications

Since the publication of the fifth edition of this book, the social world and the research community have witnessed the continuing explosion of the potential uses of computer software and the Internet for research purposes. There is no question that the Internet and its associated hardware (desktop and laptop computers, handheld devices such as iPhones and iPods, etc.) are continuing to at times radically change the methodologies of social science research. Searching the Internet for resources (now called “Googling”); using software to assist in transcribing audiotapes, to manage citations, and for data analysis; interviewing by means of e-mail, via Skype, or in dedicated chat rooms; and using dialogues and interactions online as sites for study are all now part and parcel of much scholarship in the social sciences and applied fields, as is the integration of technology into narratives, noted in Chapter 6 under “Digital Storytelling.” In Chapter 2, we noted this emerging method as comprising three major strands: (1) the use of the Internet for gathering data; (2) the use of software packages that support transcribing tapes and analysis of data; and (3) the use of Internet ethnography, in which the Internet itself is a site for research.

These uses of computer software and the Internet are reflected in the three editions of *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000, 2005), when one examines the chapters dedicated to the use of computers in qualitative research. The first edition included a chapter titled “Using Computers in Qualitative Research” (Richards & Richards, 1994), in which the authors described various software programs designed to assist in qualitative data management and analysis. The second edition contained a similar chapter, “Software and Qualitative Research” (Weitzman, 2000). The acronym for this developing field is QDA, for *qualitative data analysis.* The third edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* includes no chapter on QDA; instead, Markham’s (2005) chapter focuses on **Internet ethnography**, illustrating the growing focus on the Internet itself as a site for identity representation and construction. The fourth edition of the handbook includes a chapter titled "Qualitative Research and Technology: In the Midst of a Revolution" (Davidson & di Gregorio, 2011) that incorporates strategies and considerations in using technology and various platforms to gather data. Thus, the evolution of using the Internet is apparent from the four editions of this important handbook, with the development of a focus on using the Internet for directly gathering data through e-mail, dedicated discussion blogs, and social media platforms. The frequency of using these methods has increased dramatically since the third edition of the handbook was published.

Gathering Data Using Software Applications

Use of the powers of the Internet for gathering data has mushroomed in recent years. Two distinctions are useful here: Are the data "naturally occurring or researcher-generated"? (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014, p. 70). Researcher-generated data include online surveys using various survey applications, interviews using e-mail or a chat function (such as Skype chat or Google chat), videos and photos taken using any of a number of video-recording devices (including an iPhone), and material gathered from blogs and YouTube, to mention just a few of the applications in this burgeoning area.

Surveying a large sample using applications such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics is now commonplace. While not typically the case, such applications could include only open-ended questions, as would be appropriate in a qualitative study. E-mail is frequently used to follow up interviews with questions for clarification or elaboration, as are technologies that allow for asynchronous "conversations with participants, especially when they are distant from the researcher" (James & Busher, 2006, p. 403). In addition, dedicated discussion blogs or sites create "virtual" focus-group discussions, as noted earlier. Other intriguing developments include applications that can assist in taking field notes (Evernote, for example, or the voice-memo function on an iPhone) and for locating observations in space using a global positioning system (e.g., GPSLogger, an application that allows you to enter spatial data into field notes).

All these uses of such applications present challenges and questions: Are data collected from a discussion blog as rich as, for example, in-person interviews or focus groups? What cues are missing when the data are gathered without actually seeing, sensing, or directly interacting with the participants? What intuitive inferences are lost? Furthermore, how can you protect the anonymity of your sources if you collect data online? And how do you justify a sample that is made up of only people who are computer literate, comfortable with the medium, and have computer access? Despite these challenges, computer-mediated **data gathering** may offer an alternative to face-to-face interviewing and be most appropriate for certain research projects. Because of technology's pervasiveness in today's society, Seymour (2001) explored the experiences of individuals with different kinds of disabilities (paralysis as a result of spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, and amputated arms or hands) in using various hardware and software applications, seeking to understand if and how they felt excluded from the communication channels embodied in the Internet.

Gathering naturally occurring data happens when the researcher focuses her gaze on an online community. As noted previously, the ubiquity of social networking compels many social scientists to attempt to understand this phenomenon. As Paulus et al. note (2014), "discussion groups, blogs, social networking sites and virtual worlds are all sites of interaction that are important for social scientists to understand" (p. 76). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 6, scholars from a number of disciplines have taken up this fascination, focusing on online communities and blogs as sites for their research, giving birth to a new genre of qualitative research —Internet ethnography. In particular, the fields of communication and cultural studies have contributed fascinating studies of the Internet and its wealth of opportunities to reflect changing social identities, communities, and cultures (see, e.g., Baym, 2000; Gatson & Zwerink, 2004; Hine, 2000; Kendall, 2002; Miller & Slater, 2000). Their fascination emerges in part from the postmodern turn that has examined and problematized the embodied construction of identity. The Internet provides a disembodied site where social identities (gender, social class, sexual orientation, etc.) are hidden. Thus emerges the possibility of studying the construction of identity solely through text. As Markham (2005) notes, "although we recognize that reality is socially negotiated through discursive practice, the dialogic nature of identity and culture is thrown into high relief in computer-mediated environments" (p. 795). A qualitative study could be designed to focus exclusively on a particular blog, as did Gatson and Zwerink (2004) in their studies of sites dedicated to fans of the popular movie *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

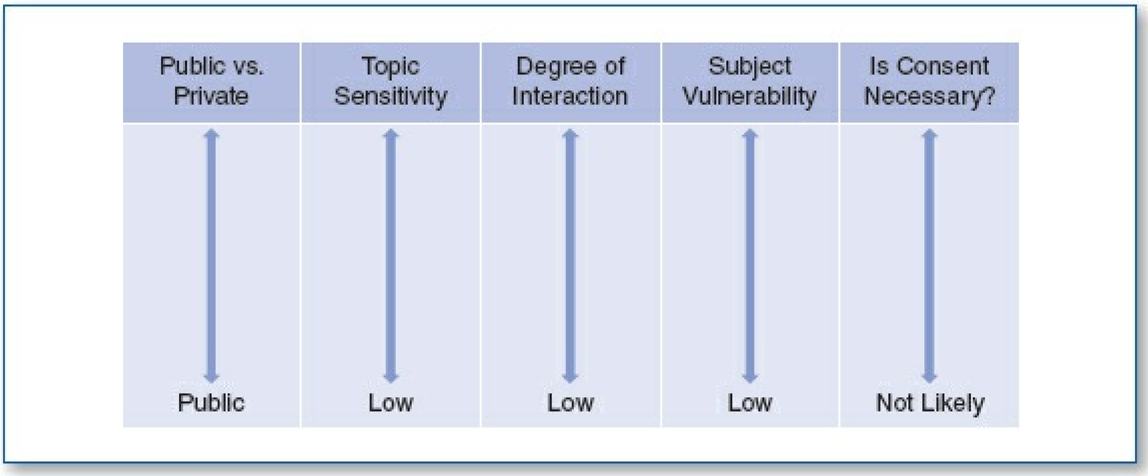
As noted in Chapter 2, one major advantage in using the Internet to gather data is that one's sample can quite literally be global. Computers also provide access to populations uncomfortable with or unwilling to engage in face-to-face interactions. At the proposal stage, the researcher will have to provide a sound rationale for gathering data using the Internet, as with any method, arguing that this strategy flows logically from the conceptual framework and research questions. She will also need to convince the readers that she is capable of using the medium successfully.

Ethical Issues in Using Software Applications and Internet Sites

Gathering data using software applications poses one set of ethical issues; using various software applications poses others; and focusing on online communities as research sites brings its own considerations. When gathering data using various applications, there are particular concerns about protecting anonymity and privacy. As interviews and observations are increasingly digitized, the researcher cannot claim, with strict confidence, that the data will be destroyed at the end of the study (a common requirement from institutional review boards). Files stored on a computer are easily hacked into; files that are backed up automatically onto a server are never “destroyed” and remain accessible, despite the researcher’s best intentions. Considering these ethical issues at the proposal stage is critically important. Using applications to transcribe tapes poses challenges similar to those discussed above, and they center on respecting one’s interview partners in how their words are represented. This is not unique to using software but remains an important ethical concern.

Finally, conducting ethnographies of online communities poses a different set of ethical issues. Are all participants informed that research is going on? Have they willingly consented to participate? If they are on the site as avatars (a computer user’s representation of herself, which can be three-dimensional or a photo or text), can the researcher easily request that they be allowed to review the transcripts or analyses prior to her publishing them? And does conducting research change the dynamics of interaction on the site such that the ethnography is really a study of online blog participants’ engagement in a study? Paulus et al. (2014) present a matrix for assessing how and when to use informed consent when gathering data from an online community (see Figure 7.1). They note four dimensions to consider and weigh: (1) whether the online community is more public or more private, (2) whether the topic is more or less sensitive, (3) the degree of interaction with participants using the site, and (4) whether the participants are more or less vulnerable. Judgments about these four dimensions shape the final column: whether consent is necessary or not likely. These dimensions help researchers think through issues around informed consent when working in the increasingly ambiguous Internet environment.

Figure 7.1 Heuristic for Making Informed Consent Decisions in Internet Research



SOURCE: Paulus et al. (2014, p. 77), adapted from McKee and Porter (2009, p. 88); Buchanan (2003, p. 56). Used with permission.

■ Multimodal Approaches

Multimedia Data in the Digital Age

By Rachael B. Lawrence

As qualitative data management systems have advanced in the digital age and the Internet has created new platforms in which people work, learn, and play, qualitative researchers across many disciplines have gained access to a broad array of media that can serve as data sources. These media include photographs, audio and/or video recordings, graphics, sketches, and other artifacts. Qualitative researchers have always gathered data in multimedia contexts; however, data collection traditionally focused on the written and spoken word:

> Clearly, data in the field are by their very nature composed of diverse media (they are likely to include sounds, objects, visual designs, people's actions and bodies, etc.). Data, then, are necessarily composed of a diverse and shifting range of media. (Dicks, Soyinka, & Coffey, 2006, p. 78)

While researchers have traditionally recorded observations in field notes, it is now possible to collect, store, analyze, and incorporate multimedia into research.

New platforms for management and virtual spaces that allow for the creation of *hypermedia* (interactive text, image, and sound presentations) may make consideration of these data from multimedia sources more feasible for today's researchers than for their peers in the past (Dicks, Mason, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2005). Any qualitative method or design can incorporate multimedia data, including traditional ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies. However, multimedia data figure prominently in *multimodal inquiry* and *arts-informed inquiry*.

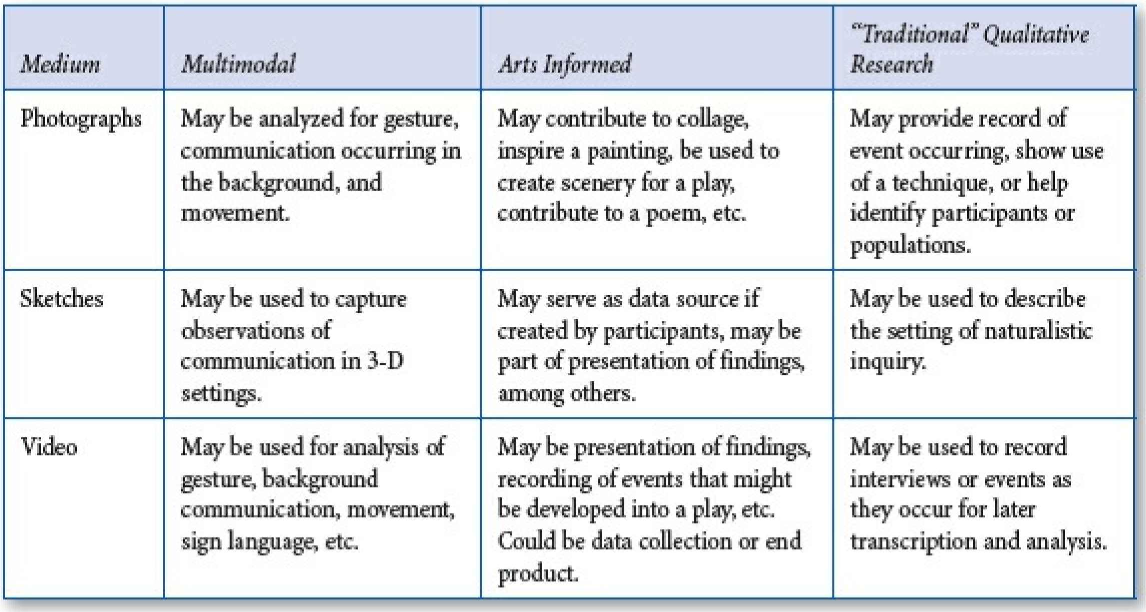
Multimodal inquiry as a research field uses multimedia and hypermedia sources to analyze communication beyond the written and spoken word and can use qualitative and quantitative methods (see O'Halloran & Smith, 2011, also Jewitt, 2009). Originating in communication studies, this field of inquiry examines body language, what pictures on a pamphlet or textures might be communicating, how people interact with objects in 3-D contexts, and other modes of communication (Norris, 2004; Pink, 2011). *Multimodal* is sometimes conflated with multimedia data collection, but the term is really specific to the form of information the study is seeking.

Arts-informed inquiry may also use multimedia data but, instead of primarily analyzing communication, seeks meaning making through aesthetic principals and choices. Multimedia data may contribute to the creation of creative literature, performance art, interactive art, collage, music, poetry, or other art forms that are intended to make research findings accessible and interesting to a wider audience (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Pink, 2011; Stanley, 2009). Both multimodal and arts-informed inquiries are interested in communication beyond the traditional written word—in arts-informed inquiry, research efforts contribute to an aesthetic focus, rather than analysis of communication. Table 7.1 examines how a medium may be used in the various research approaches.

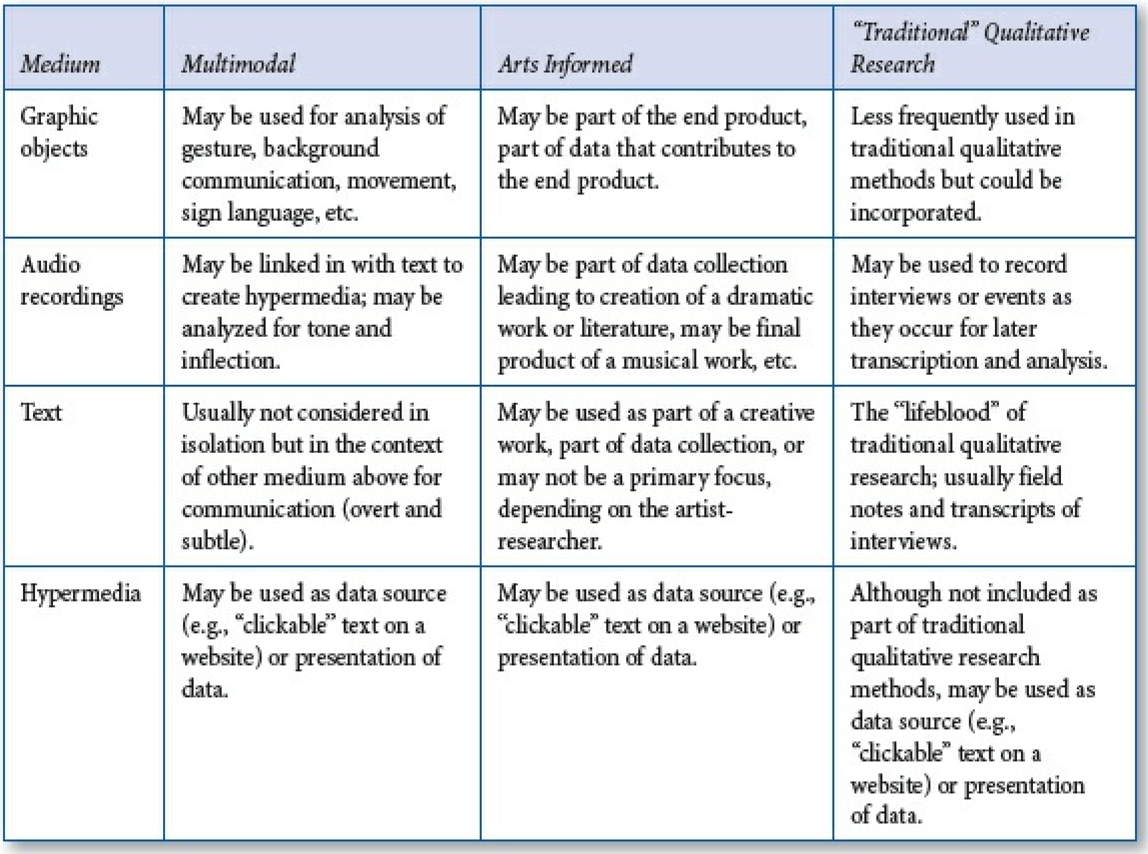
Videos and Photographs

With the advent of digital cameras, which take not only pictures but also short videos, visually recording events at research sites and participants’ interactions is quite easy. In parallel, the advent of the video-sharing website YouTube makes the uploading and sharing of videos commonplace. These recent developments bring opportunities and ethical risks (discussed below) and link to a long tradition in anthropology and other social science disciplines, as well as highly respected work in documentary filmmaking. Note their relationship to digital storytelling, discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 7.1 Medium by Qualitative Approach



Medium	*Multimodal*	*Arts Informed*	*“Traditional” Qualitative Research*
Photographs	May be analyzed for gesture, communication occurring in the background, and movement.	May contribute to collage, inspire a painting, be used to create scenery for a play, contribute to a poem, etc.	May provide record of event occurring, show use of a technique, or help identify participants or populations.
Sketches	May be used to capture observations of communication in 3-D settings.	May serve as data source if created by participants, may be part of presentation of findings, among others.	May be used to describe the setting of naturalistic inquiry.
Video	May be used for analysis of gesture, background communication, movement, sign language, etc.	May be presentation of findings, recording of events that might be developed into a play, etc. Could be data collection or end product.	May be used to record interviews or events as they occur for later transcription and analysis.



Medium	*Multimodal*	*Arts Informed*	*"Traditional" Qualitative Research*
Graphic objects	May be used for analysis of gesture, background communication, movement, sign language, etc.	May be part of the end product, part of data that contributes to the end product.	Less frequently used in traditional qualitative methods but could be incorporated.
Audio recordings	May be linked in with text to create hypermedia; may be analyzed for tone and inflection.	May be part of data collection leading to creation of a dramatic work or literature, may be final product of a musical work, etc.	May be used to record interviews or events as they occur for later transcription and analysis.
Text	Usually not considered in isolation but in the context of other medium above for communication (overt and subtle).	May be used as part of a creative work, part of data collection, or may not be a primary focus, depending on the artist-researcher.	The "lifeblood" of traditional qualitative research; usually field notes and transcripts of interviews.
Hypermedia	May be used as data source (e.g., "clickable" text on a website) or presentation of data.	May be used as data source (e.g., "clickable" text on a website) or presentation of data.	Although not included as part of traditional qualitative research methods, may be used as data source (e.g., "clickable" text on a website) or presentation of data.

SOURCE: Rachel B. Lawrence.

SOURCE: Rachel B. Lawrence.

Historically, using films and photography constituted the field of *visual anthropology* or *film ethnography*, where interactions and activities were systematically recorded to depict a cultural group or event. The Visual Anthropology Society's website facilitates knowledge sharing within the discipline and provides links to its journal, *Visual Anthropology Review*. The various forms of film can be used for data collection and for organizing, interpreting, and validating qualitative inquiry (Szto, Furman, & Langer, 2005). As Banks (2001) illustrates, films of marriage ceremonies in different social strata in contemporary India, coupled with historical photos and documents, raised key questions in his search for cultural understanding of the interconnections between economics and tradition in handicrafts, dowries, and trousseaux.

The tools of **videos** and **photographs** are used in many disciplines: communication, cultural studies, anthropology, and many applied fields. Scholars focus on visual media as sites for analyses and use the production of visual representation to depict their analyses. From what can be argued as a cultural studies perspective, Hurdley (2007) studied photographs on living room mantelpieces as "domestic display" (p. 355), expressive of the "complexities of 'doing' home cultures" (p. 355). Videos and photographs have the unique ability to capture visual phenomena in a seemingly objective manner—yet always from the perspective of the filmmaker, just as with other forms of observation. The filmmaker—the observer—must decide what to focus on while recording and then how to interpret the data in that recording (whether on film or in field notes). More recently, photo-elicitation methods have emerged where participants are asked their reactions to and thoughts about photos, videos, graffiti, and other visual content (see Bignante, 2009; Harper, 2002). A PhD student in sports management recently used video elicitation in his small-scale study of highly identified sports fans and their preference for attending sporting events live or viewing from home. He showed a short video clip of a highly identified fan discussing his preferences as a method to elicit his interviewees' perspectives (Larkin, 2014). Increasingly, these methods are being used in marketing research.

Some photo-elicitation approaches espouse an explicit empowerment ideology (see Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Pies, 2004). Described as a "participatory action research methodology" (Wang & Pies, 2004, p. 95), these methods are used by ordinary community members to document and describe their community by taking photographs. They often blend photography with social action, encouraging community members to build awareness of and commitment to changes in their community's circumstances. Several websites describing this method are included at the end of this chapter.

Researchers choose to use photographs or videos for their obvious strengths. Visual representations are evocative and can be profoundly moving. Videos and photographs can document rituals and ceremonies, creating a visual record of cultural events to pass on to successive generations. They can document social conflicts (court proceedings, public speeches, protests, Senate sessions, etc.). Videos can be especially valuable for documenting nonverbal behavior and communication patterns such as facial expressions, gestures, and emotions. These visual records can help preserve unique, disappearing, rare, or deeply disturbing events (as with the uprisings in Egypt and other countries that became known as the "Arab Spring"). However, interpretation of the images in film can be problematic, as with other forms of observation and in the use of documents and artifacts. One strategy could be to share the images with participants and invite them to share their interpretations as a form of member validation. This strategy is central to some photo-elicitation methods, where participants narrate the images they have collected. Two excellent examples of classic ethnographic films are *Educating Peter* (Home Box Office Project Knowledge, 1992), which shows the experiences of a boy with severe cognitive challenges in a regular classroom, and *High School* (Wiseman, 1969), a depiction of life in a comprehensive high school in the early 1970s. A more recent example is *The Crash Reel* (Walker & Cautherly, 2013), which presents a moving portrayal of world-class snowboarder Kevin Pearce—his triumphs, fierce competitiveness, and tragic accident.

However, the use of film, in its various forms, comes with certain challenges. Videos and pictures can appear to be "true" and "accurate" when the viewer is not mindful that the film was taken by an individual with her own positionality. What might be the professional subjectivity and interests of the filmmaker? Moreover, good-quality equipment can be expensive, and most research budgets are quite modest. And production can be problematic, especially in creating a smooth final product—a flowing video or collage of photographs interspersed with text and, perhaps, music. The researcher may need technical expertise, although there is now software, such as Pinnacle Studio 12, that helps even novice researchers produce high-quality videos. Historically, videos and photographs were not easily included in a book, journal article, or dissertation, but this has changed in recent years. Many journals accept—even encourage—the inclusion of images in an article. Moreover, dissertations and other academic works are increasingly required to be submitted electronically, making the inclusion of images quite simple (although consuming more bytes).

Ethical Issues With Videos and Photographs

Do the participants know that photos or videos are being made? Are they fully aware? And most important, have they given their consent to be represented in a photo or video? Especially problematic with visual representations of people is the recurring question of protecting their identities. Furthermore, these representations, once digitized, may spread without the researcher's knowledge. Institutional review boards are increasingly requiring that the use of photos be explicitly outlined in an informed consent form. In the proposal, the researcher should indicate how she will protect the identities of the participants, scrupulously, and how well she is prepared to use these media ethically and sensitively.

Using the Arts for Data Collection

By Rachael B. Lawrence

As stated earlier (Chapter 2), the arts can inform any step within qualitative research design (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Knowles & Cole, 2008). Much of the writing on arts-informed inquiry focuses on the production and presentation of knowledge in the form of fine art, literary, or other artistic creations, but the arts can be used to generate and collect data. Arts-informed data may help address a wide variety of research questions, such as, “How do children interpret an experience?” and “How did this change over time?” and many more. The generative and creative nature of these data can inform research questions in ways not possible through text alone. The arts can be used for data collection in two main ways: data drawn from observation and interaction with artworks, and art generated by the researcher or participants to inform research questions. Additionally, the arts can be used to help map ideas or concepts during data collection.

Here are a few examples of how qualitative researchers can use the arts in data collection.

Data on interacting with the arts:

- Transcribing an “interview” of a piece of art (Sullivan, 2010, p. 204)
- Transcribing thinking in reaction to a work of art (Sullivan, 2010, p. 205)
- Quantifying and categorizing objects contained within a work of art (Rose, 2012)
- Interviewing participants on their interpretations of photographs (Laplenta, 2011)

Arts created for data collection purposes:

- Rephotography to document change over time (Rieger, 2011)
- Collection of images, paintings, screenshots, and other arts objects (Rose, 2012)
- Participatory arts (drama, painting, collage) in reaction to participants’ lived experience (O’Neill, 2012)
- Sketching for visual memory (Sullivan, 2010)
- Collecting drawings created by children (Ganesh, 2011)
- Visual anthropology (MacDougall, 2011)
- Photo diaries (Chaplin, 2011)
- Cartography of studied communities (Grasseni, 2012)

Arts for mapping concepts or ideas:

- Cartographic mapping of concepts, relationships, or policies (Butler-Kisber, 2010)

This list is by no means exhaustive but provides a starting point from which a researcher can generate novel approaches to gathering data to inform research questions.

Ethical Issues in Arts-Based Data Collection

When gathering media created by someone else, whether it be an artistic medium, a fictive story, or interpretation of a photograph, ownership of the data is a key ethical concern for the researcher (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Working with film and photography brings additional ethical concerns for her; if a work is taken out of context or placed in an unintended context, the potential for embarrassment or misunderstanding of participants' intentions arises (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Do participants fully understand how you intend to use their art (or words about art), and do you have their permission? These are essential considerations when engaging in this type of data collection.

■ Interaction Analysis

Interaction analysis is an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the interactions among and between people and their environments in naturally occurring settings. The focus of many interaction analysis studies is on “human activities such as talk, nonverbal interaction, and the use of artifacts and technologies, identifying routine practices and problems and the resources for their solution” (Jordan & Henderson, 1995, p. 39). The approach has emerged from ethnography (with its focus on participant observation), sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology (the study of the methods people use to accomplish ordered social interactions), conversation analysis, kinesics (the study of how nonverbal gestures, posture, and movement send communicative messages), and proxemics (the study of how people interact in terms of their spatial relationship to each other).

What distinguishes interaction analysis as a specialized method is its reliance on video and audio recording and a noninterventionist stance toward the collection of data. Thus, those employing interaction analysis seek to unobtrusively observe naturally occurring interactions, record them on tape, and subsequently analyze those recordings through a particular analytic lens. What typically does not occur in interaction analysis is direct talk—interviewing—with participants in the setting chosen for study. First used as a method for studying small groups in organizations in the 1920s, interaction analysis gained prominence as a method for observing classrooms (Rex & Green, 2008; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs, & McEachen, 2002; Rex, Steadman, & Graciano, 2006) and for aiding teacher training (Flanders, 1970). Recently, it has been used in research on couples to develop coding systems that can powerfully analyze an ongoing stream of dyadic behaviors (Baucom & Kerig, 2004). Power dynamics are revealed with interaction analysis in micropolitical studies of organizations such as school boards, state legislatures, employment agencies, and corporations, as well as in street gangs and on playgrounds. One can see how conflicts are resolved, how dominance is maintained, and how ideologies are imposed (Corson, 1995).

Because interaction analysis has been widely used in education, specifically in studies of classroom interaction, we discuss this strand and then briefly describe kinesics and proxemics because of their generative historical role in the development of interaction analysis.

Classroom Interaction Analysis

With a long history drawing on multiple disciplines, classroom interaction analysis has tended to focus on the language in use in classrooms and how these interactions reflect, reproduce, and shape wider social processes such as the power dynamics of class, race, and gender. While interaction analysis has diverse strands, studies typically "examine behaviors and strategies used by teachers and students . . . [and how these] correlate with student performance measures or student learning indices" (Rex & Green, 2008, p. 571). Researchers typically rely on videotaping and audiotaping to produce a permanent record of the interactions of interest.

Representative of studies in this genre is the work of Rex et al. (2002), who studied the stories that teachers tell in classrooms, using videotaping as the primary method for gathering data. They argue that the frequency, duration, and kinds of stories that teachers tell and the occasions on which they tell them shape the norms for how students think they need to present themselves, what students count as knowledge, and how students display achievement in their classroom (p. 768). Rex and her graduate assistant took daily videos of classroom "talk"; they then coded these, noting "teachers' use of narrative-like constructions when addressing their classes" (p. 773). The theoretical notions that this research was embedded in helped frame their analyses.

Another relatively new development in interaction analysis, broadly construed, is **gesture research** in classrooms. This research focuses on ways gestures contribute to meaning making in the teaching–learning interaction. The assumption here is that gestures and other paralinguistic movements convey substantial meaning that may enhance or detract from the explicit verbal message (also see the subsection on kinesics below). Work in this domain has focused on learning science concepts and skills among middle school students (Singer, Radinsky, & Goldman, 2008) and on learning algebra concepts (Alibali & Nathan, 2007).

One strength of interaction analysis is that a permanent record is obtained through video and audio recording; this helps preserve the original data but does raise ethical issues (discussed below). Depending on how tightly focused the analytic categories are, the method can produce quantifiable data, should this be desired. Interaction analysis may be particularly useful for testing out patterns that were identified in early participant observations or interviews.

Clearly, interaction analysis is only as generative as the categories used to focus the observations. When these are culturally biased, too reflective of the researcher's prejudgments, or not well designed for the setting, the categories may not be particularly fruitful. Two well-developed “grandparents” of interaction analysis broadly construed—kinesics and proxemics—offer examples of finely focused analyses. We discuss these below.

Ethical Issues in Interaction Analysis

The ethical issues that arise when conducting interaction analyses center on protection of and respect for the persons participating in the research. In today’s age, as mentioned before, when digitized data are never fully deleted from a computer, disk, or jump drive, protecting participants from future unwarranted or even harmful use of the data is problematic. Hacking into computers and cybersleuthing have become daily events; therefore, the protection of the data—and, more important, the participants—is of paramount concern. Furthermore, the temptation to use video segments when presenting research findings is seductive but might well violate promises made to participants about ensuring their anonymity. This would be especially true for children—as in classroom interaction analysis—and other vulnerable populations.

We now turn to a brief discussion of kinesics and proxemics—two generative methods that are closely linked to interaction analysis.

Kinesics

Learning about society can be enhanced if we study not only what people say but also what their body movements and other subtle, nonverbal cues reveal; this is the working assumption behind **kinesics**, which is the study of body motion, including nonverbal gestures and postures, and their communicative messages. Movement is analyzed systematically so researchers can identify and interpret significant patterns in communication events.

The classic work of Birdwhistell (1970) asserted that nonverbal body behaviors function like significant sounds and combine like words into single or relatively complex units. Body movements ranging from a single nod of the head to a series of hand and leg gestures can attach additional meaning to spoken words. (Remember these gestures when transcribing an interview.) Kinesics research rests on the assumption that individuals are unaware of being engaged constantly in adjustments to the presence and activities of other persons. People modify their behavior and react verbally and nonverbally. Their nonverbal behavior is influenced by culture, gender, age, and other factors associated with psychological and social development.

However, correctly understanding just what these body movements mean is the main challenge in using kinesics. Novice body readers who have a “pop-psych” understanding of the science of kinesics may make incorrect, and perhaps damaging, interpretations of behavior. But note the wide popularity of *Blink* (Gladwell, 2005). On his website, the author states that this book is

> about rapid cognition, about the kind of thinking that happens in a blink of an eye. When you meet someone for the first time, or walk into a house you are thinking of buying, or read the first few sentences of a book, your mind takes about two seconds to jump to a series of conclusions. Well, “Blink” is a book about those two seconds, because I think those instant conclusions that we reach are really powerful and really important and, occasionally, really good. (Gladwell, n.d.)

We also note here the development since the 1960s of the method of “microexpression,” developed and elaborated by Ekman and his colleagues (see, e.g., Ekman, Campos, Davidson, & de Waal, 2003; Ekman & Friesen, 1975). This extension and elaboration of the basic principles of kinesic analysis has focused on **microexpressions**, which are involuntary, fleeting facial expression that, the authors argue, occur when one is trying to conceal an emotion. As developed by

Ekman and his colleagues (2003), analysis of these fleeting, microsecond expressions may reveal when the individual is lying. Their analyses formed the basis for the Fox series *Lie to Me* (2009–2011), in which the central character was based on Ekman.

One strength of kinesic analysis is that it provides another perspective on interactions in specific settings. With caution, a researcher may be more confident about the integrity of the data provided by an interview partner if the speaker's body language is congruent with his words. Also, she can monitor her own nonverbal behavior to clarify messages sent to the research participant and to stay in touch with her feelings during data collection.

Kinesic analysis has limitations, however, because the meanings conveyed in specific body movements or gestures are certainly not universal; researchers must be aware of cultural differences. Gestures signal different meanings in different cultures. In some countries, moving the head up and down signifies *no*, and moving it from side to side means *yes*. Body movements should be interpreted very tentatively and with exquisite sensitivity to the context.

Proxemics

Another classic example of the analysis of interaction, **proxemics** is the study of people's use of space in relation to their cultures and environments. The term was developed by Hall (1966), although he did not perform the original work in this area. Many studies have been conducted on human activities in bars, airports, subways, elevators, and other public places where individuals have to deal with one another in a limited space. Using proxemics, the researcher focuses on how space is defined and managed, from interpersonal distance to the arrangement of furniture and architecture. Anthropologists, for example, have used proxemics to determine the territorial customs of cultures. Proxemics has been useful in the study of the behavior of students in the classroom and of marital partners undergoing counseling.

There are several strengths to the use of proxemics. It is unobtrusive, and, usually, it is difficult for a research participant to mislead the observer deliberately. As with kinesics, because proxemics focuses on nonverbal behavior, participants would have to be skillful to "lie" about their feelings. Proxemics is useful for studying the way individuals react to the invasion of their territory. Likewise, proxemics can be used in cross-cultural studies, because people's use of personal space varies greatly from one culture to the next. Finally, proxemic analysis is useful for studies in areas such as the effect of seating arrangements on student behavior or the effect of crowding on workplace productivity.

The greatest challenge with proxemics as a data collection method is that the researcher must be cautious when interpreting the observed behaviors. If she is observing a conference or a business meeting, the manner in which the participants take their seats can be of vital importance for shaping the decisions that emerge in the meeting, but the data must be interpreted carefully. When used exclusively, proxemics could be misleading, because the researcher's analysis might suggest relationships that do not exist. Proxemics, however, can provide fresh insights into a social group or interactions when coupled with other methods.

Ethical Issues in Proxemics

The ethical issues that arise when using proxemics as a method of data gathering center on informed consent and representation. If researchers are observing people in large, public spaces, such as airports or shopping malls, is it ethical to do so without their informed understanding? Are public spaces "exempt" from the ethical considerations of research with humans? And how does the researcher "represent" these individuals without making unwarranted assumptions about their social class, ethnicity, and the like? These are all considerations that need to be pondered at the proposal stage when using proxemics.

■ Dilemma Analysis

Dilemma analysis focuses on research participants' reactions to situations that have no right answers—that is, dilemmas. The method can be used as a focused part of interviewing, particularly to get at the core of the interviewee's processes of thinking, assessing, valuing, and judging. It has been refined primarily in developmental psychology; however, it can be adapted wherever the research focuses on moral issues and practical decision-making processes. We describe two common types.

The first, the *hypothetical, researcher-generated dilemma*, is the most common. Several research participants are given a standardized dilemma and asked what they would do and what would guide their decision making. The famous example devised by Kohlberg (1981) elicited research participants' moral reasoning in response to the so-called Heinz dilemma. In this dilemma, Heinz's wife has a terminal illness, and the only way to obtain a life-saving drug is to break a biblical commandment: violate someone's property, commit a crime, or steal the drug. Kohlberg used this method to generate theory on moral development. Shortly afterward, Gilligan (1982) critiqued Kohlberg's theory and methodology, arguing that the theory was gender biased because his samples were college-age men. She devised data collection strategies that were more contextualized and more attuned to real lives, as well as ones that focused on women. As a result, she reached very different conclusions about moral development. The real-life, researcher-generated dilemma uses a real crisis—from history or from typical workplace or family life situations—and asks for research participants' choices and the thoughts and feelings surrounding those choices.

The second, the *real-life, respondent-generated dilemma*, encourages research participants to describe the most difficult or heart-wrenching choices they have made, for example, while growing up, at work, or in their families. Thus, the situations are generated in a more naturalistic fashion. Although they are focused, they are closer to a straightforward interview, allowing respondents, at least to some extent, to choose what to focus on. For example, Marshall (1992, 1993; Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, & Steele, 1996) asked assistant principals to describe a situation that, in the past 2 years, had created ethical dilemmas for them in their workplaces. She guided them through standard questions to probe the parameters affecting the choices they made. In the interviews, telling the stories in depth to a sympathetic, nonjudgmental ear seemed cathartic for the assistant principals. The rich data included stories of denying services to students because of policy, firing teachers, turning down promotions to avoid upsetting their family stability, and so on. While the interviews were wonderfully rich with personal context, pulling them together in data analysis and reporting was no easy task.

Dilemma analysis can be fascinating, as it may elicit interviewees' deepest thinking and moral reasoning processes. Commonly focusing on one interviewee at a time, it produces a thematic coherence that does not depend on academic theories or hunches of the researcher (Winter, 1982). It opens doors to innermost thoughts and can be designed to collect standardized data across several interviewees. Real-life, researcher-generated dilemmas, if well constructed and using insights from previous research, can be very useful, especially for focusing and standardizing data collection, when appropriate. Gathering data through real-life dilemmas is often enjoyable. People like to recount poignant, heroic, and angst-provoking situations—when they are in the past and when they believe that they have created an adequate resolution. However, dilemma analysis can be dilemma laden, too. As in the Heinz example, people may not take the situation seriously, and the data may well reflect this. Also, the choice of a dilemma and the interview questions may be skewed to shape the choices and thus produce "interesting" data. In addition, the very personalized data elicited from real-life but respondent-generated dilemmas may be difficult to interpret and to compare with other data.

Ethical Issues in Dilemma Analysis

The ethical issues that may arise using dilemma analysis center on the potential for reasoning through thorny circumstances to elicit strong emotional reactions. This may be particularly true for the respondent-generated dilemma when uncovering problematic circumstances—ones that may still be raw and sore—elicits tears or anger from participants. At the proposal stage, the researcher should articulate how she might handle such situations, with respect for the persons and sensitivity to their emotional reactions.

The above discussions provide a mosaic of various specialized methods that a qualitative researcher might choose to implement to generate useful and insightful data. As we have noted throughout, it is quite common for a qualitative study to draw on more than one method. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 offer criteria for assessing the usefulness and challenges of building one of these methods into a proposal. We then discuss some key considerations in combining methods and use two vignettes to illustrate the choices and decisions to be made at the proposal stage.

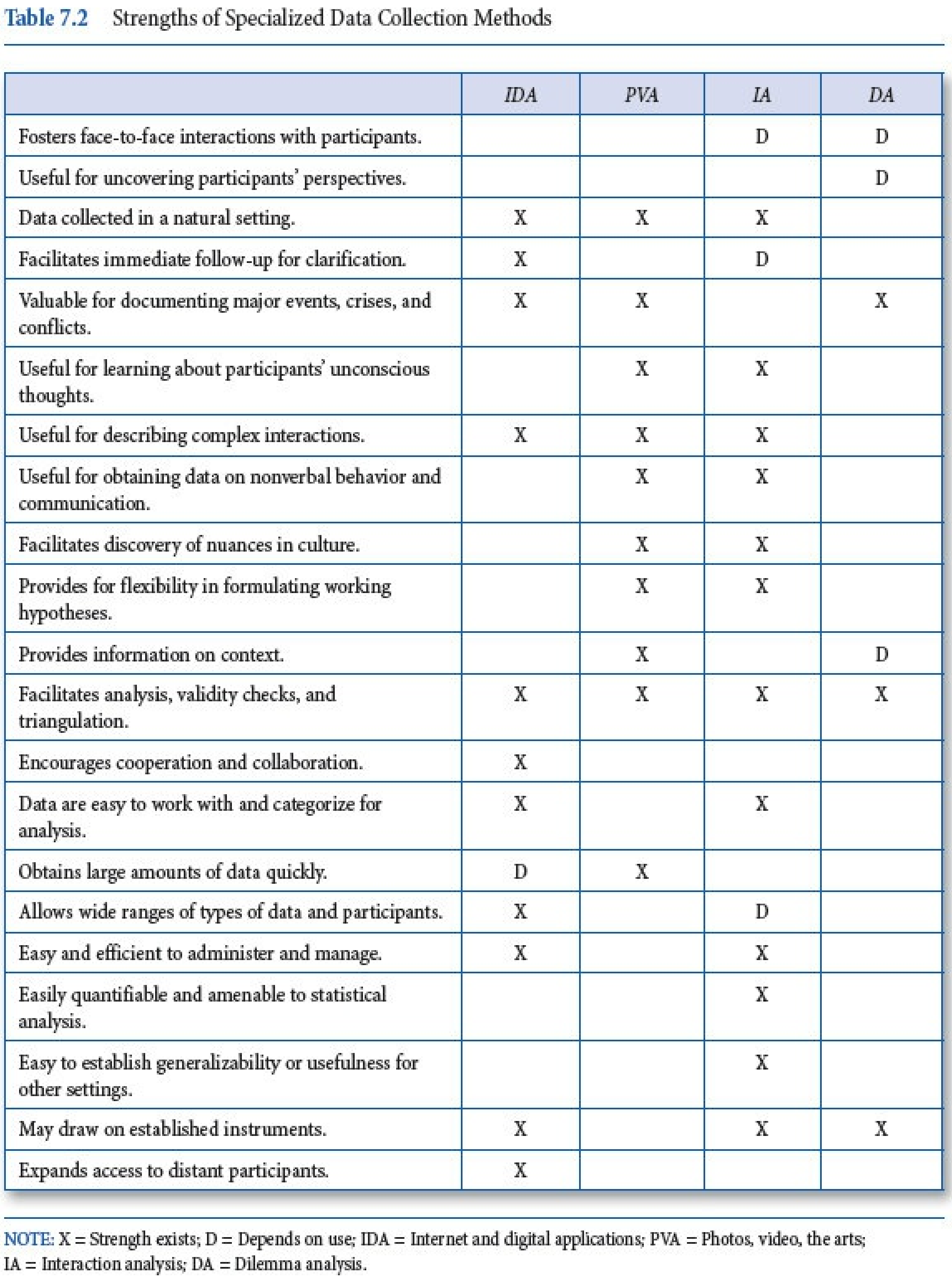


Table 7.2 Strengths of Specialized Data Collection Methods

	IDA	*PVA*	*IA*	*DA*
Fosters face-to-face interactions with participants.			D	D
Useful for uncovering participants' perspectives.				D
Data collected in a natural setting.	X	X	X	
Facilitates immediate follow-up for clarification.	X		D	
Valuable for documenting major events, crises, and conflicts.	X	X		X
Useful for learning about participants' unconscious thoughts.		X	X	
Useful for describing complex interactions.	X	X	X	
Useful for obtaining data on nonverbal behavior and communication.		X	X	
Facilitates discovery of nuances in culture.		X	X	
Provides for flexibility in formulating working hypotheses.		X	X	
Provides information on context.		X		D
Facilitates analysis, validity checks, and triangulation.	X	X	X	X
Encourages cooperation and collaboration.	X			
Data are easy to work with and categorize for analysis.	X		X	
Obtains large amounts of data quickly.	D	X		
Allows wide ranges of types of data and participants.	X		D	
Easy and efficient to administer and manage.	X		X	
Easily quantifiable and amenable to statistical analysis.			X	
Easy to establish generalizability or usefulness for other settings.			X	
May draw on established instruments.	X		X	X
Expands access to distant participants.	X			

NOTE: X = Strength exists; D = Depends on use; IDA = Internet and digital applications; PVA = Photos, video, the arts; IA = Interaction analysis; DA = Dilemma analysis.

NOTE: X = Strength exists; D = Depends on use; IDA = Internet and digital applications; PVA = Photos, video, the arts; IA = Interaction analysis; DA = Dilemma analysis.

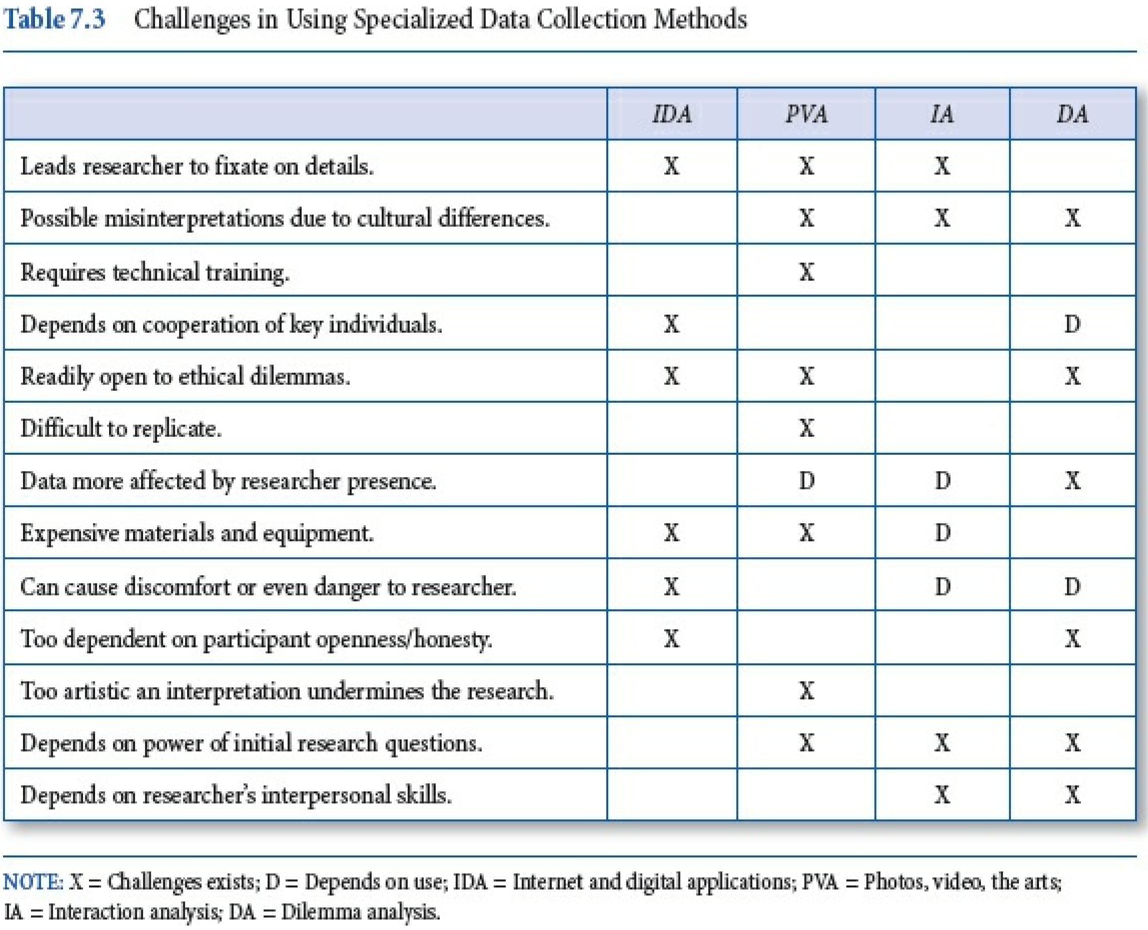


Table 7.3 Challenges in Using Specialized Data Collection Methods

	IDA	*PVA*	*IA*	*DA*
Leads researcher to fixate on details.	X	X	X	
Possible misinterpretations due to cultural differences.		X	X	X
Requires technical training.		X		
Depends on cooperation of key individuals.	X			D
Readily open to ethical dilemmas.	X	X		X
Difficult to replicate.		X		
Data more affected by researcher presence.		D	D	X
Expensive materials and equipment.	X	X	D	
Can cause discomfort or even danger to researcher.	X		D	D
Too dependent on participant openness/honesty.	X			X
Too artistic an interpretation undermines the research.		X		
Depends on power of initial research questions.		X	X	X
Depends on researcher's interpersonal skills.			X	X

NOTE: X = Challenges exists; D = Depends on use; IDA = Internet and digital applications; PVA = Photos, video, the arts; IA = Interaction analysis; DA = Dilemma analysis.

NOTE: X = Challenges exists; D = Depends on use; IDA = Internet and digital applications; PVA = Photos, video, the arts; IA = Interaction analysis; DA = Dilemma analysis.

■ Combining Data Collection Methods

Many qualitative studies combine several data collection methods over the course of the study, as seen in Shadduck-Hernandez's (1997) proposal discussed in Vignette 20 (see Chapter 6). The researcher can assess the strengths and challenges of each method and then decide if that method will work with the questions and in the setting for a given study. In drafting a proposal, she should consider whether the method will provide good, rich data and be cost-effective and feasible in terms of the subtleties of the setting and the resources available for the study (the "do-ability"). As we have noted, the relative emphasis on participation and direct interaction suggests a focus on the primary methods discussed in Chapter 6. Judicious use of the secondary and specialized methods might, however, be quite generative in responding to the research questions. The rationale for their use should be integral to the overall argument in the proposal.

When considering the use of various methods, the researcher might usefully consider three questions; these can be applied to the overall research questions but are crucial in developing the design and methods section of the proposal. First, should a specific method be implemented in a more open-ended way, or should it be more tightly prefigured? Second, how should the different methods be sequenced throughout a study (the ebb and flow)? And, third, should a method be implemented more broadly or more in depth? Combining various methods encourages the proposal writer to consider these questions. She will be well served by developing a clear (albeit flexible) plan for implementing various methods (interviewing and then observing or vice versa), for writing about whether the focus will be broad (many events, many participants) or more in depth (a few crucial events, a few individuals), and for making decisions about approaching interviews and observations, for example, with a wide-angle lens or a more focused one. Thinking through these issues of combining methods and articulating the reasoning behind the decisions is important for demonstrating that she has thought through these issues and has a clear plan in mind. The reviewers of a proposal that provides a strong level of elaboration for design and implementation choices will likely be pleased. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 list strengths and challenges in using specialized data collection methods.

We illustrate the above discussion with Vignette 21, which describes how a researcher selected data collection methods in a study about a long-term health care facility.

Vignette 21 illustrates how a researcher chose an array of data collection methods, knowing that each method had particular strengths and that each would help elicit certain desired information. It shows that data collection strategies and methods cannot be chosen in a vacuum. Intensively examining the possible methods; trying them out; examining their potential; and fitting them to the research question, site, and sample are important design considerations. In addition, researchers should consider their *own* personal abilities to successfully implement any particular overall approach or method. Thus, the proposal should convince the reviewer that she is capable of selecting, refining, and implementing data collection methods that are appropriate, well thought out, and thorough. As discussed in Chapter 1, demonstrating competence with methods is a central part of the do-ability of a study. As we have noted throughout, however, a challenge at the proposal stage is retaining flexibility in the design and implementation of the study—one of the hallmarks of qualitative inquiry. The reality is that the research questions may change as the research progresses; in response, the specific methods used may need to change to pursue the intriguing new directions. The researcher is challenged to reserve this flexibility. Vignette 22 provides an example that is fictitious but based on experiences similar to those of our graduate students.

In the example in Vignette 22, the research proposal probably did not include a plan for analysis of lobbying efforts or observation of collective bargaining sessions. It would, however, be entirely appropriate—indeed, recommended—for the researcher to modify the research proposal if an exciting and significant focus emerged from early data collection. In fact, the primary strength of the qualitative approach is this very flexibility, which allows—even encourages—exploration, discovery, and creativity.

Along with choosing appropriate strategies for data collection, the researcher should address the complex processes of managing, recording, and analyzing data. These processes are not discrete, sequential events but occur dialectically throughout the conduct of a qualitative study: Analysis occurs as themes are identified, as the deeper structures of the social setting become clear, and as consequent modifications are made in the initial design. At the proposal stage, however, she should present some initial ideas about how the data will be managed and stored, and provide some preliminary discussion of the processes for analyzing those data. We discuss these issues in the next chapter.

Vignette 21 Choosing Data Collection Methods

How might one’s view of life be shaped by residence in a long-term health care facility? A doctoral student in health care management (Kalnins, 1986) wanted to examine—in depth and in detail—the contexts, processes, and interactions that shaped patients’ perspectives. She reasoned that a qualitative approach would be most fruitful in picking up everyday actions and interactions about complex social structures.

From the variety of data collection strategies, she proposed a combination of direct observation, participant observation, and semistructured interviewing. Her beginning point would be direct observation of residents and staff in various areas of the facility, “witnessing events which particularly preoccupied the hosts, or indicated special symbolic importance to them” (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 59). This would allow her to get a holistic view and to gather data that would inform the interview process.

Kalnins’s (1986) plan as a participant observer would be to observe the residents and staff in the natural setting of the long-term health care facility, requiring her “commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their day-to-day experiences” (Denzin, 1970, p. 185). In her proposal, Kalnins anticipated that participant observation and interviewing would run concurrently, allowing data from each to be used to substantiate events, explore emerging hypotheses, and make further decisions about the conduct of the research. Her role as participant observer would mean that Kalnins would become immersed in the lives and activities of those she was studying. She understood the interactive–adaptive nature of participant observation, reflecting the complex relationship between field observation and emerging theory, and the impact of this relationship on decisions about further data collection. Her decisions about the data to be collected and methods for collecting them would be guided by Wilson’s (1977) list of five relevant types of data employed to get at meaning structures: (1) the form and content of verbal interaction between participants; (2) the form and content of their verbal interaction with the researcher; (3) nonverbal behavior; (4) patterns of actions and nonaction; and (5) traces, archival records, artifacts, and documents (p. 255).

To generate facts, opinions, and insights (Yin, 2014), Kalnins (1986) planned for open-ended structured interviews (using questionnaires) that would enable the exploration of many topics but could focus on cultural nuances; firsthand encounters; and the perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of others. Information would also be gathered from various documents and archives, lending a historical perspective to the study.

Vignette 22 Design Flexibility

A graduate student, Rodriguez, wanted to explore the implementation of a state mandate for local school councils. He first proposed participant observation of meetings and in-depth interviews with board members. The data collection plan showed a schedule for observing the meetings, goals for interviewing, and a time allowance for analysis of data and follow-up data collection. But in the process of initial data collection and preliminary analysis, he discovered that teacher resentment of the councils was creating a pattern of unintended negative consequences. This discovery could have important implications for policy development. Did Rodriguez have to stay with the original question and data collection plan? Wouldn't a design alteration offer important insights?

Rodriguez reasoned that if he could describe the processes whereby well-intended policy is thwarted, policymakers could gain insight that might help them make timely alterations in policy development or implementation. Given this possible benefit to the study, he could choose to focus subsequent data collection on the conflicts between teacher needs and the mandate to school boards to implement councils. This would require him to turn to additional literatures on, for example, teacher needs, teacher participation in decision making, or teacher unions. He might also need to employ additional data collection methods (e.g., surveying teacher needs, observing teacher union meetings, and doing historical research on the reactions of teacher lobbies to mandates for school councils), or he might need to sample additional settings or people. As the research question became more focused, his initial research design and data collection strategy would most likely undergo some changes.

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Gretchen:* Wow—the whole array of somewhat more specialized and focused methods has just exploded. I find it a bit overwhelming, at times, but my students keep me on my toes! And I’m very pleased with the short sections that our students have written—they are very current about the various literatures.

Catherine: Still, I can pick some I love to use, such as dilemma analysis. And I am intrigued with the idea of using video and Internet and digital, but I admit that I’ve never used these approaches to data collection.

Gretchen: And I find using various arts-informed approaches fascinating. I need to delve more deeply into some examples of studies grounded in these approaches. More to do!”

Dialogue Between Learners

“Dear Keren,

These discussions of methods bring me back to the design process, during which I thought so deeply about which research techniques to use in my dissertation research. I had to balance considerations of what would be most insightful with the practicalities of my own limitations (time, budget, etc.). I also admit that I was interested in learning new tools so I might use them in the future. For instance, I wanted to learn about privileging student voices, so I tried a photo-elicitation technique that provided students with cameras to take photographs. They then explained these photographs in subsequent focus-group conversations. While the implementation of the technique was certainly not perfect, I found this method intriguing and the results useful for corroborating other information I collected. It was also a good way to prompt discussions with children.

Nonetheless, I wonder if you ever feel overwhelmed with the various methods possible. I often worry that I might be trying to do too much and, perhaps more important, that in using multiple methods, I might miss their points of intersection. I also found that while I might have envisioned relying more heavily on one technique than another, once at site, things might change quite drastically. For instance, during my fieldwork, I planned focus groups with teachers only to find out that they preferred individual meetings. Thank goodness that qualitative research is flexible enough to accommodate all these changes!

Looking forward to your comments!

Karla

Karla,

I’m really enjoying our mini conversations, and they help me become even more reflexive in my work!

Since I am now in the process of developing my research proposal, the discussion on choice of data collection method or methods is very timely for me. This is an especially salient issue since some of the data I want to collect are quantitative—I want to juxtapose my qualitative inquiry with some numbers reported by international organizations such as the World Bank. This is challenging, and I’m still not sure how I will do it properly. Regarding qualitative data collection, I initially envisioned interviews and elite interviews as the only methods I would use, but now I think observing daily interactions and even attending staff meetings could be revealing for my research.

For the past 2 years I have been serving as the TA in Catherine’s field techniques class, and the more I learn about the various methods the more I want to experience using them. My challenge is of course to come up with good reasoning in the research proposal for whatever method I decide to use. The reflective nature of qualitative research is echoed, in my opinion, in the initial processes of developing a research question and deciding on data collection methods.

Take care,

Keren”

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Key Concepts

data gathering
dilemma analysis
gesture research
interaction analysis
Internet ethnography
kinesics
microexpressions
multimodal inquiry
photographs
proxemics
videos

Chapter 8 Managing, Analyzing, and Interpreting Data

Once the researcher has settled on a strategy, chosen a site, selected a sample, and determined the methods to be adopted for collecting data, he should discuss how he will record, manage, analyze, and interpret the data. He should also put forward preliminary ideas for writing up the analysis or representing it in some other format. At the proposal stage, this discussion can be brief, but it should present initial strategies for analysis and interpretation. In addition, it should provide the proposal reader with a sense that the data will be recorded efficiently and managed in ways that allow for easy retrieval. The writer should be prepared to provide examples of how the methods of data collection and analysis might proceed. Pilot studies or previous research are excellent sources for such examples.

■ Recording, Managing, Transcribing, and Translating Data

Woe be to the sloppy researcher who jumps into data collection with no practical plans, who thinks, “I’m just going out to have fun collecting data.” His section of the proposal on research design should include plans for recording data in a systematic manner that is appropriate for the genre, the setting, and the participants, showing how the plans will be efficient, will address data quality and the credibility of the end product, and will facilitate analysis. The proposal should include details, even lists, showing how he anticipates managing the tools (e.g., audio and/or video recorders, field notes) and travel to data collection sites efficiently. He should demonstrate that the techniques for recording observations, interactions, and interviews will not intrude excessively on the flow of daily events and will work, given the setting and the participants’ sensitivities. In some situations, even taking notes interferes with, inhibits, or in some way acts on the setting and the participants. For example, if he wanted to observe gang activities, he would know that filming and obvious note taking would be problematic.

The genre of the research will have a bearing on the plans. For example, in the genre of participatory and action research, the researcher is integrated with the setting. Because these approaches are fundamentally interactive and include participants quite fully in framing questions and gathering data, his presence is not intrusive. However, in participant observation or critical ethnography, his methods for recording data will be more subtle.

Whatever the qualitative approach, however, the researcher should cultivate the habits of labeling audiotapes, carrying a backup recorder, and setting up quiet places for taking notes immediately after collecting data. Such simple practices will pay off with data that are intact, complete, organized, and accessible. Imagine the horror of losing a precious 3 hours of a never-to-be-recaptured interview just because your recorder failed! And you do not want to be one of those all-but-dissertation students with piles of scarily unorganized, unlabeled data. Over the years, researchers have developed a variety of data management strategies, ranging from computer programs to color and number coding in formatted notebooks or on index cards. Whatever method is devised, it must enable the researcher to organize and make data easily retrievable and manipulatable. Even if your routines are as funny as some used by baseball pitchers, if it works for you, just do it! In the past, these techniques went unmentioned or unexplained in proposals or final reports, remaining mysterious and part of the folklore of fieldwork.

Even in his own culture, someone who is a white, middle-class sociology scholar will encounter challenges in **transcribing** and **translating**, for example, in-depth interviews of adolescents' attitudes toward religion (Smith & Faris, 2002). We turn to an expansive discussion of these important issues next.

Issues With Transcribing and Translating

Especially when the researcher is using interviews in a study, transcribing and (perhaps) translating text are critically important tasks seldom mentioned in texts, thus providing little guidance to the writers of proposals. Neither are transcribing and translating *merely technical tasks*; both entail judgment and interpretation. When data have been translated and/or transcribed, they are not raw data anymore —they are "processed data" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 7). "All social research involves translation, if only from the 'language of the streets' into formal academic prose" (Singal & Jeffery, 2008, Sec. 2). Thus, the methodological literature is now offering discussions about the issues in transposing the spoken word (from a tape recording) into a text (a transcription), or in transposing the spoken word in one language (from a tape recording) into another language (a translation) and then into a text (a transcription).

Transcribing

If the researcher is fortunate enough to have interview partners who are comfortable with tape recordings, he leaves the research encounter with spoken words, carefully recorded on tape. Those who have then sat down to transcribe the tapes, however, know well the pitfalls of assuming that the spoken word closely parallels the written one. We do not speak in logical, organized paragraphs, nor do we signal punctuation as we speak. For example, Rossman (1994) conducted interviews for an evaluation of a systemic school reform initiative. One interview partner used a discursive style that could be described as complex and dense. The interview partner would begin one topic, then loop to another midsentence, then on to another, finally saying, "Where was I?" and returning to the original topic after a prompt from the interviewer. Although this style is fascinating, it was extremely difficult to transcribe—sentences were interrupted by the speaker herself, topics were left unfinished, and overall clarity was difficult to ascertain. Rossman struggled with this transcription, finally sharing it with the interview partner to be sure that the meaning was accurately rendered in the transcribed account of her words. In another example, Chase's (1995) study of women school superintendents, responses to questions were replete with long pauses, after which the subject was changed. These gaps were, in the end, interpreted as indicators of a strong pattern of avoiding talking about and even denying experiences of sex discrimination—a major finding in her study. What if this researcher had made the mistake of simplistic transcription? But there is a cautionary note here: The meaning of pauses in conversation is not transparent; the researcher should use caution, as did Chase, in drawing inferences and offering interpretations of these linguistic patterns.

Experiences such as this are common. The implication is that the researcher needs to discuss the problematic nature of transcribing in the proposal and provide strategies for handling the judgments and interpretations inherent in such work. One valuable strategy is to share the transcriptions with the interview partners for their confirmation (or not) that the transcription captures their meaning and intent, if not always their precise punctuation. The judgments involved in placing something as simple as a period or a semicolon are complex and shape meaning of the written word, which becomes the data used for analysis and interpretation. Similarly, the visual cues we rely on to interpret another's meaning are lost when we just listen to a tape; the transcriber no longer has access to those important paralinguistic clues about meaning. Discrepancies between the intended meaning and the transcription's interpretation produce flaws that are threats to the goodness of the research (Witcher, 2010).

Software for Transcription.

Transcription of audio tapes is greatly facilitated by the use of computer software. When interviews are conducted using a digital recorder, the files can be entered directly into a software application. Working at his computer, the transcriber listens to the tapes and types the words into a word-processing program. Various key strokes permit slowing down, speeding up, or pausing the tape's playback. While we make no specific recommendations, Express Scribe and Olympus Digital Wave Player are useful. Paulus, Lester, and Dempster (2014, pp. 101–107) also recommend Sonocent Audio Notetaker 3, Inquiriam's InqScribe 2.1.1, and F4/F5 (F4 is for Windows; F5 is for Apple).

As voice-recognition software becomes more sophisticated, it can be a useful tool. By experimenting with these tools, researchers may increase their effectiveness and efficiency and eliminate costly transcription time (Tessier, 2012). The researcher can "train" the software to recognize his voice as well as the voices of those interviewed. Examples include Microsoft OneNote paired with a Livescribe smartpen, Dragon NaturallySpeaking, and e-Speaking.

Careless reliance on such technologies, however, results in inaccuracies in data. One must check on whether the technologies may have misinterpreted or overlooked key words and missed inflections and pauses. Further, comparing the old listen-and-type transcription to the voice recognition software–assisted approach, Johnson (2011) found the old method to be more accurate and faster! Slow, meticulous transcription can be tedious, but the reward is being close to the data, which can pay off in the thought processes of data analysis.

Translating

Clearly, the issues associated with translating from one language into another are much more complex than those concerning transcribing, because they involve more subtle matters of connotation and meaning. The challenges with translating include cautions about an interpreter's influence on data (Shimpuku & Norr, 2012). Temple and Young (2004) address concerns related to translating from American Sign Language into standard written English. Writing about the need for more sophistication in cross-language health research with refugee and immigrant populations, Esposito (2001) notes that translation is "the transfer of meaning from a source language . . . to a target language" and that the translator is "actually an interpreter who . . . processes the vocabulary and grammatical structure of the words while considering the individual situation and the overall cultural context" (p. 570). Thus, the focus on generating insightful, credible, and meaningful data through translation processes is paramount.

Note the use of the term *interpreter* in the above quote. This is a crucial insight, as it permits us to lift the burden of absolute accuracy from transcriptions and translations. Our position is that this goal is a chimera; what we should aim for is a reasonable approximation of the interview partner's words and intent. Subtle nuances in meaning are signaled by punctuation and paragraphing (as in transcribing), and phrases and concepts generated in one language rarely translate directly into another. Clearly, using another person, other than the researcher, to transcribe the recorded interviews and using an interpreter to gather data (as might arise when working across languages) complicate the processes immeasurably.

Researchers should consider (1) whether to identify the translation act in the research report, (2) whether it matters if the researcher is also the translator, and (3) whether to involve the translator in analysis. They must consider, too, the ethical imperative to inform the reader that the text of the data is from a translation. They must address how this will be (in the case of a proposal) or has been (in the case of a final research report) managed. Further, more issues of meaning and interpretation arise when *someone other than* the researcher translates spoken or written words. Since translation entails the construction of meaning, we believe that analysis is happening whether or not it is acknowledged.

So what are the important issues with translating the spoken or written word? Most important are the processes and procedures that the researcher/translator has used (or will use, as should be discussed in the proposal) to construct meaning through multiple transpositions of the spoken or written word from one language into another. In the proposal, researchers must weigh questions such as, If I use interpreters, will they be visible, will they be seen as collaborators, relied on for cultural interpretations (see Shimpuku & Norr, 2012)? Other overarching questions include the following:

1. If you have translated from one language to another, which language constitutes the direct quotes?
2. Can you use translated words as a direct quote?
3. How do you signal that a translation is accurate and captures the subtle meanings of the original language? (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 260)

There are no simple strategies or blueprints for addressing these and other issues associated with translation. What *is* simple and clear, however, is that the reader of the proposal must know that the researcher understands the issues, will take an ethical stance on translating, and will make clear in the final report just what he has done. Proposals must discuss the language for interviewing (and/or document review), indicating whether or not the researcher is fluent in the language and, if not, what strategies he will use to ensure accuracy and subtlety in translation. Final reports that include phrases and key words from the original language from time to time provide a reminder of the research location and a reminder to the reader that the interviews were originally conducted in a language other than English. Translations or interpretations of those phrases can be put into parentheses, with the caveat that there are no direct translations of their meanings into English. Such subtle reminders help decenter the hegemony of an English-centered world.

Two examples are taken from the dissertation research of doctoral students who conducted research in Malawi and Guatemala, respectively. The first one, a doctoral student who proposed a mixed-methods study of a complex policy domain in Malawi (MacJessie-Mbewe, 2004), described how he would use the local language, Chichewa, for his interviews. Since he was fluent in this language, this proposal posed no real problem for his dissertation committee. In his dissertation, he included several words and phrases that had evocative meaning in Chichewa but did not translate easily into English. The second student, Cohen-Mitchell (2005), studied the literacy and numeracy practices of market women in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, for her dissertation. She was fluent in Spanish but not in Quiché, the local language of the women in her study. She had to convince her dissertation committee that she would work closely with Rosa, an educated literacy practitioner fluent in Quiché and Spanish, as a co-researcher and interpreter to obtain strong data from the women. Cohen-Mitchell proposed, moreover, that she would take Quiché lessons during her fieldwork to improve her limited understanding of that language. She used both Quiché and Spanish phrases and words in her dissertation.

Issues of transcribing and translating are subtle and complex; they are not merely technical tasks. The writer of a qualitative research proposal has an ethical obligation to discuss these issues and how he will approach them, especially since qualitative research generates words—the primary symbol system through which meaning is conveyed and constructed. Not all the issues can be solved at the proposal stage; in fact, we are quite skeptical of those who write that they have them all wrapped up. Instead, the proposal should have a thoughtful discussion of the more generic issues of transcribing and translating, as well as the ones specific to the research site and participants. These ideas harken back to the section on cultural studies, an area of focus that highlights and deconstructs representations to uncover forms of power. The authority of the authorial voice represents power to be used with respect and careful attention to nuances. Vignette 23 provides a detailed example. This vignette is adapted from Karla Sarr's (2014) work in Senegal.

As can be seen in this vignette, Karla's choices about how to use the collected data in their various forms, how to translate and transcribe, all led to a powerfully grounded depiction of practices and issues in these Senegalese classrooms.

Vignette 23 Exquisite Care in Translating and Transcribing

For her research in a school in peri-urban Dakar, Senegal, and her use of various research methods, Karla's compressed ethnographic research required special considerations. In Senegal, while French is the official language, Wolof is the most dominant of several national languages and functions as a lingua franca. Wolof has an official orthography, but this is known mostly to linguists and language teachers. Since subtle variations make transcription of Wolof particularly challenging, she maintained the original Wolof and developed English translations of most utterances and quotes. She also relied on Senegalese Wolof speakers, in particular her husband and Alfa, the research associate, to help provide further understanding of both the context and participants' perspectives.

Karla's final dissertation is in English, but she wanted readers to see the actual words of participants, even in a less well-known language such as Wolof, if only as cues and reminders to the readers that the research was conducted in a language other than English. Karla's decision represented a stance against the hegemony of the English-speaking world (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and aligned with her research focus on indigenous knowledges and how they are—or are not—integrated into public school classrooms. She thus positioned her work within anticolonial and decolonizing methodologies. She also "cleaned up" some of the utterances, so as to protect the personal dignity of participants, and took the liberty of altering original phrasing when such considerations arose.

Karla's fieldwork period produced a wealth of data in the form of video and picture images, including pictures taken by students in a photo-elicitation activity. She knew that data collection includes making decisions about which images and sequences to capture and which ones to ignore. She was well aware that the seemingly objective nature of images often masks the notion that such data reflect the perspective of the person behind the camera or video-recorder. Given this, she decided to use images only when her observational notes were sketchy. For example, she used video segments to transcribe a lesson from a class that was conducted entirely in Wolof and audio recordings of a student "investigation" activity (an *enquête*). Similarly, she used photos when they could offer supplemental information, particularly for lessons she had observed. For example, by taking a photograph of a lesson on the chalkboard, she was able to continue to observe, rather than writing down the entire lesson in observation notes.

Ethical Issues in Transcribing and Translating

The ethical issues that arise in transcribing and translating others' words center on how we represent our research participants, how we demonstrate respect for them in transposing their spoken words into text that we then manipulate and write up.

Thus, in transcribing, what stance will the researcher take on “cleaning up” words, sentences, and phrases? Is it ethical to represent our interview partners who have spoken to us in incomplete sentences or used incorrect grammar *exactly* that way? Or are we doing them a disservice in presenting their imperfect speech to the world in dissertations or articles? When translating from one language to another, how do we ensure that we have shown respect for our research partners in representing their worldviews and thoughts? These issues center on respect for our participants that becomes more salient when we transform their words into analyzed **categories** and represent them publically.

Rossman conducted an evaluation of a school reform effort in a largely immigrant section of a northeastern city. The data that she and her evaluation team gathered consisted of interviews and samples of students’ written work. Many of the latter were written as one would expect of an early English language learner (as well as any newly literate schoolchild), with misspellings, incorrect grammar, reversed letters, and the like. The principal of the school was shocked when she saw these in a draft report and asked that the evaluation team “clean them up,” certainly before the report was submitted to the school council. The team did so. Was this an ethical decision? What trade-offs did they have to make? What might have been sacrificed? What would be gained by this compromise?

■ Data Analysis

In more objectivist proposals, researchers may have lists of predetermined categories for data coding. Relying on such categories does facilitate retrieval and analysis but tends to undermine qualitative research assumptions. Still, these categories are useful, so the researcher should plan decision rules for altering them during focused analysis. Furthermore, planning for the coding of notes to keep track of dates, names, titles, attendance at events, chronologies, descriptions of settings, maps, sociograms, and so on is invaluable. In piecing together patterns, defining categories for data analysis, planning further data collection, and especially writing the final product of the research, color-coding is a useful tool. For researchers fascinated with details about the range of coding processes, see Saldaña (2012).

Most introductory texts on qualitative methods provide extended discussions of the processes of analyzing data. Terminologies for qualitative data analysis include the following:

- **Analytic induction**
- **Constant comparative** method of analysis
- Developing **grounded theory**
- Template and editing

Throughout this chapter, we will provide examples that use the varied terminologies and techniques. The researcher must demonstrate not only knowledge of the terms but also application of them to his own research questions and conceptual frameworks. He must be able to say things such as, “To begin my data coding, I will use the conceptual levers listed on page XX of my proposal when I observe YY kinds of behaviors.” He must go beyond abstract explanations of the chosen analytic approach by providing examples of how he will generate categories as the coded data accumulate and he sees patterns. He must speak of how, and why, he will create site or case summaries, make comparisons, and try out clusters, hierarchies, networks, linkages, matrices, and typologies, then decide if there is data saturation. Importantly, when there are **outliers**—that is, data, people, behaviors, or events that do not fit—he will search for ways of gathering more data to understand those **negative instances**. Usually this leads to deeper clarification or even alteration of the analyses. In asserting his plans for data analysis, if he speaks knowledgeably and gives concrete examples of how this could happen, he will sound convincing when he speaks of analytic induction.

■ Generic Data Analysis Strategies

The process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data is messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. At times, the researcher may feel like an eccentric and tormented artist; not to worry, this is normal! Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes; it explores and describes and builds grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). As described by Wolcott (1994), description, analysis, and interpretation—three somewhat distinct activities—are often bundled into the generic term *analysis*. He notes,

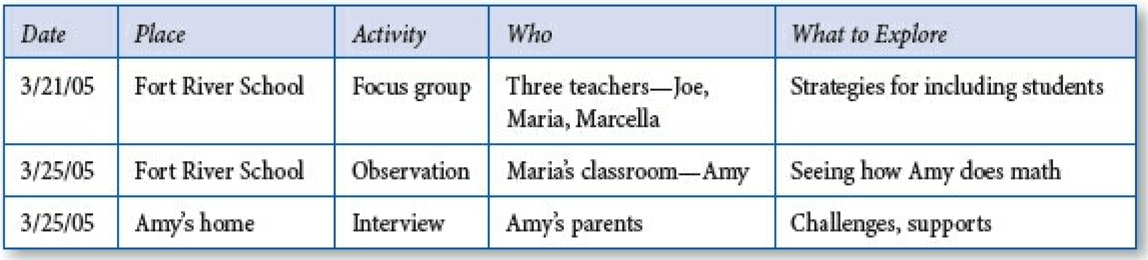
> By no means do I suggest that the three categories—description, analysis, and interpretation—are mutually exclusive. Nor are lines clearly drawn where description ends and analysis begins, or where analysis becomes interpretation.... I do suggest that identifying and distinguishing among the three may serve a useful purpose, especially if the categories can be regarded as varying emphases that qualitative researchers employ to organize and present data. (p. 11)

Wolcott (2009) even advises his doctoral students to write a tentative table of contents for the final report in their proposals! Acknowledging that it will be altered, he views this device as a tool for supporting the massive challenge of moving from proposal to analysis to writing up.

The design section of the research proposal should describe initial decisions about data analysis and should convince the reader that the researcher's knowledge of qualitative analysis encompasses data organization, theme development and interpretation, and report writing. Although none of these can be given exhaustive consideration in the proposal itself, they should convince the reader that thought and awareness have gone into planning the analysis phase of the study. What follows is a discussion of some considerations the researcher should bring to this section of the proposal. But this cannot be just abstract terms. Convincing proposals have concrete examples (often in appendices) of tables and charts for data management, timelines and sampling sequences, and perhaps even examples of previous researchers' use of the procedures being proposed. Even a simple charting of the sampling and data collection plan (illustrated in Table 8.1) can provide reassurance.

Putting such a log in a proposal's appendix demonstrates that the qualitative inquiry will be connected to exploration in the real world but will have intention, not just be "mucking around," and will be guided by literatures and have high probability of eliciting findings in an efficient manner. More sophisticated appendices could provide observation schemes that include distillations of theoretical literature and that have been piloted in various settings, so the proposal demonstrates the significance and feasibility of the study.

Table 8.1 Log of Data-Gathering Activities



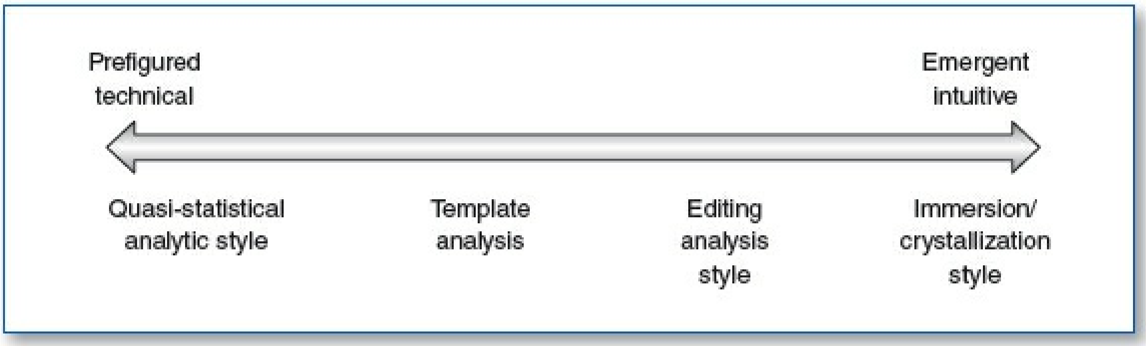
Date	*Place*	*Activity*	*Who*	*What to Explore*
3/21/05	Fort River School	Focus group	Three teachers—Joe, Maria, Marcella	Strategies for including students
3/25/05	Fort River School	Observation	Maria's classroom—Amy	Seeing how Amy does math
3/25/05	Amy's home	Interview	Amy's parents	Challenges, supports

Whether the researcher prefigures the analysis before collecting data, begins analyzing while collecting, or collects first and analyzes later depends on the qualitative genre and assumptions of the study. If he begins with a literature review on a conceptual framework that points directly to predetermined categories to use in analysis, he will be using a quasi-qualitative approach for testing hypotheses in context. He is not exploring to understand. His analysis is quite technical, almost statistical. Such focused, tightly structured, and highly organized data-gathering and data-analyzing schemes are efficient; however, they preclude the opportunity to explore and discover. Also, they often filter out the unusual and the serendipitous—the puzzle that if attended to and pursued would require a recasting of the entire research endeavor. Generating categories of data to collect, like defining cells in a matrix, can be an important focusing activity for the study. Thus, a balance must be struck between efficiency and design flexibility.

Crabtree and Miller (1992) propose a continuum of analysis strategies (see Figure 8.1), although they note that "nearly as many analysis strategies exist as qualitative researchers" (p. 17). At the extreme left end of their graphic are technical, scientific, and standardized strategies in which the researcher has assumed an objectivist stance relative to the inquiry and has stipulated the categories in advance. At the other end are the immersion strategies, in which categories are not prefigured and rely heavily on his intuitive and interpretive capacities. What they call template and editing analysis strategies stand along the continuum, with the template process more prefigured and stipulative than the editing processes (pp. 17–18). They begin with a template and gather context-laden data to fill in the contextual details. Still, template strategies can begin with sets of codes to apply to the data, but they may undergo revision as the analysis proceeds. Editing strategies, on the other hand, are less prefigured. “The interpreter engages the text naively, without a template” (p. 20), searching for segments of text to generate and illustrate categories of meaning. This method is closely allied with recent writing on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000, 2005; Harry, Sturges, & Klingner, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1997).

In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand as the researcher builds a coherent interpretation. He is guided by initial concepts and developing understandings that he shifts or modifies as he collects and analyzes the data. His overall strategy is closer to the interpretive/subjectivist end of the continuum than to the technical/objectivist end. In their classical work—still very useful—Schatzman and Strauss (1973) portray the process of qualitative data collection and analysis:

Figure 8.1 A Continuum of Analysis Strategies



SOURCE: Adapted from Crabtree and Miller (1992, pp. 17–20).

> Qualitative data are exceedingly complex and not readily convertible into standard measurable units of objects seen and heard; they vary in level of abstraction, in frequency of occurrence, in relevance to central questions in the research. Also, they vary in the source or ground from which they are experienced. Our model researcher starts analyzing very early in the research process. For him, the option represents an *analytic* strategy: he needs to analyze as he goes along both to adjust his observation strategies, shifting some emphasis towards those experiences which bear upon the development of his understanding, and generally, to exercise control over his emerging ideas by virtually simultaneous checking or testing of these ideas.... Probably the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant *classes* of things, persons and events and the *properties* which characterize them. In this process, which continues throughout the research, the analyst gradually comes to reveal his own “is’s”

> and “because’s”: he names classes and links one with another, at first with “simple” statements (propositions) that express the linkages, and continues this process until his propositions fall into *sets*, in an ever-increasing density of linkages. (pp. 108–110)

The researcher should use preliminary research questions and the related literature developed earlier in the proposal as guidelines for data analysis. This early grounding and planning can be used to suggest several categories by which the data could initially be coded for subsequent analysis. These are theory-generated codes.

As a coherent interpretation, with related concepts and themes, emerges from the analysis, troublesome or incomplete data will lead to new collecting and analysis that will serve to strengthen the interpretation. Interpretation takes shape as major modifications become rare and concepts fall into established categories and themes. Analysis will be sufficient when critical categories are defined, relationships between them are established, and they are integrated into an elegant, credible interpretation.

■ Analytic Procedures

Typical analytic procedures fall into seven phases: (1) organizing the data, (2) immersion in the data, (3) generating **case summaries** and possible categories and themes, (4) coding the data, (5) offering interpretations through **analytic memos**, (6) searching for alternative understandings, and (7) writing the report or other format for presenting the study. Each phase of data analysis entails the following: (a) **data reduction**, as the reams of collected data are brought into manageable chunks, and (b) *interpretation*, as the researcher brings meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants in the study. At the proposal stage, he should project what this process will entail, in preliminary ways. The procedures to be followed, the initial guides for categories, and the potential coding schemes all indicate to the reader that this crucial phase of the research will be managed competently.

The interpretive act remains mysterious in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. It is a process of bringing meaning to raw, inexpressive data that is necessary whether the language is standard deviations and means or a rich description of ordinary events. Raw data have no inherent meaning; the interpretive act brings meaning to those data and displays that meaning to the reader through the written report. As Patton (2002) notes, "qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe.... The final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when—and if—arrived at" (p. 432). With this caution in mind, we offer some general stages to guide the analysis section of the proposal.

Organizing the Data

When beginning analysis, it is important that the researcher spend some time organizing the data. He can list on note cards the data that have been gathered, perform the minor editing necessary to make field notes retrievable, and generally clean up what seems overwhelming and unmanageable. He should also log the types of data according to the dates and times when, the places where, and the persons with whom they were gathered. This should be done all along, revisiting the “huge piles” of data periodically. An example of a simple log was provided in Table 8.1, earlier in this chapter. Nowadays, researchers often enter the data into one of the several software programs designed for the management or analysis of qualitative data, making the next steps easier (Basit, 2003; Lewins & Silver, 2007). Recall the discussion in Chapter 7 outlining examples of such software.

Immersion in the Data

There is no substitute for intimate engagement with your data. Researchers should think of data as something to cuddle up with, embrace, and get to know better. Reading, rereading, and reading through the data once more force the researcher to become intimate with the material. People, events, and quotations sift constantly through his mind. Patton (2002) notes,

> The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer mass of information they will find themselves confronted with when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming. Organizing and analyzing a mountain of narrative can seem like an impossible task. (p. 440)

Patton (2002) then underscores how much of qualitative reporting consists of descriptive data, the purpose of which is to display the daily events of the phenomenon under study. Careful attention to how the data are being reduced is necessary throughout the research endeavor. In some instances, direct transfer onto predeveloped data-recording charts is appropriate, as with the template strategies. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest several schemas for recording qualitative data. Such techniques streamline data management, help ensure reliability across the efforts when there are several researchers, and are highly recommended for large, complex studies such as multisite case studies (Yin, 2014). In using graphics and schemas, however, he should guard against losing the serendipitous finding. For researchers relying on editing or immersion strategies, this phase of data analysis is the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative, and fun.

Coding the Data

The proposal itself should, at least, provide a listing of likely themes, derived from the literature review—that is, *theory-generated codes* (see Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, and Saldaña, 2012, for extensive examples). It may also provide codes that will likely emerge in the real-life data—that is, **in vivo codes**. The in vivo codes emerge from the actual data as they are collected. For example, Vignette 24 illustrates how research processes flow from literature to a final report. In Table 8.2, the list of codes was for theory and research but then was used to help understand the data collected to elicit participants' real-life experiences. Often, such themes are displayed in a conceptual framework, as we showed in Chapter 4, so the researcher is sensitized by previous literature and theory to the likely relationships among themes and will examine them in the data. At the same time, he will also be sensitized to exploring to understand when those expected and hypothesized relationships do *not* appear in the data. This vignette presents one example of developing codes.

Vignette 24 describes the crafting of an analysis process that combined theory-generated and in vivo codes and benefited from the creativity and challenging logics of a team of six. It describes a start-to-finish process. In a research design or proposal, this is not possible. But when the proposal includes demonstrations of such likely and hypothetical processes, applied to the new research, reviewers and judges will be convinced. Dissertation committees, review boards, and funding agencies will feel reassured that the research will proceed systematically and the written report will be credible.

The tough intellectual work of analysis is in generating categories and themes. The researcher then applies some coding scheme to those categories and themes, and diligently and thoroughly marks passages in the data using the codes. Codes may take several forms—abbreviations of key words, colored dots, numbers; the choice is up to him. The codes come from varied sources, including the literature review, the actual words and behaviors in the data, and his own creative insight. As coding progresses, he sees the ways data/codes group or cluster together and how behaviors and sentiments appear concomitantly or in some patterned sequence. He may write a memo that is a draft of an emerging definition of a key concept (e.g., "a good marriage"), with reference to bits of data to illustrate it. He may write a memo that is a draft of a kind of hierarchy or ordering that comes from participants' talk (e.g., "valuable qualities in a spouse"). Gradually, using both the readings of the data and the conceptual framework for indications, he sees how the data function or nest in their context and what varieties appear and how frequently. As analysis progresses, he will search for **clusters**, starting with a main topic and pulling anything that is related, perhaps seeing how some things form **subclusters**. Ideas about codes can happen just about anytime and anywhere—sitting in front of the computer, scribbling on a dinner napkin at a restaurant, creating designs in the sand at the beach, standing in the shower, and more! Coding data is the concrete action taken during analytic thinking.

Vignette 24 Moving From Literature Review to Data Collection and Management to Analysis and Findings

By Catherine Marshall

The research question was, How can educators get involved in social movement activism, given the conservatism and control in their careers? Amy was interested in activism for women's reproductive rights. Wanda wanted to focus on gay rights; Annice, on activism for African Americans; Gloria, on activism against sexual harassment; and Susan, on activism for women and girls. The literature review of educators' careers, identity, social movements, and these particular movements generated our sense of the kinds of questions to ask. For example, what deeply held values motivated activists' choices and what was their level of participation in their movement? Did educators fear isolation, career dilemmas, or even job loss? So we devised questions and identified participants to interview.

As we collected data, keeping field notes about emotions and expressions, we each tried out codes that came from the literature (i.e., theory-generated codes). We wrote analytic memos so that insights, aha moments, and wonderings would be recorded, in case they were useful for interpretation. Since we were a team, we read and coded our own and one another's transcriptions, then met to analyze data collectively. Sometimes we disagreed on whether a particular quote was to be coded "fear" or "confronting elites" and we'd argue, resulting in refinement, more clarified definitions of these codes, a search through other data for illustrative examples, and some modification of interview questions, as we were discovering our participants' experiences and perceptions (in vivo coding). Also, we wrote case summaries to ease comparisons (and as useful sections of the final report).

We wondered, as we compared the array of participants' data, were there patterns, correlations? The literature had led us to ask, Are there critical or intolerable events where activists decide they absolutely must find some way to express their values and their alignment with a social movement? Are some social movement actions safe and others career-breakers? Were there any patterns? For example, when educators are untenured, how do they express their activist-oriented identity and values, and how is that different from very senior, secure activists? Such pondering led to the delineation of patterns of "high and low congruence" as we saw some activists being much more able to combine their values, identities, and careers more easily than others. Collective reflection and analytic memos, logic, use of previous literatures, and close examination and comparison of cases resulted in emerging themes. We saw a strong indication that career seniority allowed heightened activism. But then several cases and quotes forced us to look again. One and then another educator, moving nicely up the career ladder, said, "The more you gain, the more you have to lose." And activism for gay rights or for women's reproductive freedom was risky even for teachers with many years of tenured security. So their social movement participation was only manageable if they "take it out of town" where they could be surrounded by social movement allies and their community wouldn't see them with signs and banners. Other educators found ways to blend careful activist behaviors and values within their jobs, as when administrators acted against sexual harassment as just part of the school safety obligation and teachers integrated literature from gay authors in their English classes.

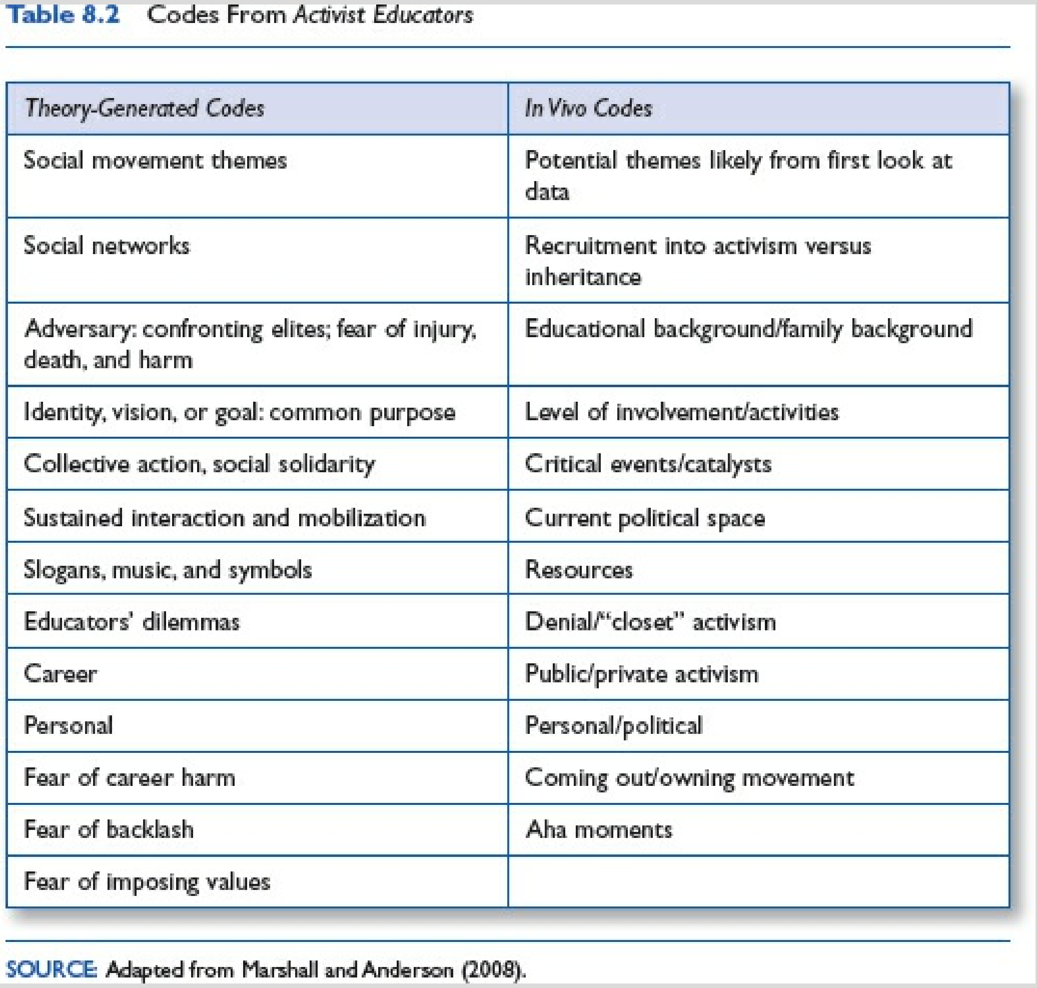


Table 8.2 Codes From *Activist Educators*

Theory-Generated Codes	*In Vivo Codes*
Social movement themes	Potential themes likely from first look at data
Social networks	Recruitment into activism versus inheritance
Adversary: confronting elites; fear of injury, death, and harm	Educational background/family background
Identity, vision, or goal: common purpose	Level of involvement/activities
Collective action, social solidarity	Critical events/catalysts
Sustained interaction and mobilization	Current political space
Slogans, music, and symbols	Resources
Educators' dilemmas	Denial/"closet" activism
Career	Public/private activism
Personal	Personal/political
Fear of career harm	Coming out/owning movement
Fear of backlash	Aha moments
Fear of imposing values	

SOURCE: Adapted from Marshall and Anderson (2008).

SOURCE: Adapted from Marshall and Anderson (2008).

Thus, the search for interpretation and then for alternative understandings brought us to a point of theoretical saturation. This iterative process continued, and themes and linkages appeared and were "tested" against other data. We also realized we needed more literatures, for example, on the South, once our data indicated that the moral conservatism of the region overlaid activists' fears that their challenging local mores would harm their career status.

Thus, data analysis, guided by literatures and then grounded in our participants' realities, eventually led to our overarching findings in *Activist Educators* (Marshall & Anderson, 2008). Even better, four of the case summaries became dissertations!

Writing Analytic Memos

In thematic and theoretical memos, the researcher writes his thoughts about how the data are coming together in clusters or patterns or themes he sees as the data accumulate. The original literature review provides stimuli that give some direction to his wondering, so some memos may read like this: “I wonder if my data are falling into a pattern that would be explained somewhat by such-and-such theory?” or “I think there is an emerging set of themes that are increasingly evident as I collect my data.”

Throughout the analytic process—the transformational process, according to Wolcott (1994)—we strongly encourage the researcher to write. Writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative. Several recent scholars underscore the value of writing early and often throughout the research process, especially during more focused analysis. For example, in *Small-Scale Research*, Knight (2002) begins not with a chapter on designing small-scale research or with an overview of research methods but with a discussion of writing. He notes that this opening chapter is about “the interplay of writing and thinking *from the beginning* of the small-scale inquiry . . . writing as a part of the research process” (p. 1). Private writing and more public writing are great stimuli —to foster creativity and push one’s thinking (Knight, 2002; Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). As Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) note, “language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self” (p. 961); so choosing the language while writing brings codes to a conceptual level in data analysis. Writing prompts the analyst to identify categories that subsume a number of initial codes. It helps identify linkages among coded data. It helps identify gaps and questions in the data. It forces the analyst to stay thoughtfully immersed in his study, even when pulled away by tempting distractions. Such distractions—cute dogs wanting a walk, friends suggesting a movie, your boss—may be useful breaks and may even provide “think time,” but writing provides a structure for the constant thinking he *will* be doing as he is propelled forward by the richness and intrigue of his data.

We mentioned analytic memos earlier. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) advise the use of observational notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes, and analytic memos. We like the terms **methodological memos**, **thematic memos**, and **theoretical memos** (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). By keeping notes about what works (or not) in one’s methods (e.g., “This interview respondent was distracted, so the data are probably incomplete,” or “In the next observations, I will focus on the nurse-practitioners’ caregiving”), the researcher has an account of design decisions made in the field. By writing thematic memos, he assembles thoughts about how a story of events, behaviors, or sentiments seems to have meanings, and he will use these as building blocks in his analysis. With his theoretical memos, he plays with the ways his theory and the related literature do or do not explain and lend meaning to his emerging data.

Patton (2002) describes the processes of inductive analysis as "*discovering* patterns, themes, and categories in one's data," in contrast to deductive analysis, where the analytic categories are stipulated beforehand "according to an existing framework" (p. 453). He may generate "indigenous **typologies**" (p. 457) or "analyst-constructed typologies" (p. 458) to reflect the understandings expressed by the participants. Indigenous typologies are those created and expressed by participants and are generated through analyses of the local use of language.

Generating Case Summaries, Categories, Themes, Typologies, Matrices, and Clusters

Although researchers often devise their own strategies, this phase is best described through examples. The analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of the social phenomena they are studying. One device, writing brief case summaries, helps many researchers see what they have so far. Identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis—one that can integrate the entire endeavor. Through the process of questioning the data and reflecting on the conceptual framework, the researcher engages the ideas and the data in significant intellectual work.

From Open Coding to Focusing

Generating names and labels for phenomena identified in the data—themes, categories—is coding. Coding is the representation of analytic thinking; it is not analytic thinking itself. Beginners often confuse these. Coding can be done formally and systematically or more organically. In grounded theory, specifically, coding typically begins informally, with intuitive identification of key ideas. Called **open coding**, this initial process helps the researcher see patterns and key ideas in the data. This open coding process is similar to immersion in the data, where ideas bubble up and are noted. When new categories or themes are identified, grounded theorists may not go back to review previously examined data; they note the new categories for the next stage in the process and may well keep a record of the specific categories used thus far. Categories are assigned a shorthand “code” that signifies the key concept being noted. As codes are developed, thematic memos are often written to summarize key ideas that the codes signify. Through this open coding process, the corpus of data is closely read to identify the meaning being signified. Clusters of data are categorized and assigned a code.

While coding, the researcher develops conceptual categories and explores their definitions and meanings. He constantly compares the codes he assigns to events, behaviors, and words, seeking patterns, commonalities, and differences, and “soon starts to generate theoretical properties of the category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106). Thus, he is sorting for initial coding.

The next step for grounded theorists is to group initial codes along conceptual categories that reflect commonalities among codes; this is referred to as **axial coding** (Fielding & Lee, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The codes are clustered around points of intersection, or axes. Axial coding relates codes to one another, relying on complex thinking that is a mix of induction and deduction—working back and forth from the emerging "grounded theory" to specific clusters of data, back to the emerging theory with modifications, and so on. As Borgatti (2014) notes, "to simplify this process, rather than look for any and all kinds of relations, grounded theorists emphasize causal relationships, and fit things into a basic frame of generic relationships" ("Axial Coding"). He proposes the elements shown in Table 8.3.

Clustering

Another device for analysis is called clustering. *Clustering* is creative work in which the researcher creates diagrams of relationships—forming outlines according to what is most overarching. He is doing conceptual or situational mapping, playing with construction pictures of how the data fit together. We say "playing" because this activity should be seen as drafting and experimentation. Still, it can lead to preliminary sketches that move along the analysis.

For editing and immersion strategies, the researcher generates the categories through prolonged engagement with the data—the text. Many of the categories will be modifications of concepts derived from his conceptual framework and literature review. These categories then become buckets or baskets into which segments of text are placed. As he generates ideas about the interconnections among concepts and categories from the intensive reading and rereading of his data, his analysis progresses.

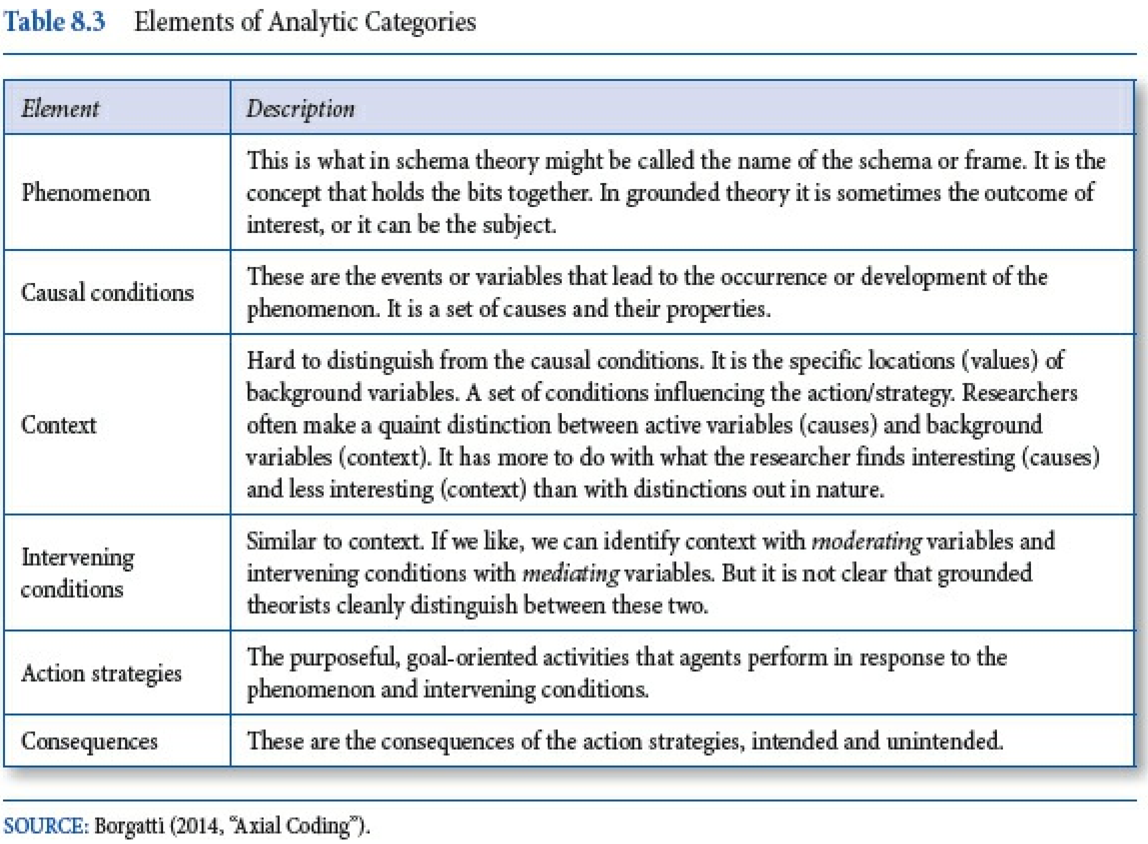


Table 8.3 Elements of Analytic Categories

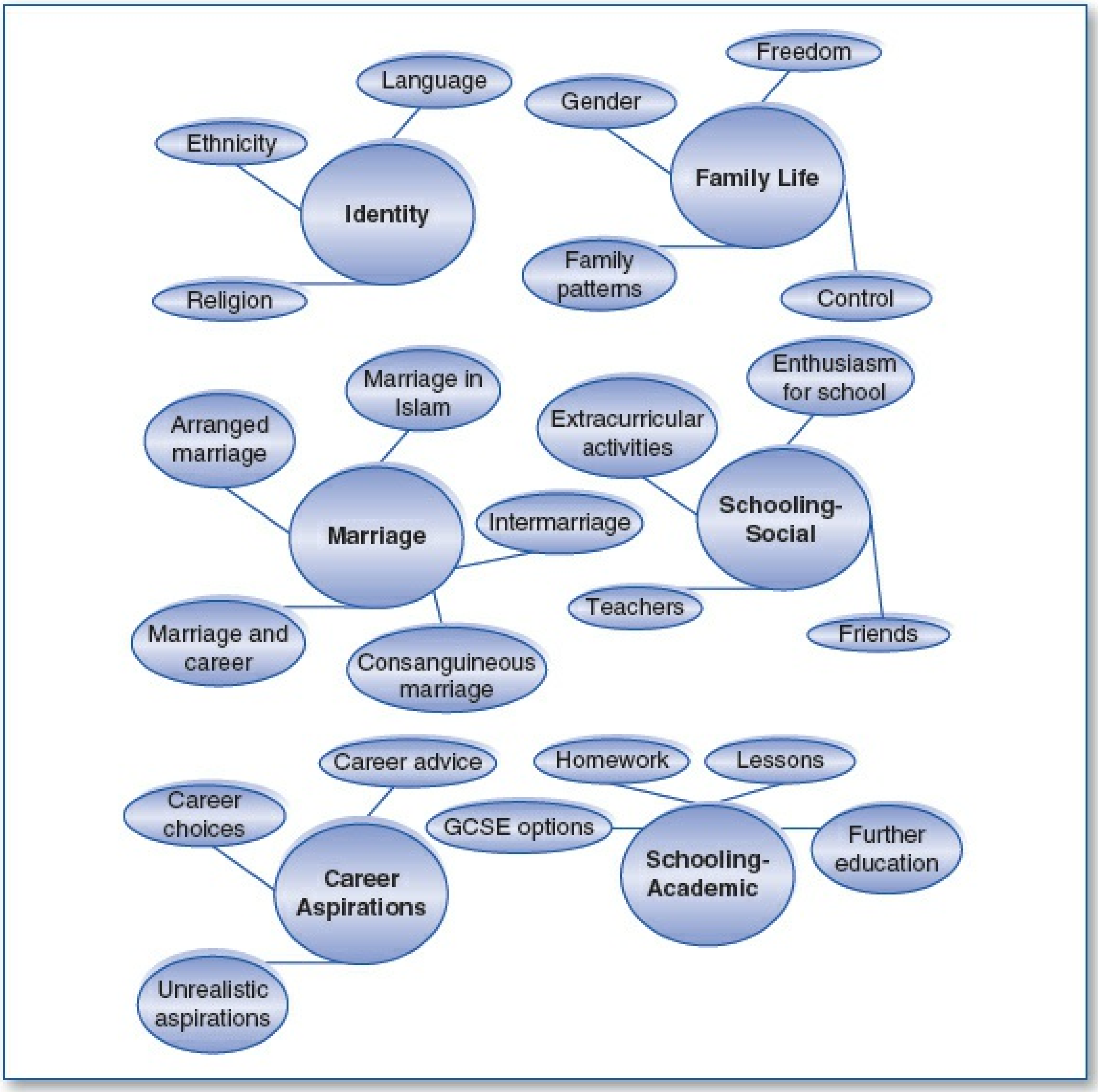
Element	*Description*
Phenomenon	This is what in schema theory might be called the name of the schema or frame. It is the concept that holds the bits together. In grounded theory it is sometimes the outcome of interest, or it can be the subject.
Causal conditions	These are the events or variables that lead to the occurrence or development of the phenomenon. It is a set of causes and their properties.
Context	Hard to distinguish from the causal conditions. It is the specific locations (values) of background variables. A set of conditions influencing the action/strategy. Researchers often make a quaint distinction between active variables (causes) and background variables (context). It has more to do with what the researcher finds interesting (causes) and less interesting (context) than with distinctions out in nature.
Intervening conditions	Similar to context. If we like, we can identify context with *moderating* variables and intervening conditions with *mediating* variables. But it is not clear that grounded theorists cleanly distinguish between these two.
Action strategies	The purposeful, goal-oriented activities that agents perform in response to the phenomenon and intervening conditions.
Consequences	These are the consequences of the action strategies, intended and unintended.

SOURCE: Borgatti (2014, "Axial Coding").

SOURCE: Borgatti (2014, "Axial Coding").

In Figure 8.2, we provide one example of themes and categories from a literature review for a study seeking to understand how identity, family life, schooling, career aspirations, and marriage were interconnected for British Muslim girls (Basit, 2003). Wanting to ascertain how British Muslim girls' aspirations were shaped, Basit's literature review helped her devise questions about identity, family life, marriage, social and academic aspects of schooling, and career aspirations. Gradually, through immersion with her data, she could see expanded dimensions of these categories. This, then, could demonstrate the need to see this complexity so that future researchers, practitioners, and policymakers will avoid simplistic assumptions that could blunt opportunities for these girls.

Figure 8.2 Themes and Categories on British Muslim Girls' Choices


Language
Freedom
Gender
Ethnicity
Identity
Family Life
Family patterns
Religion
Control
Enthusiasm for school
Marriage in Islam
Arranged marriage
Extracurricular activities
Schooling-Social
Marriage
Intermarriage
Teachers
Marriage and career
Friends
Consanguineous marriage
Career advice
Homework
Lessons
Career choices
GCSE options
Further education
Career Aspirations
Schooling-Academic
Unrealistic aspirations

SOURCE: Basit (2003, p. 148). Reprinted with permission.

The process of category generation involves noting patterns evident in the setting and expressed by participants. As categories of meaning emerge, the researcher searches for those that have internal convergence and external divergence (Guba, 1978). That is, the categories should be internally consistent but distinct from one another. Here, he does not search for the exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of the statistician but, instead, identifies the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting.

Analyst-constructed typologies are those created by the researcher that are grounded in the data but not necessarily used explicitly by participants. In this case, he applies a typology to the data. As with all analysis, this process entails uncovering patterns, themes, and categories, but it may well run the risk of imposing “a world of meaning on the participants that better reflects the observer’s world than the world under study” (Patton, 2002, pp. 459–460). In a related strategy, through logical reasoning, classification schemes are crossed with one another to generate new insights or typologies for further exploration of the data. Usually presented in matrix format, these cross-classifications suggest holes in the already analyzed data, suggesting areas where the data might be *logically* uncovered. Patton (2002), however, cautions analysts not to allow these **matrices** to lead the analysis but, instead, to generate **sensitizing concepts** to guide further explorations: “It is easy for a matrix to begin to manipulate the data as the analyst is tempted to force data into categories created by the cross-classification to fill out the matrix and make it work” (pp. 469–470). An example of a logically constructed matrix is presented in Figure 8.3.

Any of these devices, and any other creative analytic strategies, can be managed with the aid of computer programs. For smaller projects, and for more intimate immersion in one’s data, we still like being computer free. As Vignette 25 shows, there was no choice before computers. This vignette, based on early work by Marshall, describes the old-fashioned way of managing thick, complex data.

Vignette 25 Data Management Before Computers

For her dissertation research on women's socialization in school administration, Marshall (1979) had neither word processors nor programs for computer-assisted qualitative data management. Now, for those who are technology averse and for small projects, her process may still be instructive. She developed a process by which data transcription, organization, and analysis were combined in a single operation. Observational notes and pre-fieldwork mapping of sites or subjects were recorded on hardback legal pads that could be held in the lap or used on the run. Following each interview, Marshall partially transcribed the field notes of audiotaped conversations, selecting intriguing phrases that either connected conceptually with previous literature or suggested patterns emerging from the analysis of previous data.

Preserving the data and meanings on tape and combining the transcription with preliminary analysis greatly increased the efficiency of data analysis. The researcher's transcription, done with the literature review, previous data, and earlier analytic memos in mind, became a useful part of data analysis and not a mere clerical duty.

Marshall's data analysis was guided by a conceptual framework and a set of guiding hypotheses. By trying out conceptual levers such as Goode's (1960) role strain theory to code interview data revealing conflicts experienced by women entering male sex-typed careers, she began devising grounded theory of a career-role strain that included feminine identity and sexuality crises prompted by the demands of working in a male-normed profession.

After writing two-page case summaries for each of her 20 participants, discovering tentative categories and themes, and employing constant comparative data analysis, she discovered in her data a period of transition (defined as a phase when women resist the pull of aspiration, resent exclusions, get angry about the double demands, and yet simultaneously create new ways to fill the role expectations).

Data collection, management, and analysis went hand in hand. The work of transferring data to index cards, writing codes on those cards, sorting cards to identify the overlapping categories, and placing the cards into piles eventually led to identifying more inclusive, overarching, and abstract domains. Methodological notes, analytic memos, theoretical notes, case summaries, charts, and dummy tables were all tools for analysis. Although time-consuming, this method avoided the intrusiveness of the computer program and threats to the exploratory value of qualitative research or to data quality.

Computer-Assisted Analysis

No mechanism can replace the mind and creativity of the researcher. Still, computers can serve as tools. Software programs for data analysis typically rely on abbreviations of key words for coding. For example, in a dissertation proposal, Tucker (1996) discussed how she might use the following codes for her data:

TCARE.LIS: Teacher's caring as demonstrated through listening

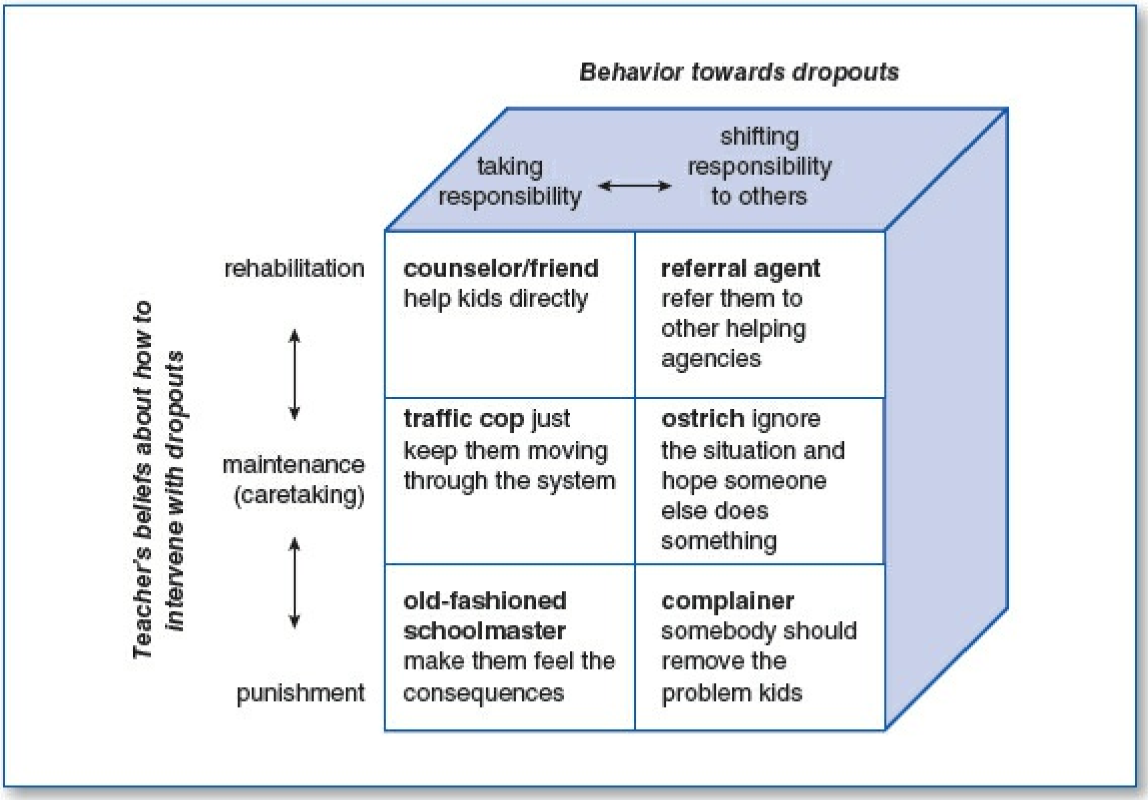
TCARE.Q'S: Teacher's caring as demonstrated through honoring questions

TDIS.RACISMO: Teacher's disrespect as demonstrated through overt racism

Were she not using software, she might have planned to use different-colored dots to place on the interview transcripts and field notes, or she might have underlined passages with different-colored highlighting pens. Whatever system the researcher plans to use, he should know that the scheme will undergo changes—*coding is not a merely technical task.* As he codes the data, new understandings may well emerge, necessitating changes in the original plan.

Computer software can assist with axial coding, clustering, and writing analytic memos, and it can also help the researcher ask questions of his coded data. If, in his thematic memo, a researcher develops the thought that "contribution to economic security" is very high in his respondents' views of a valuable spouse, he can query his data, perhaps finding that (1) it is true for 44% of the participants and (2) there are new questions to ask about the other 56%. This may lead to neat new avenues of inquiry in the analysis or even to new data collection questions.

Figure 8.3 An Empirical Typology of Teacher Roles in Dealing With High School Dropouts


Behavior towards dropouts
taking responsibility
shifting responsibility to others
Teacher's beliefs about how to intervene with dropouts
rehabilitation
maintenance (caretaking)
punishment
counselor/friend help kids directly
referral agent refer them to other helping agencies
traffic cop just keep them moving through the system
ostrich ignore the situation and hope someone else does something
old-fashioned schoolmaster make them feel the consequences
complainer somebody should remove the problem kids

SOURCE: Patton (1990, p. 413). Reprinted with permission.

Twenty years ago, a handful of these computer applications were available commercially. Today, there is a multitude. The website of the American Evaluation Association (n.d.) lists more than 30 different software applications for assisting in analyzing text (from transcriptions or other sources), audio files, and video clips. This burgeoning industry has raised both hopes and fears among qualitative researchers.

Computers can assist the analysis phase because they facilitate making and writing observational notes, editing, coding, storing, searching and retrieval, linking data, writing memos, analyzing content, displaying data, drawing and verifying conclusions, building theory, mapping graphics, and writing reports. However, such "software . . . cannot do the analysis for you, not in the same sense in which a statistical package such as SPSS or SAS can do, say, multiple regressions" (Weitzman, 2000, p. 805). Our experience is that novice qualitative researchers hope that software will do the hard work of analysis for them, somewhat magically. Unfortunately, just like life at times, qualitative research is not so easy. We caution that software is only a tool to help with some of the mechanical and management aspects of analysis; the hard analytic thinking must be done by the researcher's own internal hard drive!

While we make no specific recommendations here (and do not get a payment from the producers), we observe that perhaps the most commonly used applications are ATLAS.ti, MAXQDA, and NVivo 10 (we provide URLs for information or free trial copies at the end of Chapter 7). We do recommend, however, that the researcher proposing to use software to assist in either transcribing or analyzing data demonstrate, at the proposal stage, that he is familiar with the application, has used it before, and is capable of drawing on its strengths, while ensuring that he understands that the hard analytic work must be his own.

Offering Interpretations

As categories and themes are developed and coding is well under way, the researcher begins a process whereby he offers integrative interpretations of what he has learned. Often referred to as “telling the story,” interpretation brings meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, and categories, developing linkages and a story line that makes sense and is engaging to read. As Patton (2002) notes, “interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order” (p. 480). Part of this phase is concerned with evaluating the data for their usefulness and centrality. He should select the most useful data segments to support the emerging story, to illuminate the questions being explored and decide how they are central to the story that is unfolding about the social phenomenon. Eventually, these may become a section of the final report, as we will show in Chapter 10.

Searching for Alternative Understandings

What if the descriptions, inferences, interpretations, and explanations are nothing but exactly what the researcher set out to find? How do the processes of data management and data-quality assessment guard against this? Scrupulous qualitative researchers are on guard from the beginning, having been explicit about their voice, their biases, and how their identities have shaped their research questions. This caution, then, guides our scrupulous researcher during his data analysis. He is scrutinizing his data and his field notes, checking where data were undermined by a faulty approach, a less than forthcoming participant, and his early mistakes in the field. He looks suspiciously at his own observations, asking where he might have applied his own biases and interpretations instead of those generated from the actual behaviors, interactions, words, and sentiments of his participants.

Challenging One's Own Interpretations

As the researcher develops categories and themes, with his use of coding well under way and numerous analytic memos that summarize key "chunks" of the findings, he is constantly evaluating the plausibility of his developing understandings. He is constantly searching through the data. He is constantly challenging the very explanations and interpretations he is putting forward. We have used terms such as *analytic induction*, *constant comparative analysis*, and *building grounded theory*; that is what our researcher is doing here. He is writing case summaries. He is comparing the viability of themes and explanations, checking them against the data he has, and seeing whether he needs to collect more or different data. He is comparing his emerging themes and explanations with those in his literature review and looking for any new variations or surprises. He is playing with creating matrices, clusters, and hierarchies, with the goal of constructing a credible explanation that provides significant knowledge from his new study. He is reviewing his original conceptual framework and guiding hypotheses with great curiosity about the ways his own new data and analyses fit, and do not fit, with his earlier premises. These are the activities of the scrupulous yet creative qualitative researcher—that is, doing constant comparative analysis and analytic induction and also constructing grounded theory.

Moving Toward Theoretical Sufficiency

The researcher notices when he sees or hears the same patterns repetitively, and senses that little more can be gained from further data collection since there is **saturation** of data (Saumure & Given, 2008). He then tests the themes, typologies, and patterns as he searches in his data for *negative instances* of the patterns. This may lead to new data collection. Just as likely, it will lead to refinement of his analysis as he incorporates the negative instances into expanded constructs, as necessary.

We used to speak of **theoretical saturation** as the sense that any additional data collection will result only in more of the same findings. Dey (1999) calls saturation an "unfortunate metaphor" (p. 257), suggesting that we now should speak of **theoretical sufficiency**, whereby we have categories well described by and fitting with our data. This acknowledges the fact that we can never know everything and there is never one complete Truth.

As the researcher discovers categories and patterns in the data, he should engage in critically challenging the very patterns that seem so apparent. He should search for other plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them. Alternative explanations *always* exist, and he must identify and describe them and then demonstrate how the explanation he offers is the most plausible. This recalls the discussion in Chapter 1 concerning *the proposal as an argument* that offers assertions about the data, provides substantial evidence for those assertions, builds a logical interrelationship among them, and finally presents a summation of how the assertions relate to previous and future research.

We discussed earlier, especially in Chapters 3 and 5, the ways to design a qualitative study so it is credible and progresses to zero in on the findings. Over the decades, in their search for ways to decide whether their research is complete and credible, qualitative researchers have developed useful terms and strategies. Some of these strategies are triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, intercoder reliability, audit trails, and theoretical sufficiency.

Triangulation, discussed earlier in Chapters 3 and 5, needs to be built into the setup of data collection early on. Still, it is projected as a strategy that will help the researcher assert that his data interpretations are credible. He will have ways of showing that he got the participants' real views and authentic behavior.

In **member checking**, the researcher devises a way to ask the participants whether he "got it right." Most often, he gives summaries to participants before writing up his study and asks for reactions, corrections, and further insights.

In **peer debriefing**, the researcher makes arrangements with knowledgeable and available colleagues to get reactions to the coding, case summaries, analytic memos written during data analysis, and next-to-final drafts. Such debriefing helps both for talking through logic and clarity of interpretations and for answering the all-important questions: “Have I got it right?” and “How do I know what I know?”

Audit trails will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. Briefly, they provide a transparent way to show how data were collected and managed—to account for all data and for all design decisions made in the field so that anyone can see data as evidence and trace the logic leading to the representation and interpretation of findings.

Intercoder reliability borrows terminology from quantitative research. As the researcher begins and proceeds through coding, he develops definitions for each code and asks “blind” review coders to apply the definitions to data to check for consistency in meanings and application. He also may uncover interesting nuances of interpretation as he puzzles over any differences between his coding and his blind coders’ work. In the next chapter, we discuss more about strategies for managing the voluminous data in ways that will make the research process transparent and also enhance its credibility.

Numbers Are Useful

Yes, the qualitative researcher can use numbers. First, he may wonder how frequently themes and categories or patterns appear in the data as he asks himself questions about his emerging analysis. Numbers serve nicely for identifying frequencies and distributions. For example, an analysis revealing contribution to economic security is strongly related to people's definition of "the good spouse," and it can be tested and pushed further when the researcher asks, "How often and according to what patterns among my population of participants?" This kind of testing can be used in a qualitative report as long as readers remember that this is quite different from the ways numbers are used in quantitative research. Thus, the report may say, "In this research, the pattern indicated that the spouses' economic contribution was much more likely to be reported as valuable by people with longer marriages. This pattern offers interesting insights for future research."

Writing the Report or Representing the Inquiry

Writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process, as noted above in the section on writing analytic memos. In fact, it is central to that process, for in choosing words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data, the researcher is engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape and form—meaning—to mountains of raw data. Many aspects of data analysis processes are intertwined with managing the research process (see Chapter 9) and lead logically to the final product. The proposal is an argument that makes sense and will gradually lead to *writing* a final product (see Chapter 10).

The proposal must demonstrate the promise that the various phases of data analysis and report writing will be interwoven with considerations of the soundness, usefulness, and ethical conduct of the qualitative research study, along with providing a plan for this. Proposals that demonstrate considerations of role and entry—for example, addressing the researcher's personal biography and how that might shape events and meanings—provide reassurances. Proposals that demonstrate ways of managing how the research, whether participatory or more objectivist, might alter the flow of daily life are convincing. Proposals that demonstrate a sound reasoning and clear rationale for the selection of the setting and sampling of people and behaviors within that setting provide effective arguments. The proposal that argues a balancing and weaving of these elements will have laid the groundwork so that, when the study is at the writing-up stage, that planning will pay off.

Chapter 10 will continue this discussion of writing, with consideration of planning for demonstrating the soundness, transparency, and credibility of the procedures of data analysis.

Previous chapters have laid out the complex, sometimes tedious, process of building a design and choosing data collection for the research study. The design will demonstrate that the researcher is competent to conduct the research; knowledgeable about the issues, dilemmas, choices, and decisions to be made in the conduct of the research; and immersed in the literature that provides guidance for the qualitative methodology and particular questions in the proposal. When the research design reveals sensitivity to various issues, a capacity to be reflective about the nature of inquiry and the substantive questions at hand, and a willingness to tolerate some ambiguity during the conduct of the study, the researcher will have a viable proposal/argument. The next chapter moves on to practicalities—managing resources, organization, time, and simple considerations such as having chargers and batteries, or making sure to plan time to eat and sleep.

427

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Catherine:* This is the scary aspect for fledgling qualitative researchers . . . looking ahead beyond data collection to organizing and all the complexities of data analysis. Most see the processes of gaining access, negotiating entry, creating researcher roles, and anticipating ethical dilemmas as fun challenges. But then they face the complexities and the tensions between creative insights, on the one hand, and the need to manage goodness and credibility of interpretations they will be presenting, on the other hand. In my experience, none have abandoned their study in despair, but I don’t know how many have veered away from considering a qualitative study after they’ve seen the challenges we present in this chapter.

Gretchen: One of my new colleagues is quite taken with these complex processes: moving through the data for thoughtful analysis and interpretation. I still like Wolcott’s notion of description, analysis, and interpretation—learners find them somewhat fuzzy but useful. I find that no one really “gets it” from a class, or just reading about it in the abstract. The ohmygod moment comes when they actually try it out.”

Dialogue Between Learners

“Dear Karla,

I recently found myself thinking about what will happen once I’m in the field doing my own research. Even though I have been involved in qualitative research projects before, I was never a lead investigator making final decisions on ending the data collection phase. The literature refers to this as “saturation,” but how do you know when you have reached saturation? When I was working with Dr. Marshall on the sexual harassment perception project, we interviewed more than 15 college students and the decision to wrap up the interview phase was made as a team but also due to some time constraints.

I have so many questions to ask you about your research proposal! Did you build in an accurate timeline that you just followed? Once in the field did you feel you had reached saturation or was it just time to stop? I feel that often our fieldwork is determined a lot by financial considerations and not saturation considerations, but perhaps that is too cynical of me.

Keren

Hi, Keren,

You’ve posed some very interesting questions here. In regard to the timing of my own research, I had developed a timeline within my proposal, but this was drastically altered once I got to the site where I was doing my data collection. To illustrate, the first week I hoped to be in classrooms happened to coincide with an important religious holiday. Although I thought I might miss a day or two, the entire week was declared vacation. So much for my preliminary timeline! However, in the end, I came to the understanding that this event also told me a story about the school and its community that I might not have been able to access otherwise.

Of course, this compounded your other question about wrapping up data collection. Fortunately, by the time the research period was ending, I had started to see themes developing and building on one another, which led me to believe that, while more time would have provided an even richer understanding, it was also an acceptable moment to wrap up and leave site. It was also extremely beneficial to keep a journal and to send e-mails back to my committee members while I was in the midst of data collection. These e-mails served as mini analytical memos that pushed my thinking a bit further than my journaling. In fact, I returned to these e-mails when I was in the analytic induction phase and found that they revealed many of the themes I would later develop as my coding categories. Fortunately, new technologies also help extend the research period remotely if needed.

I also had a few other thoughts for you: As I was in the data collection phase, it was extremely helpful to keep a spreadsheet that functioned as a log of my activities and data collected on those days. While it seems that we will remember the details of photos, interviews, and so forth forever, my memory, at least, needs some more permanent support. Also, back up, back up, back up—and back up your backups, too! ☺ Finally, computer programs for qualitative analysis can be extremely helpful! While most of them can even do automatic coding, I've used them more as data management and coding tools. It's amazingly simple how they can keep track of the same data with multiple coding. Of course, I still had to generate the themes and provide that level of analysis and organization (no small feat!).

Hope all is well with you!

Karla"

Further Reading

Translating and Transcribing

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Key Concepts

analytic induction
analytic memos
audit trails
axial coding
case summaries
categories
clusters
constant comparative
data reduction
grounded theory
in vivo codes
intercoder reliability
matrices
member checking
methodological memos
negative instances
open coding
outliers
peer debriefing
saturation
sensitizing concepts
subclusters
thematic memos
theoretical memos
theoretical saturation
theoretical sufficiency
transcribing
translating
triangulation
typologies

Chapter 9 **Stressors** Time, Resources, and Politics

The process of planning and projecting the resource needs for a qualitative study and for considering potential political issues is an integral aspect of proposal development, whether for a master's thesis, a doctoral dissertation, or submission to a funding agency. In general, the resources most critical to the successful completion of the study are **time**, **personnel**, and **financial support**. The last of these is not always readily available, especially in graduate-level research. Often, doctoral dissertation research is a labor of love, or at least an investment in one's future, with the student self-funding the travel money, batteries, notebooks, appropriate attire, computer programs, and so forth. This often constrains the time allocated and the sites selected. Serious consideration, however, must be given to time and personnel for larger studies. Many hidden costs associated with the study may become apparent only after the researcher has carefully analyzed and reflected on the study's demands. Convincing potential funding agencies that the expenses are worthwhile may also be a challenge.

This chapter offers some strategies for projecting the resource demands of qualitative research in particular, but the principles and reasoning processes can be applied to any study or project proposal. Using three vignettes as illustrations, we suggest some general guidelines for consideration in the development and projection of resource needs. Vignette 26 shows the process of planning resource needs for a multiresearcher qualitative evaluation study submitted to a funding agency. In contrast, Vignette 27 depicts the planning process of a solo doctoral student proposing a study with few financial supports to back it up. The contrast between Vignettes 26 and 27 is intended to display how each proposal must address difficult resource questions. Finally, Vignette 28 demonstrates the need to teach reviewers about the labor intensity of qualitative analysis. Careful, detailed projections of the resource demands for a study are critical in demonstrating that the proposer is knowledgeable about qualitative research, understands that its inherent flexibility will create resource difficulties at some point, has thought through the resource issues, and recognizes the demands that will be made.

To begin with, many resource decisions cannot be made until basic design decisions are in place. The researcher, however, should consider resources as she struggles with the conceptual framework and design issues. For example, a researcher cannot decide to conduct a multisite, multiperson project unless she has some prospect of financial resources in sight, nor can she prudently plan to conduct a long-term, intensive, participant-observation study when she knows she must continue to work full-time and cannot possibly devote the necessary time to the research study. Thus, general decisions about resources and design are often made in parallel and are major criteria for the “do-ability” of the study.

In the narrative structure of the proposal, after discussing the design of the study, the researcher should address resource needs specifically. These include time demands and management, personnel needs and staffing, and financial support for the entire endeavor. The two vignettes presented below are followed by a discussion of the major resource needs of each. The vignettes are intended to display the strategies for resource allocation in two quite different studies.

■ Planning Resources for a Large Study

Although the resource needs for a long-term, complex study involving multiple people and agencies are typically more substantial than those for graduate-level research, the processes of projecting those resources remain very similar. Careful and explicit plans regarding resource allocation need to flow from the overall design of the study. The challenges are exacerbated in multisite comparative research conducted over several years. Sometimes these studies are collaborations among researchers in several institutions or with practitioners. The larger the scope, the more resources are necessary to ensure that there is adequate (a) time (sufficient to gather in-depth, evocative data), (b) personnel (capable of thoroughly and efficiently gathering and analyzing the data), and (c) other supports for personnel, such as travel, software, and report writing.

The first task in projecting resource needs for a large-scale study is to organize its activities into manageable tasks. These typically consist of (a) planning, (b) meetings of the research team, (c) meetings among principal investigators, (d) advisory committee meetings, (e) site visits in the field for data gathering, (f) data analysis, (g) report writing, (h) conference attendance for dissemination, and (i) preparation for and management of a final policy forum or other means for public dissemination.

For some large-scale studies, especially those funded by the U.S. government, the funding agency may require an outside "auditor" to review the data, analyses, and reports, essentially "certifying" that the research was conducted well and the data support the analyses and findings. Marshall had an experience with this requirement. Called in to serve as an external auditor for a large study, she reviewed data files, inspected analyses, and examined reports. This function was required by the funding agency. The implication for projecting resources is that the researchers must diligently manage their data and analyses, creating an "audit trail" that an external reviewer (or other legitimately interested parties) can examine. And there are resource implications for this. Recall the discussions in Chapters 3 and 8 about how planning for an audit trail helps convince a proposal's reviewers that the study will be conducted systematically and in ways amenable to "outside inspection."

In working through the details of a large-scale study, a research team typically iteratively refines its initial projections of time as members are able to make associated cost projections. That is, the team can first plan an ideal study, one in which resources are virtually infinite. Creative insights often emerge through imagining such an ideal study before tempering these with the realities of ceilings on funding, limited availability of researchers, and other considerations of feasibility—the do-ability criterion discussed in Chapter 1. Often, such ideal plans call for immersion in the setting, with many site visits. Refinements must be made when realistic costs in terms of time, personnel, and travel are estimated.

Vignette 26 details how resource decisions were made in planning for a two-state qualitative study of successful leadership in multicultural schools. It paraphrases the research proposal and details the final allocation of resources to each research task.

Time

As Vignette 26 illustrates, projecting sufficient time to undertake a richly detailed study that also remains doable is a difficult task but one that can be rewarding. Thinking through the time necessary for various research activities can be sobering even for experienced researchers; the novice learns a great deal from undertaking this exercise. For example, each of the research tasks described in this vignette required a certain number of days for its successful completion. The first step was to determine the optimal number of days for each site visit. Although this depended on the year of the study, the research team was able to estimate days by deciding on the number of interviews possible in each school, the hours to allocate for observations, as well as the amount of time necessary to talk with community members and gather documents and other archival data.

In proposals for qualitative studies, the number of days allocated to data gathering becomes a metric for estimating the time required for other tasks, such as data management, analysis, and report writing. That is, the amount of data gathered dictates the amount of time needed to manage and analyze them. Once the researcher has projected time for fieldwork, a management plan can be developed. The projections developed for Table 9.1 helped construct a framework for estimating costs, discussed below.

The researcher should also use this kind of framework to address practical concerns. A time-management chart, research agenda, calendar of research events, description of research phases, or some other concrete plan (often in a Gantt chart; see Table 9.1) shows a funding agency or dissertation committee that she has considered the feasibility of involving specific people, settings, events, and data in the research. This demonstrates that the research is feasible. But she should remind the reader that this plan is a guide; it is a tentative road map that will most likely undergo some modifications as data are collected and analyzed and as new patterns for more focused data collection become apparent. The chart serves as a guide for initial contacts and reminds the reader of the inherently flexible nature of qualitative research. It also serves as an important reminder—sometimes an anchor—for the researcher herself once she becomes immersed in the study.

Vignette 26 Projecting Resources for a Large-Scale Study

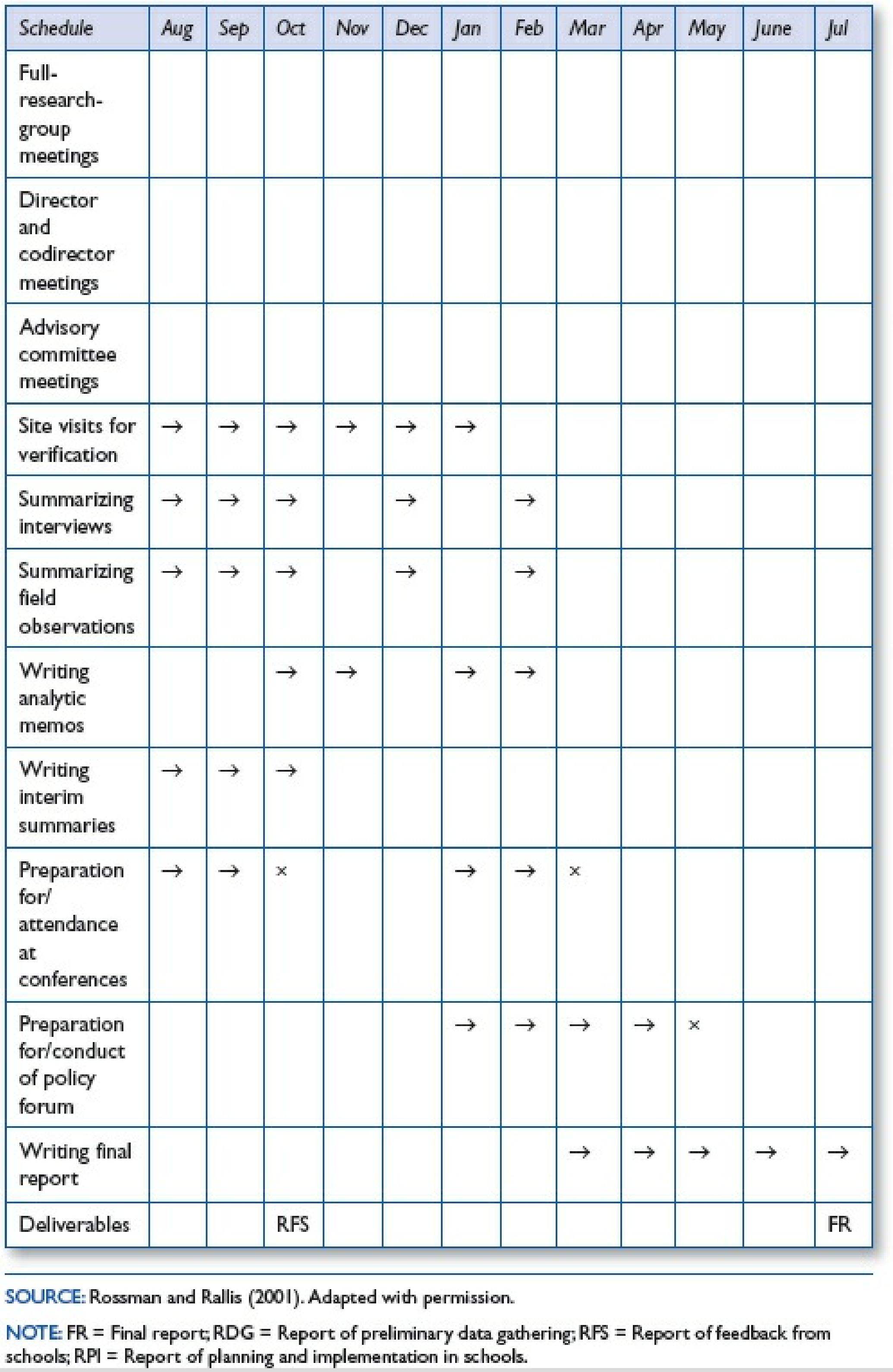
"Leading Dynamic Schools for Newcomer Students: Studies of Successful Cross-Cultural Interaction" (Rossman & Rallis, 2001) proposed a collaborative research project between the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts and the Neag School of Education of the University of Connecticut. The purpose of the study was to create grounded depictions of how leadership is enacted in multicultural schools. The principal investigators (PIs) wanted to learn how successful school principals—and leadership more broadly—interact across cultural differences with empathy and respect. They posed the following broad research questions:

1. In what ways are school leaders savvy and attuned to the multiple cross-cultural dynamics in schools that serve migrant, refugee, and immigrant children particularly well?
2. How do they mediate the cultural differences that can be confusing, emotional, humorous, hurtful, and inspirational?

In designing a proposal to respond to the call for field-initiated research from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education, Rossman and Rallis had to make a series of decisions to support their multisite, multiresearcher, multiyear case studies of leadership practices in 12 schools in Connecticut and Massachusetts. As the PIs identified important aspects of the study that would require time and effort (i.e., more data), the study grew and grew. But ideal projections then had to be grounded in real considerations of the total budget allocated for the study. Using the study's conceptual framework and the requirements of the request for proposal, the researchers ensured sound adherence to the initial research questions. Table 9.1 shows the final allocation of staff days to tasks.

Table 9.1 Schedule of Work

Schedule	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*Jul*
Year 1 (August 2001–July 2002): Planning and site research												
Planning	→	→										
University-based research team meetings			×	×	×	×	×		×	×	×	×
Full-research-group meetings	×		×		×		×		×		×	
Director and codirector meetings		×		×		×		×		×		×
Data gathering in schools		→	→	→	→		→	→	→			
Data gathering in communities	→		→					→		→		
Preparation for/ attendance at conference						→	→	×				
Planning for/ conduct of policy forum						→	→	→	×			
Deliverables						RPI					RDG	
Year 2 (August 2002–July 2003): Data analysis and product development												
Planning	→	→										
University-based research team meetings												



Schedule	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul
Full-research-group meetings												
Director and codirector meetings												
Advisory committee meetings												
Site visits for verification	→	→	→	→	→	→						
Summarizing interviews	→	→	→		→		→					
Summarizing field observations	→	→	→		→		→					
Writing analytic memos			→	→		→	→					
Writing interim summaries	→	→	→									
Preparation for/ attendance at conferences	→	→	×			→	→	×				
Preparation for/conduct of policy forum						→	→	→	→	×		
Writing final report								→	→	→	→	→
Deliverables			RFS									FR

SOURCE: Rossman and Rallis (2001). Adapted with permission.

NOTE: FR = Final report; RDG = Report of preliminary data gathering; RFS = Report of feedback from schools; RPI = Report of planning and implementation in schools.

SOURCE: Rossman and Rallis (2001). Adapted with permission.
NOTE: FR = Final report; RDG = Report of preliminary data gathering; RFS = Report of feedback from schools; RPI = Report of planning and implementation in schools.

In the text of the proposal, Rossman and Rallis explained that the project would (a) identify the leadership strategies used successfully in dynamic schools that serve large populations of newcomer students (migrants, immigrants, and refugees); (b) analyze and synthesize the research to develop prototype strategies that can be used in professional development; and (c) disseminate these prototypes to practitioners (administrators, teacher groups, administrator preparation programs, and community groups), policymakers, and the scholarly community.

They then proposed using a multisite case study design to describe and analyze the leadership in 12 such schools in Massachusetts and Connecticut that serve newcomer students particularly well. The findings of the research project would be disseminated to practitioners, policymakers, and the scholarly community through a project website, presentations at conferences, articles in journals, and two policy forums. Furthermore, these findings would be communicated to the National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students and the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management. The PIs explained,

> The local school and the community it serves will be the unit for analysis. . . . Case studies, in-depth explorations of a single phenomenon, seek to understand that larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific instance. . . . The case studies in this project will generate grounded depictions of leadership. Observations and interviews will yield rich descriptions that illustrate the complexities of the settings: their structures, politics, cultures, and moral principles. Six sites will be selected in each state, yielding a total of 12 schools. Yearlong fieldwork will be conducted at each site, generating qualitative data descriptive of leadership in context. Cross-case analysis to generate prototype leadership strategies will be performed in Year Two of the project. The key activities for each year, focusing on data gathering, data analysis, Site Researcher responsibilities, and Advisory Committee roles, are described below.

To justify the resource requests, the proposal provided details for data gathering:

> We envision yearlong fieldwork in the 12 schools for the first year of the project. The design will deploy the Site Researchers to the schools for one day per week per school. Thus, each Site Researcher will focus on two schools, providing the depth of knowledge necessary for constructing prototypes of leadership. Typical fieldwork strategies will be employed: informal and formal observations coupled with conversations (both informal and structured interviews) and the review of key documents. Observations of interactions between the principal and other key leaders in the school and community members will occur. Interviews with these key individuals will be scheduled. In addition, focus group interviews with community members and teachers will be conducted. [Activities for the project are summarized in Table 9.1.]

The proposal also explained the resources allocated for data analysis:

> Preliminary data analysis will be ongoing, as the Site Researchers gather information, conduct initial analyses of it, and share those analyses in analytic memos and in the Research Team meetings. During Year Two, the Site Researchers, supervised by the Project Director and Codirector, will engage in detailed data analysis to build the prototypes of leadership in the 12 dynamic schools. During this process, they will return to the sites on a twice-monthly basis to share emergent conclusions with principals and other participants and gather additional data as needed. This will ensure that the conclusions and prototypes are grounded in the realities of the schools and the perspectives of participants.

Next, the proposal explained the duties of site researchers, who would conduct the yearlong fieldwork for the project and be actively involved in data analysis and the development of products during the second year. The proposal then presented the makeup and duties of the advisory committee, which would meet semiannually to provide feedback to the project and ensure that the emerging results were incorporated into policy and practitioner dialogues.

The explanation of products and dissemination of information called for a website devoted to the project to share emergent findings and relevant literature. The website would link to the Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. Dissemination strategies also included two policy forums, presentations to scholarly audiences at national conferences, articles submitted to research journals, and dissertations by the site researchers.

Next, the proposal attempted to justify the time and resources of personnel. It requested salary support for the directors, the PIs, the community liaisons, a fiscal administrator, six full-time site researchers (research associates), and four half-time research assistants. Time allocations of 20% for directors, who were responsible for the management of the project, were justified for production of reports and supervision of staff and finances. The PIs would devote 10% of their time to provide management support and supervision of the site researchers. The community liaisons would devote 15% of their time, and the fiscal administrator would work half-time on the project. The responsibility of the six research associates, three in each university, was to conduct the field research; the four half-time research assistants would develop and maintain the webpage and support the software for advanced data analysis. Table 9.2 provides a template for determining the key budget features of the proposal.

Once Rossman and Rallis had determined the scope of the study, they were able to plan its implementation, as presented in Table 9.1. This, in turn, had implications for staffing the research, which, in turn, had a direct effect on the overall budget. The final decisions represented in Table 9.1 are the end result of many iterations of projections for the scope of the study, the personnel needed, specific data-gathering and data-analysis procedures, and dissemination strategies. In Table 9.2, we list key categories for determining actual costs, as these vary widely across personnel and institutions.

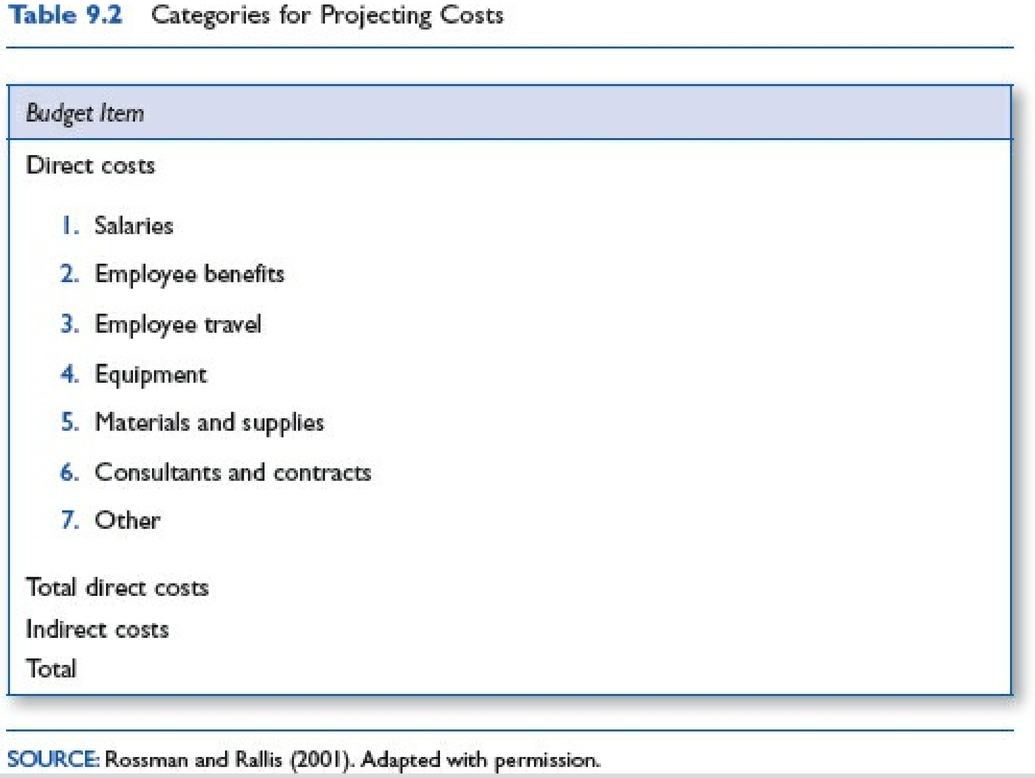


Table 9.2 Categories for Projecting Costs

Budget Item
Direct costs
1. Salaries
2. Employee benefits
3. Employee travel
4. Equipment
5. Materials and supplies
6. Consultants and contracts
7. Other
Total direct costs
Indirect costs
Total

SOURCE: Rossman and Rallis (2001). Adapted with permission.

SOURCE: Rossman and Rallis (2001). Adapted with permission.

Personnel

The allocation of time to tasks also shapes decisions about personnel needs. In Vignette 26, as the scope of the study developed (i.e., number of school sites, single- or multiple-person research teams), personnel decisions could be made. Principal investigators with university contracts can allocate the equivalent of the summer months and 1 day per week to the effort. Their time can be supplemented by a cadre of graduate students who can be awarded research assistantships to work on the project for a certain number of hours per week for the academic year, with additional summer funding budgeted into the proposal. These kinds of “person loadings” are illustrated in the budget categories listed in Table 9.2.

Financial Resources

For graduate-level research or sole-investigator studies, analyzing tasks can help the researcher decide to purchase certain services—for example, audiotape transcription or data processing. This analysis can also introduce the novice to the variety of tasks associated with the project. Determining the resources necessary for the study must often wait until fundamental design decisions have been made. Those design choices, however, must be made with some knowledge of the finances available. In the preceding vignette, the evaluators knew that they were constrained by the total allocated by the grants initiative (roughly $1 million, in 2001 dollars, over 2 years).

Although this sum may seem considerable to the novice proposal writer, planning a multisite, multiyear study with intensive data gathering as a primary design goal became quite difficult within this budget. Travel and personnel costs increased with inflation and rising salaries, and they represented a substantial proportion of the total budget.

The other major costs associated with the evaluation activities included (a) local travel; (b) equipment (computers, printers); (c) office supplies, telephones, and postage; (d) books and subscriptions; (e) printing and duplicating; and (f) contracted services (tape transcription, data analysis, website developer and maintainer, consultants). Because the costs of data analysis specialists vary considerably, the proposal writer would consult local costs and time allocations in developing that portion of a qualitative proposal. The time required for thorough transcription also varies. Each hour of tape can require from 3 to 8 hours for transcription. Thus, **transcription costs**, which are always high, can vary widely.

■ Topsy-Turvy Politics and Research

Vignette 28, later in this chapter, describes a rational plan that addressed logistics and justified the elements for a study that was well received but not funded at that time. Governmental agencies fund some qualitative research; more often, they want analyses that give clear, quantifiable findings that can help them ponder and decide what to do. Still, intractable problems, programs that show little or no effect, and programs and policies that create unanticipated new problems are ripe for qualitative inquiry. So case studies of such programs are quite useful, and research that promises specific policy recommendations is often viewed with favor. Qualitative evaluation and mixed-methods research are more likely to be funded than are descriptive ethnographies. Funding agencies' requests for proposals are often quite focused and specific. Agencies and foundation boards employ experts and bureaucrats who stay finely tuned to issues as they come to the forefront of policy crises and to the underlying issues regarding those crises. In policy worlds, a great deal of research, analyses, policy briefs, and white papers go unnoticed as policymakers identify more pressing issues that are getting substantial public attention; they feel the need to respond to these current issues and propose policies that may make a difference. In these situations, research reports may be used by legislative aides to frame out the complex issues and provide documentation for a specific policy stance.

Requests for proposals coming from governmental agencies are carefully crafted to articulate the priorities identified by boards, agency teams, and consultants. Some scholars are quite adept at making connections within agencies and foundations, which can help them get a sense of possible issues on the horizon. Large research universities have systems to help scholars make connections between their research agendas and those of governmental agencies and foundations. Researchers have a better chance of getting funding after they finely tune their proposals to fit, for example, the priorities of agencies that fund mental health research or foundations that have a track record of favoring studies of programs that aim at alleviating the effects of poverty, or to address policy questions about controversial issues such as charter schools and school vouchers.

Crisis- and controversy-generated agendas for research might get plentiful funding, media coverage, and attention from various policy arenas, but the policy world is fickle and decidedly not within the control of researchers. On the one hand, as policy attention shifts to the next crisis, the research that needed a year or more to complete may end up on a dusty shelf or in a never-viewed drop box. Just as unfortunate are the many instances when unwary researchers are caught up in a media and policy world where their research, specifically the words they have written, become political footballs. Researchers, and the agencies that provide funding to them, may be left undefended when their findings reveal embarrassing or unpleasant news. Many a researcher has told the tale of reporting an evaluation of an expensive and highly touted policy or program that did not work, then being left on her own to handle the press and the ire of powerful policymakers who had expected to see good results.

Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005) have used an example of President Clinton and his reactions to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) data that revealed that U.S. schoolchildren were performing quite poorly compared with many other countries. In their book on the politics of education, they note that qualitative scholarly work may get into political debate when it is connected to topics that are part of political debates. However, scholars' research seldom gets the attention that was focused on Pat Forgione, who recalled his experience as President Clinton's National Center for Education Statistics commissioner when the TIMSS report data showed the United States looking bad: "Who wanted to be with me reporting that? There I was, in the Rose Garden, alone, saying only Cyprus and South Africa were below us in the twelfth grade" (p. 211). Even after carefully developing a "toolkit" so that math specialists and school board members could be guided on how to look at the implications of the report, Forgione recalled politicians and media brushing off the cautions and nuances regarding international comparisons, saying, "Anytime you're part of an election, they're gonna look for the data and try to put their spin on it" (p. 211).

Should researchers avoid such foundation and policy-world delimitations and risks? Absolutely not, unless they are satisfied with small, self-funded studies. This is often the quite satisfactory solution for master's and doctoral research. Collaborating with scholars who have experience—even battle scars—and reading about the politics of research and evaluation will help anticipate the issues that might arise and thus help share the burdens of managing the politics and the media. Some researchers manage to find ways to carefully specify that they, themselves, own the research findings and modes of dissemination (frequently a stipulation of contracts with universities to protect researchers' academic freedom) as they look ahead and try to ward off any political and media topsy-turvy. Vignette 26, above, is one such collaboration, where the two scholars had built into their proposal the answers to questions that might come up as reviewers assessed the viability of their work.

■ Planning Master's Thesis or Dissertation Research

Many of the same issues confronted in the large-scale evaluation project are apparent in Vignette 27, a proposal for dissertation research. Although the scope is considerably smaller, similar resource challenges emerged in planning the study.

Vignette 27 illustrates the importance of being practical and realistic. Although it is impossible to anticipate all the potential stumbling blocks, a thoughtful and thorough research proposal will address the issue of feasibility by making an honest assessment of available energy, time, and financial resources and requirements.

While the researcher was planning for and conducting the above study, several resource issues became apparent. First, the commitment to a graduate student's research differs from that required of the researchers in Vignette 26. A master's thesis or dissertation—often one's first major, independent scholarly work—carries more professional and personal significance than do subsequent research projects. Furthermore, the project described in Vignette 26 had built-in supports for the researchers. As a team project funded by an external agent, commitments to colleagues and professional responsibilities to the funding agent were adequate to rebuild interest when it began to wane. Theses and dissertations demand different kinds of supports; the most important are those of mentors and peers.

Mentors and Peers

In planning qualitative research for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the judgments of university faculty members about the adequacy of the proposal are crucial. For master's theses, the faculty advisor should have some experience with qualitative methods. For doctoral dissertations, at least one member of the committee, preferably the chair, should be quite knowledgeable about qualitative studies. Such experience enables the faculty members to help in making decisions about how to allocate time realistically to various tasks, given the all-important idea that qualitative research often takes much more time than one might predict. The support and encouragement of faculty members are critical for developing research proposals that are substantial, elegant, and doable, and for advocating for the legitimacy of a particular study and of qualitative research generally in the larger university community.

The experiences of our graduate students suggest that the support of peers is also crucial for the personal and emotional sustenance that students find so valuable in negotiating among faculty whose requests and demands may be in conflict with one another. Graduate seminars or advanced courses in qualitative methods provide excellent structures for formal discussions as students deal with issues arising from role management or plan how to build grounded theory in their dissertations. As **communities of practice**, student support groups also build in a commitment to others not unlike that found in the team project described in Vignette 26. By establishing deadlines and commitments to one another, students become more efficient and productive. These groups bridge the existential aloneness of dissertation research. Finally, rereading literature on qualitative inquiry is both a support and a reminder of the traditions and challenges we all face.

Vignette 27 Feasibility and Planning for Dissertation Research

> Should I do a study that is clean, relatively quick, limited, and do-able so as to finish and get on with my professional life, or should I do something I really want to do that may be messy and unclear but would be challenging and new enough to sustain my interest? (S. Hammonds-White, personal communication, August 5, 1987)

A doctoral student, finding any number of stumbling blocks standing between her and the completion of her dissertation project, was asked to reflect on the process through which the research plan had been developed. Her response indicated that, as with any kind of major investment, a preliminary notion of how to proceed should be tempered with a comparison of anticipated costs and available resources. In this student's case, she had to weigh energy (her physical and emotional stamina), time, and finances.

The demands of the student's chosen research methods were many. Seeking to explore a process, she chose naturalistic inquiry, which would encourage her to search for multiple views of reality and the ways such views were constructed. Her training, experience, and interest in counseling psychology, coupled with a positive assessment of her knowledge and competence in this field, constituted excellent sources of personal energy. This was an area of particular interest (the "want-to-do-ability"), and methods were elegantly suited to that substantive focus. The researcher realized, however, that personal energy and a deep commitment to the topic were not going to be sufficient.

She looked to the university for two types of support, which she described as "risk-taking support" and "learning support." The first would encourage someone attempting to go beyond the conventional in her research. The second was offered by faculty members who possessed the interests and skills necessary to advise her.

In addition to personal energy and commitment and faculty support, a third source of energy was a support group made up of others who were engaged in dissertation research. Of that group she wrote, "We meet every other week, set short-term goals for ourselves, and help each other with the emotional highs and lows of the process."

The commitment in time required of an individual doing qualitative research is substantial. This particular researcher was quick to advise that those following similar research plans would do well to build into their proposals more time than they thought would be required to make allowances for the unexpected. In her case, a change in her family situation necessitated a return to full-time employment, forcing her to suspend her research when it was only two thirds complete.

Financial resources need to be equal to the financial demands of a study. When it appeared unlikely that grant monies would be available, the student opted for a smaller-scale study that she could finance personally.

Time on a Small Scale

Developing a graduate-level proposal for qualitative research demands sensitivity to the time necessary for the thorough completion of the project. This is where the experience of mentors on the university faculty and advice from the community of practice become crucial. As noted in Chapter 3, complying with institutional review board requirements for proceeding ethically takes time. Gaining access to a setting can take 6 months or more and may require the skills of a seasoned diplomat. As in Vignette 27, personal circumstances may intervene to dramatically alter the student's available time and energy to conduct the study. Thus, even though not all critical events can be anticipated, planning for more time than initially seems necessary is prudent. As Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2000) note, "relatively few research studies finish on schedule, and *time requirements invariably are underestimated.* Frequent setbacks are almost inevitable" (p. 44; emphasis added). We have both worked with advanced doctoral students who needed to find jobs. The economic necessity often has to take priority over completing their degrees, at least in a timely manner. This most often delays completion and, in a few cases, means that students don't finish at all. Though unfortunate, this is the reality of graduate work.

Financing

In some fields (public health, regional planning, special education, and international education), financial support for graduate research may be available through federal agencies or private foundations. Unfortunately, this is not typically the case in many social science fields and in many applied fields. Opportunities do sometimes become available, however, to work on a university professor's funded grant as a research assistant. This was the case in Vignette 26. Several graduate students would have been supported annually, and several of them could have dovetailed their research interests with those of the project.

Much more common, especially in education, is the case in Vignette 27. The student had to modify the proposed research to conform to the personal financial resources she was able to devote to the project. Recall that the proposal for funded research described in Vignette 26 suffered the same fate. The researchers planned an ideal study based on design considerations and the purposes of the study and then had to modify that ideal design based on the real budgetary constraints imposed by the funding agency.

For thesis or dissertation research, many costs, some obvious and some hidden, will arise over the course of the study. Planning ahead for these makes them a bit more manageable. These costs are clustered into three categories: materials, services, and personal costs.

Materials

The materials necessary for the completion of a thesis or dissertation may include word-processing equipment and materials, computer software for data analysis, computer disks, note cards and filing systems, tape recorders and tapes, transcription services (if appropriate), video equipment and cameras, books, articles, and copies of completed documents. The student should project the costs in each category, being sure to include the costs of printing drafts of the work as it proceeds, as well as the final document. Increasingly, we note, theses and dissertations are defended with each committee member's laptop open and a digital copy on each screen; many graduate schools now require electronic submission of the final work.

Costs associated with printing materials may also be necessary for ensuring that committee members can examine the data, analyses, and interim findings, although, as noted above, electronic copies may be preferred. As discussed in terms of ensuring an audit trail for a large-scale study, small-scale researchers must also be diligent about documenting their work such that a committee member could go through the data and analyses and find evidence to support the final results and interpretations.

Services

The services necessary for the completion of the thesis or dissertation vary depending on the skills of the student. Typical services, however, might include tape transcribing, final word processing according to university formatting requirements, statistical data analysis consulting, and professional proofreading and editing. The student often wants to have copies of the work professionally bound; this is an additional service that might be important for the student to consider as well.

Personal Costs

Personal costs are the most difficult to specify but may also be the most important in terms of perceived costs to the individual student. Especially for doctoral dissertations, this work is unlike any scholarly work the student has ever undertaken (and, most likely, any she will undertake in the future). It is not like a large course or like reading for exams; it is of a quite different magnitude. The sustained effort necessary to complete the project takes time away from all other commitments in the student's life, whether these are work, family, friends, or professional associations and volunteer groups. Students who are the most successful in moving through the phases of the dissertation build support networks for themselves within their families or through friends and colleagues—they create **communities of support** (families and friends) and communities of practice (other students and colleagues). Dissertation proposal sections discussing researcher role (see Chapter 3) should include assessments of her ability to manage the personal costs. Even though not all the costs associated with personal sacrifice can be anticipated, knowledge that the undertaking is not trivial and will require sacrifices on the part of the student can make the entire process more manageable.

Sometimes, researchers seek new funds to continue a project that uncovered interesting data. It is difficult to convince funding agency reviewers that a reworking of data analysis is a worthwhile venture. Vignette 28 describes a researcher's efforts to convince funding agency reviewers that a secondary analysis of qualitative data is worthy of financial support.

Vignette 28 demonstrates the tasks involved in convincing funding agencies of the labor-intensiveness of qualitative data analysis. Such analysis requires time and money and is not as simple as sitting in a comfy chair and reading over interview data. Those more attuned to traditional research, however, may need explicit details before they will provide support for that labor. Charts, diagrams, timelines, examples of precedents from highly regarded publications, and explicit delineation of the procedures will be convincing when tied to text. Funding agencies, pressed by the needs of many eager researchers and guided by the peer review process, will not provide resources unless everyone involved can see clearly how the money will be converted into knowledge. Even small requests for a graduate assistant or a computer program will be denied if the research sounds like a mystical process or simple filing. Anyone who has ever done qualitative data analysis knows better, but those with the funds need explicit guidance so they can see how the expenditure is justified. Vignette 28 shows the need to fit explanations to the knowledge bases and predilections of reviewers by walking them through the steps to be followed and thereby providing assurances that the researcher can produce something meaningful on their terms.

This chapter has displayed the recursive processes of planning sufficient resources to support the conduct of a qualitative research project. Vignette 26 could aptly be retitled “Planning in a Context of Largesse,” because the study was proposed to a funding agency with substantial financial resources. The major problem for that study was paring down the ideal design to conform to those budget parameters.

Vignette 27 portrays some of the unique problems associated with planning thesis or dissertation research, for which financial resources are largely unavailable and where time and personal support systems become critical. Each type of project poses unique challenges when the researcher is designing the proposal. Consideration of these issues strengthens the proposal by demonstrating that she is aware of and sensitive to the many challenges that may arise during the conduct of the study. Finally, Vignette 28 reminds us that even low-budget studies will be criticized if they cannot lead the reviewers to an understanding of the resources needed for qualitative analysis. Attention to these considerations helps strengthen the overall proposal and makes its positive evaluation more likely.

Throughout this book, we have presented considerations for building clear, thorough, and thoughtful proposals for qualitative research. In the final chapter, we make these considerations more explicit by describing them as a set of criteria.

Vignette 28 Walking the Reviewers Through Qualitative Analysis

The data collected were voluminous, comparative, qualitative, and quantitative, and came from key state education policymakers in six states. From a study funded by the National Institute of Education, Mitchell, Wirt, and Marshall (1986) developed a taxonomy of state mechanisms for influencing school programs and practices, and showed the effect of political culture and the relative power of policymakers to affect the education choices made in state capitals. Captivated by the richness of the interview data, Marshall began to develop a grounded theory of assumptive worlds—the understandings policymakers have about the way things are done, as demonstrated in their stories. Although this theory had been published (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1985; Mitchell et al., 1986), the next step required funds. Her proposal to the National Science Foundation's political science program promised a secondary analysis of the interview data from six states, assisted by a computer program for data analysis to elaborate the theory. The funding could be minimal because no new data collection was required.

Months later, the reviewers came back. One of them wrote, "This proposal breaks fresh and important ground in the political field." Another noted that "using qualitative data in a systematic way and employing computers in data management are innovative techniques well worth development." A third, however, objected:

> The proposal is to apply qualitative analysis to the interview materials. Perhaps that term has some [other] understood connotation in other research traditions, but so far as I could fathom, what it means is the investigator would read/listen to interview materials and file them on a microcomputer.

The proposal was rejected.

Overcoming frustration, Marshall revised and resubmitted her proposal with important changes. First, for the theoretical framework, related literature, and significance, she created a chart, tracing the precise place where assumptive worlds fit with other political science and education policy theory and literature. Second, after explaining the traditions of qualitative research, she cited political scientists' calls for more theory building with comparable case studies and calls to get behind the scenes to find out how the values of the policy culture affect policy outcomes. Third, with Table 9.3, she demonstrated the promise of the theory. Narratively, she described its significance for understanding the policy culture.

Finally, and perhaps most important, following a section on the philosophy of qualitative methodology and a section on the use of microcomputers with qualitative data, she wrote the following step-by-step description:

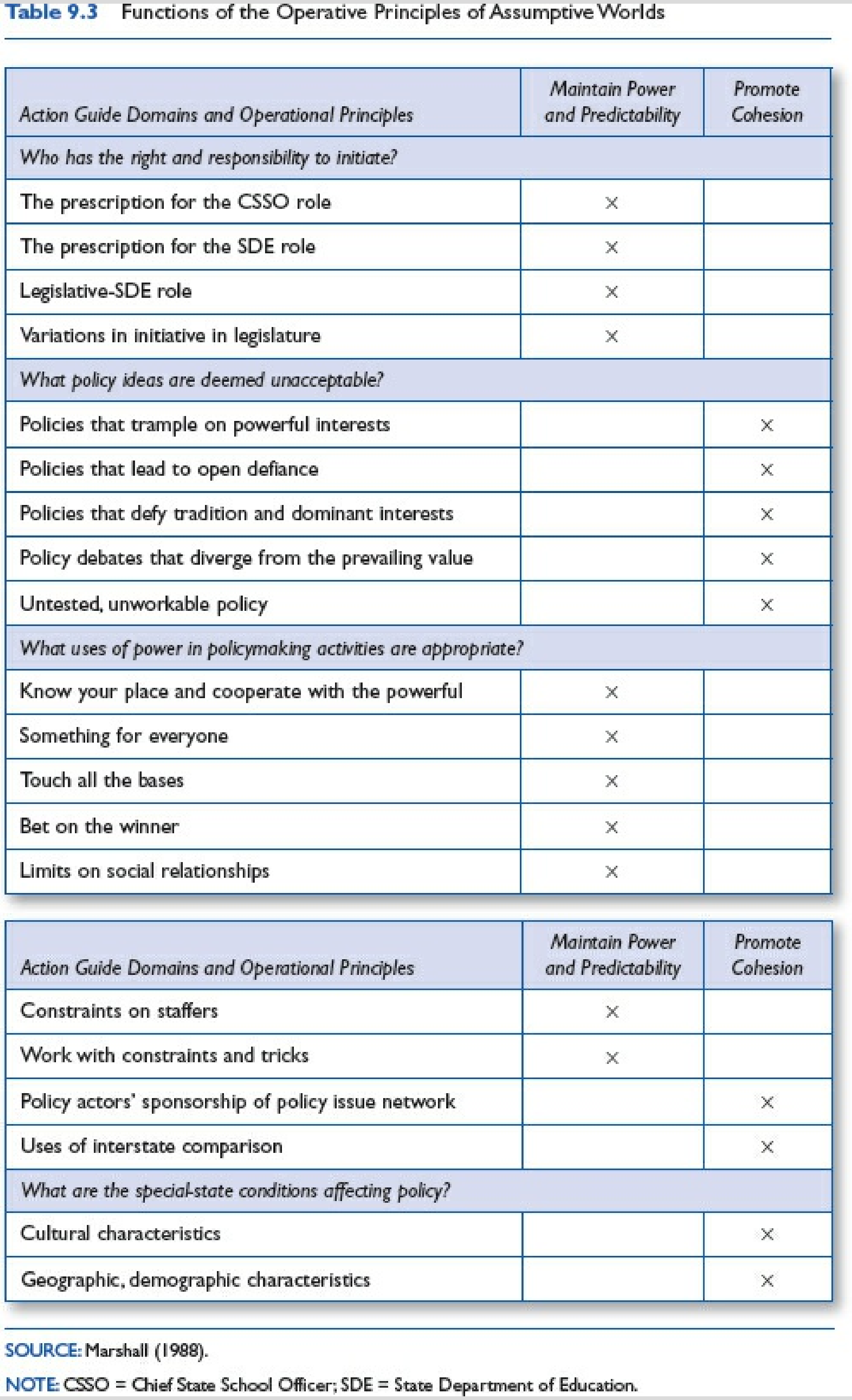


Table 9.3 Functions of the Operative Principles of Assumptive Worlds

Action Guide Domains and Operational Principles	*Maintain Power and Predictability*	*Promote Cohesion*
Who has the right and responsibility to initiate?		
The prescription for the CSSO role	×	
The prescription for the SDE role	×	
Legislative-SDE role	×	
Variations in initiative in legislature	×	
What policy ideas are deemed unacceptable?		
Policies that trample on powerful interests		×
Policies that lead to open defiance		×
Policies that defy tradition and dominant interests		×
Policy debates that diverge from the prevailing value		×
Untested, unworkable policy		×
What uses of power in policymaking activities are appropriate?		
Know your place and cooperate with the powerful	×	
Something for everyone	×	
Touch all the bases	×	
Bet on the winner	×	
Limits on social relationships	×	
Constraints on staffers	×	
Work with constraints and tricks	×	
Policy actors' sponsorship of policy issue network		×
Uses of interstate comparison		×
What are the special-state conditions affecting policy?		
Cultural characteristics		×
Geographic, demographic characteristics		×

SOURCE: Marshall (1988).

NOTE: CSSO = Chief State School Officer; SDE = State Department of Education.

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NOTE: CSSO = Chief State School Officer; SDE = State Department of Education.

Qualitative data analysis seems to be a mystical process to those accustomed to statistical analysis. However, the goal of both methodologies is the same: to identify clear and consistent patterns of phenomena by a systematic process. I will follow the following steps:

1. Transcribe data in Ethnograph files, using categories from preliminary analysis. Analyze field notes and taped interviews from Wisconsin, Illinois, Arizona, and California.
2. Expand assumptive world rules by examining all computer files with relevant descriptors. For example, when identifying patterns of behavior in legislative–state board relations, call up all files under the descriptor "state board" or, when identifying constraints on legislative staffers, call up all field notes and quotations under that label.
3. Do content analysis of all six states' data to (a) identify any additional patterns of behavior or belief, and (b) redefine domains and operational principles.
4. Reanalyze the file data using the alterations of assumptive world domains and operational principles.
5. Reorder the six states' files until clear, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive categories of behavior and belief systems are identified that organize the data descriptions of the policy environment.
6. Identify assumptive world effects on policy outcomes from field notes and interview data based on analytic notes regarding assumptive worlds (already started with West Virginia and Pennsylvania data).

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Gretchen:* I really struggled with the big example in Vignette 26 for this edition. I know it is old, but the general principles and procedures stand the test of time. I changed Table 9.2 to be a list of items/categories to consider in building a budget. I hope this somewhat modified table will still be useful. And I think that Knight’s book *Small-Scale Research* (2002) is one of the very best for graduate students to read and ponder. He provides lots of great ideas and examples.

Catherine: Actually, I hope readers will use this chapter imaginatively. For example, when reading about communities of practice and the importance of mentors and peers, I hope they’ll imagine the costs of those less tangible supports. When a student needs many, many hours of my time helping them make sense of their data, that is a cost. When peers patiently hear stories of your fascinating project and how you met ethical challenges, they are providing a service. Researchers need to imagine ways to reciprocate.”

Dialogue Between Learners

“Hi, Keren,

This chapter focuses on issues of resources and time, two issues that have been fundamental in guiding my research design. In my case, the desire to build a family and the economic imperative to finish quickly and get a job meant that I used personal funds instead of seeking external funding. In your case, it sounds as if you may be more successful than I was with the latter. While my decisions have resulted in the trade-off of a small-scale study rather than a larger-scale one, as well as taking on more debt from loans, I am satisfied with how my dissertation is shaping up. This doesn’t mean that the way I chose was the best. It was just the best for me. And although I see even more clearly now as I approach the end the multiple alternative methods, theoretical positionings, and so forth that I might have chosen instead, I am feeling more and more at peace with my choices and process.

Time is also an interesting topic. I believe we’ve talked about this in other ways already. I was able to set aside two full workdays for transcription, translation, analysis, and writing over the several months that followed my data collection. While I wasn’t always successful, I did my best to treat these days as I’ve treated other office days—no interruptions, please! In addition to these days, I’ve often used early morning hours—even just 30 minutes sometimes—to reconnect with my work and allow thoughts to percolate in my mind until I have a more extensive period to sit back down with it. I even have attended seminars on writing methods and time management. It’s amazing the apps and other technologies now available to help keep us distracted writers on track! Some are pretty neat and may be worth exploring!

How do you anticipate addressing issues of resources and time in your own work?

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Karla

Dear Karla,

I think that the issue of resources is probably my greatest challenge, and one that I have yet to really grasp. I hope to secure some external funding for my field research and am actually willing to shift my geographical focus somewhat if I can link it with an existing international project within my university. It’s hard for me to envision how all these issues will be resolved since I feel I’m still at an early stage of the process. However, I will have to start giving this more attention because I am starting to work on a proposal soon.

Writing is an issue I have thought about plenty! As a writing tutor at the Writing

Center I have often advised students how to make the most out of their "writing time," and I have tried to implement my own advice myself. One of them is disconnecting from the Internet for allotted times when I am writing. Also, I know I cannot be productive if I am not sleeping properly so I make sure I get enough sleep. I know it sounds lame, but sleeping at normal hours makes me much clearer. Another thing I do is plan regular breaks throughout my writing day be it shopping, cooking, or even doing the dishes, I find activities to do that don't require sitting in front of a computer. I think it is important to start implementing good working habits even before you actually start writing your dissertation.

Keren"

Further Reading

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Coley, S. M., & Scheinberg, C. A. (2013). *Proposal writing: Effective grantsmanship* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (See Appendix A on estimating time.)

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Key Concepts

communities of practice
communities of support
financial support
personnel
time
transcription costs

Chapter 10 Arguing the Merits of Your Proposal and Envisioning the Final Report

Throughout this book, we have provided guidance for the preparation of a well-documented argument to convince readers that the study should and can be done and how all the elements of a proposal intertwine. You readers now know that the genre you choose intertwines with the ways the study will fill gaps in knowledge, policy, and practice, and with the researcher as a person. You know how statements about role, for example, should address the personal biography of the researcher and how that might shape events and meanings. Considerations of the ethical conduct of the study are woven throughout your proposal. You know to make decisions about whether your research is participatory or more objectivist. You know to create a design so your selection of the setting and sampling of people and behaviors within that setting are based on sound reasoning and so the rationale that has guided those choices is presented, indicating how they will inform the research questions. Just as your proposal addresses issues of the value, truthfulness, and soundness of the study, it also addresses the various phases of data analysis and report writing.

You know that you must develop a sound rationale for the choice of qualitative methodology, buttressed by the logic and argument for the interpretive paradigm—the idea of conducting research in a natural setting with the researcher as the primary means for gathering and interpreting data.

Qualitative research involves a series of choices: “These choices and the theoretical reasons for them need to be presented explicitly” (Sanjek, 1990, p. 395). Qualitative research is generally no longer tossed aside as simply an alternative or merely the pilot study. However, the qualitative researcher needs to be mindful of strong countervailing conservative forces. This is especially pronounced in the United States with the federal government’s calls for **“scientifically based research.”** In the **politics of knowledge**, certain research is seen as the “gold standard”—the most dependable, the conventional and privileged way. Powerful and dominant groups work to maintain those conventions, sometimes marginalizing other forms or sources of knowledge (Bustelo & Verloo, 2009; Lather, 1991; Marshall, 1997a; Scheurich, 1997). When the U.S. Department of Education requests and supports studies by “qualified scientists” that “address causal questions” and “employ randomized experimental designs” (Flinders, 2003, p. 380) as the viable research design, the powerful message is that expanded exploration of issues does not qualify as research! So using multiple examples showing the value and the systematic nature of qualitative inquiry will offset such narrow views.

We, however, put aside such knowledge politics for the moment. Instead, we concentrate on ways for the proposal and the researcher to be prepared to articulate the assumptions and usefulness of the interpretive paradigm. The essential considerations are articulated well by Patton (2002), who notes that the **credibility** of a qualitative report depends on the use of rigorous methods of fieldwork, on the credibility of the researcher, and on the "fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking" (pp. 552–553). Developing a logic that will solidly defend a proposal entails three large domains: (1) responding to criteria for the overall soundness of the project, (2) demonstrating the usefulness of the research for the specific conceptual framework and research questions, and (3) demonstrating the sensitivities and sensibilities to *be* the research instrument. Careful consideration of each will help the proposal writer present a sound, strong design.

When facing debates and challenges about the soundness, validity, utility, and generalizability of qualitative methods, the researcher can draw on the deep conversations in the literature that address these issues. Many social sciences have put aside the old doubts and mistrusts of qualitative inquiry. Old arguments and concerns about quantitative versus qualitative are now recast as the research community recognizes that the rationales and the supporting criteria for various approaches to inquiry will differ. In general, qualitative research proposals can move on to the current methodological scene with discussions about criteria for judging the soundness of any research and about choices of genres. While such proposals may encounter debates and challenges from those with a more traditional take and from those with concerns about postmodern, feminist, action, and emancipatory stances in research, still, the more naturalistic and explicitly interpretive approach of qualitative research has gathered momentum and support.

This chapter will help you think ahead about the proposal presentation and even the look of the final product or report. As you make the big leap of submitting your proposal, you should revisit and be ready to answer questions and point to specific sections in the proposal that address those questions. As an exercise, pretend to be a skeptical reader, not the writer of the proposal, and see what questions still need to be answered. This works whether you are sending a proposal to a funding agency or prepping for a dissertation **proposal defense**. Take one last look at your proposal and have one last practice session so you can calmly answer questions. To make it fun, gather together a few fellow researchers and have them play the role of professors or funding agencies doling out the third degree on the proposal!

■ Criteria of Soundness

As you assert your abilities to carry out your proposed study, think about where and how well you address questions about soundness, credibility, and trustworthiness. Recall our discussion, particularly in Chapters 3 and 8, about the criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated. These canons can be phrased as questions to which all social science research must respond (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). First, how well does your design enhance the credibility of the particular findings of the study? And by what criteria should we judge those findings? Second, how transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people? Third, what has been done to assure judges that the findings are not completely idiosyncratic to your study—for example, would another researcher put forward similar findings if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context (even though we know that can never happen)? And fourth, how can we be sure that the findings reflect the perspectives of the participants and the inquiry itself rather than the perspectives—perhaps biases or prejudices—of the researcher? Postmodern and feminist challenges to traditional research assert that all discovery and truths emerge from the researcher's prejudgments and predilections. Those espousing these positions argue that such predispositions should be used "as building blocks . . . for acquiring new knowledge" (Nielson, 1990, p. 28).

Recall Lincoln and Guba's (1985) strategies for establishing the **"truth value"** (p. 290) of the study, its applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Every systematic inquiry into the human condition should address these issues. Strategically, you should at least be prepared to discuss how these terms have parallels to the conventional positivist paradigm—internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity—and then the ways qualitative methodologists have demonstrated the need to rework these constructs for interpretive qualitative inquiry. Be ready to discuss alternative constructs that have given qualitative researchers new terms with different connotations—ones that more accurately reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm. Discuss credibility, in which the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was appropriately identified and described. The inquiry should then be "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (p. 296). The credibility/believability of a qualitative study that aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group, or a pattern of interaction will rest on its validity. An in-depth description showing the complexities of processes and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it is convincing to readers. Within the parameters of that setting and population and the limitations of the theoretical framework and design, the research will be credible.

A qualitative researcher should therefore adequately state those parameters, thereby placing boundaries around and limitations on the study.

Be prepared to discuss **transferability**, ways the study's findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice. The burden of demonstrating that a set of findings applies to another context rests more with another researcher who would make that transfer than with the original researcher. Kennedy (1979) refers to this as the **second decision span in generalizing**. The first decision span allows the researcher to generalize the findings about a particular sample to the population from which that sample was drawn (assuming adequate population specification and random selection of the sample). The second decision span occurs when another researcher wants to apply the findings about a population of interest to a second population believed or presumed to be similar enough to the first to warrant that application. This entails making judgments about and an argument for the relevance of the initial study to the second setting.

However, a qualitative study's transferability or generalizability to other settings may be problematic, at least in the probabilistic sense of the term. Generalizing qualitative findings to other populations, settings, and treatment arrangements—that is, its external validity—is seen by traditional canons as a weakness in the approach. To counter the challenges, the researcher can refer to the original theoretical framework to show how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models. By doing so, you should state the theoretical parameters of the research. Then, those who make policy or design research studies within those same (or sufficiently similar) parameters can determine whether the cases described can be generalized for new research policy and transferred to other settings. In addition, the reader or user of specific research can see how research ties itself into a body of theory. Be ready to explain this.

For example, a case study of a new staff development program in a high school can be tied to theories of the implementation of innovations in organizations, leadership, personnel management, and adult career socialization. The research can then be used in planning program policy and further research in a variety of settings —not just the high school, school organizations, and staff development. It can be included with research about organizations and can contribute to the literature on organizational theory.

Be prepared to discuss strategic choices that can enhance a study's generalizability, such as triangulating multiple sources of data. **Triangulation** is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point. Derived from navigation science, the concept has been fruitfully applied to social science inquiry (see Richards, 2005; Rossman & Wilson, 1994). Data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question (Rossman & Wilson, 1994). Designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple informants, or more than one data-gathering method are used can greatly strengthen the study's usefulness for other settings.

Be prepared to discuss **dependability**—showing how the researcher plans to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design caused by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. This represents a set of assumptions very different from those shaping the concept of reliability. Positivist notions of reliability assume an unchanging universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated. This assumption of an unchanging social world is in direct contrast to the qualitative/interpretative assumption that the social world is always being constructed and the concept of replication is itself problematic.

Be prepared to discuss **confirmability**—the ways qualitative researchers can parallel the traditional concept of objectivity. Discuss ways to ask whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another person or another study, and demonstrate the impossibility and foolishness of doing so. But still, be ready to discuss ways to show that the logical inferences and interpretations of the researcher can make sense to someone else. Does that reader or **critical friend** see how the inferences were made? Do they make sense? Be prepared to argue that the logic and interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry can be made (somewhat) transparent to others, thereby increasing the strength of the assertions.

Be prepared to respond to concerns about the researcher's natural subjectivity shaping the research. Again, assert the strengths of qualitative methods by showing how you will develop an in-depth understanding of, even empathy for, the research participants to better understand their worlds. Be ready to explain how insights increase the likelihood that you will be able to describe the complex social system being studied and that you have, however, built into the proposal strategies for limiting bias in interpretation. Be ready with strategies such as the following:

- Plan to use a research partner or a person who can play the role of a critical friend who thoughtfully and gently questions your analyses.
- Describe your community of practice—a group of critical but supportive peers —who will walk through the process with you, helping you guard against unwarranted bias.
- Build in time for cross-checking, member checking, and time sampling to

search for negative instances.
- Describe how analysis will use, but not be limited by, previous literature and how it will include checking and rechecking the data and also a purposeful examination of possible alternative explanations.
- Provide examples of explicitly descriptive, nonevaluative note taking: Show how you plan to take two sets of notes, one with description and another with tentative categories and personal reactions.
- Cite previous researchers who have written about bias, subjectivity, and data quality.
- Describe how you will write analytic memos to share with your community of practice, to capture your emerging insights and seek critical feedback.
- Plan to conduct an audit trail of the data collection and analytic strategies. (See Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Richards, 2005.)

Qualitative research does not claim to be replicable; so you purposely avoid controlling the research conditions and concentrate on recording the complexity of situational contexts and interrelations as they occur naturally. Explain how your goal of discovering this complexity by altering research strategies within a flexible research design makes sense but cannot be strictly replicated by future researchers, nor should anyone attempt to do so.

Thus, be ready to explain that qualitative researchers do respond to the traditional social science concern for **replicability** by taking the following stance: First, they can assert that qualitative studies by their nature (and, really, any research) cannot be replicated because the real world changes. Second, by planning to keep thorough notes, a journal or log that records each design decision and the rationale behind it, and to write frequent in-process memos, researchers allow others to inspect their procedures, protocols, and decisions. Finally, by planning to keep all collected data in a well-organized, retrievable form, researchers can make them available easily if the findings are challenged or if another researcher wants to reanalyze the data.

However, it is more important to embrace subjectivity for works emphasizing the interpretive strengths of qualitative inquiry. Then, triangulation is not so much about getting the “truth” but, rather, about discovering the multiple perspectives for knowing a particular social world. With research derived from feminist or critical theories, the study is valuable, and good, when it reveals oppressive practices and their effects. Similarly, research aimed at promoting emancipatory change, such as participatory or collaborative action research, will adhere to very different criteria of goodness. Such assertions will support the value of research that highlights oppressive power relations and empowers the participants.

Last, and related, we see an emerging trend toward judging research value through its presentation or its performance. Thus, one values the research effort for the aesthetic of its narrative, the theater, the poetry, or other performance aspects. For example, Alemán and Luna (2013) combine the power of case study with the emotional impact derived from film. Film, performance ethnography, multimodal studies, and ethnotheater (Saldaña, 2011) all call for alternative presentation formats, ones that draw on aesthetic senses for making judgments about the quality of the work. Whichever philosophical assumptions ground your proposal, be ready with well-reasoned and articulate responses to the important question: How can you make sure that your earthy, thick, evocative finding is not, in fact, wrong? Or will make no difference? Or will have no audience? The traditional, realist responses will be very different from those of the proposal writer doing critical ethnography. Each response must be convincing in the arguments and strategies it proposes for ensuring goodness.

For some descriptive studies aimed at presenting a thick description of reality, traditional scientific standards can be paralleled, as in using comparative analysis and emphasizing rigor in data collection, cross-checking, and intercoder consistency, as discussed in Chapter 8 (see also Miles and Huberman's [1994] guidelines and Anfara, Brown, and Mangione's [2002] demonstration). However, discussions of criteria for assessing the value and trustworthiness of qualitative research continue to evolve, undergoing critique, refinement, and substantial revisions. Qualitative inquiry, moving to a kind of "non-naïve realism" (Smith & Deemer, 2000), recognizes that understanding is relative and there are **multiple understandings**, and that, at best, we present a report that is likely to be true given our existing knowledge. As Smith and Deemer put it,

> relativism is nothing more or less than the expression of our human finitude: we must see ourselves as practical and moral beings, and abandon hope for knowledge that is not embedded with our historical, cultural, and engendered ways of being. (p. 886)

Finally, "criteria should not be thought of as an abstraction, but as a list of features that we think, or more or less agree at any given time and place, characterize good versus bad inquiry" (p. 894).

Planning ahead, thinking about how your final research product will be judged as "good" is a useful exercise for proposal writers. In the next section, we offer reminders of criteria that can be applied to written reports of qualitative research (adapted from Marshall, 1985a, 1990). Your attention to these issues ensures a solid and well-thought-out research proposal that can convince reviewers your product will be good.

Explicit Details on Design and Methods

When you have created an effective research proposal, a knowledgeable reviewer can read the explication of your design and methods to judge whether they are adequate and make sense. Your rationale for qualitative research is presented well, as is the specific genre in which the study is situated. There is sense to the anticipated methods for attaining entry and managing role, data collection, recording, analysis, ethics, and exit. The description of how the site and the sample will be selected, as well as the appropriate data collection and analysis procedures, make sense and include illustrations. These elements are not taken for granted or treated as if they will happen by some magical, mystical process. It is not enough for you to say, “Trust me, it will happen and I’ll come back with rich description and earthy data.”

The reader will see clearly any assumptions that may affect the study; he will see that biases are expressed, and he will see that you have engaged in some preliminary self-reflection to uncover personal subjectivities. The reader will also see, and feel assured by, your articulation of how you will act as a finely tuned research instrument whose personal talents, experiential biases, and insights will be used mindfully. Providing examples drawn from the work of the grandmother and grandfather pioneers of qualitative research and recent published studies will be reassuring, as will your demonstrations that you can be self-reflective, recognizing when you are becoming overly subjective and not critical enough of your interpretations. The reader will also learn about your use of others—your community of practice and critical friends—to encourage your reflexivity. As part of this process, you have even analyzed the conceptual framework for theoretical biases. Furthermore, you have articulated a scheme to help you reflexively engage with and discuss the value judgments and personal perspectives that are inherent in data collection and analysis. For example, you have statements and plans to exercise caution in distinguishing between descriptive field notes (e.g., “The roofs had holes and missing tiles”) and judgmental ones (e.g., “Many houses were dilapidated”).

The reader will be impressed with how you write about tolerance for ambiguity, how you intend to search for alternative explanations, check out negative instances, and use a variety of methods to ensure that the findings are strong and grounded (e.g., with triangulation). He will see that the strategies you have proposed for ensuring data quality (e.g., informants’ knowledgeability, subjectivities, and candor) make sense, as do your measures for guarding against hegemonic explanations.

If you describe preliminary observations—a pilot study—or first days in the field, demonstrating how the research questions have been generated from observation, not merely from library research; if you quote the pioneers of the field about concern for the sensitivity of those being researched and demonstrate finely tuned ethical standards; and if you have ways of ensuring that the people in the research setting will likely benefit in some way (e.g., by receiving an hour of sympathetic listening or feeling empowered to take action and alter some facet of their lives), your reader will be more prone to give you the go-ahead.

Explicit Details and Rigorous Arguments About Research Questions and Data Relevance

With the promise of abundant evidence from raw data to demonstrate the connection between those data and your interpretations, your research screams credibility. Demonstrate how data will be presented in a readable, accessible form, perhaps aided by graphics, models, charts, and figures. Showing and citing examples of such presentations from others' work is a useful stratagem. State the preliminary research questions clearly, and argue that the plan for managing data collection will allow you to respond to those questions and even generate further questions. Provide a graphic showing how the research questions and subquestions lead logically to specific data collection methods and then sampling choices—all yielding data that logically move back up that branching tree to the questions that guide the study. The relationship between the proposed study and previous studies needs to be explicit. The discussion of how the study will be reported in a manner accessible to other researchers, practitioners, and policymakers should be clear, with demonstrations of ways to provide user-friendly representations of findings so others can implement them efficiently.

Firm Grounding in the Scholarly Context

Your proposal acknowledges the limitations of qualitative inquiry vis-à-vis generalizability. However, you also need to show the reader how your study will fit back into the big picture. Be convincing about looking holistically at the setting to understand the linkages among systems, and about the need to trace the historical context to understand how institutions and roles have evolved.

While mapping out and hence defining central concepts and referencing previous research, you may argue that your research will go beyond those established frameworks, challenging old ways of thinking (as Rosalie Wax [1971] sought to do in her study of Native Americans; see Chapter 5, Vignette 15). You may argue that your highly descriptive ethnographic account will reveal unknown realities that matter for creating effective programs and policies (as an ethnography or case studies of teenage parents might). Chapter 4 details ways to use the literature review to situate the study in previous research and in the need for information for policy and practice. Chapter 5, too, points to sections in research design that should articulate the reasons why a qualitative approach is appropriate for the big questions being pursued.

Detailed Records

Your proposal also describes how the data will be preserved and made available for other analyses. You indicate how you will document any in-field analysis, perhaps through analytic memo writing. Furthermore, you explicitly mention a **running record** of procedures, perhaps an audit trail that will be included in an appendix to the final report. Chapter 8 provides details of how that can be managed.

Paying attention to these criteria will help ensure a solid proposal that demonstrates concern for issues of trustworthiness and shows how knowledgeable you are regarding these issues. Many issues are addressed in the body of the proposal; others may be discussed in the meeting to defend the proposal or in response to the queries of funding agencies. (See Marshall, 1985b, 1990, for a discussion of the evolving set of "criteria of goodness" that cuts across scholarly and political debates.)

Finally, you may find it necessary to allay fears (perhaps your own, perhaps your reviewers') that you may stay in the field too long or become stalled when faced with analyzing the data. It may help if you can articulate your ability (perhaps previous experience) in moving from data collection to analysis and from interpretation to writing. Again, a pilot study, a hypothesized model, or an outline of possible data analysis categories can be appended to the proposal and is often quite compelling. However, you should use such models with caution, arguing that they are primarily heuristic—tentative guides to begin observation and analysis. They are reassuring, however, to those who are uncomfortable with the flexibility and ambiguity of many qualitative research designs. Chapter 8 provides several strategies for moving the analysis along. Still, qualitative research cannot get bogged down by what Schwandt (1996) calls **criteriology**: lists that are too restrictive and preordained.

Clarity and Academic Credibility

Audience matters. Some judges of proposals are quite impressed with deeply philosophical treatises and loads of jargon-laden, quote-laden, long-winded backgrounding of issues. Others impatiently skim through this, asking, “Where’s the beef?” or saying, “OK fine, just tell me what you want to do and why and how.” If you are writing a dissertation proposal, you might think about how to balance your proposal and answers to questions, given what you know of your professors. Proposers seeking funding should sleuth to find any available information about their audience—the foundation’s previous projects, their likely reviewers’ styles and preferences. All proposers can benefit from Silverman’s (2007) “anti-bullshit agenda” (p. 139). He advises qualitative researchers to consider clarity, reason, economy, beauty, and truth as guides to the plans for their proposals, as well as for their final reports. How long should the proposal be? How long should the final report be? Perhaps the answer is, “It depends” or “Long enough to balance clarity with adequate academic credibility.”

■ The Essential Qualitativeness of the Research

Many discussions about criteria of goodness for qualitative research emphasize the transparency of data collection and analysis and the “systematization” of procedures for gathering and presenting evidence. Other standards matter as well. The real-world significance of the questions asked, the practical value of potential findings, and the degree to which participants in the study may benefit are also important criteria. Frequently, still, in attempting to make a proposed design efficient and conform to traditional research, reviewers recommend alterations in the original design. They may argue that the time for exploration is wasteful; they might propose just a pilot study; they may try to change the nature of the study from ethnographic exploration and description to a more traditional design. They may worry that the design is not “tight.” Your explanations, therefore, should sway your audience with the power of the methodologies for the kinds of unanswered questions you choose to explore. Also, you should be prepared to allay fears about design “looseness,” immersion in the natural setting, and the time expended in exploration.

■ The Value of the Qualitative Approach

In Chapter 1, and throughout this book, we discuss matching methodology with research questions. When presenting a proposal, this kind of matching constitutes the most essential and potentially convincing argument. *It is not enough to give a nod to this by citing Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Rossman and Rallis (2012)!*

You should try to be eloquent about the need for research methodologies that are culturally sensitive and that, in the real world, can identify contextually generated patterns. Write effectively about why nonmeasurable soft data are valuable. Critiquing previous research that left unanswered questions helps make clear the need to observe naturally or to elicit **emic perspectives**. This substantiates your assertions. Demonstrating how persistent problems continue unresolved can also substantiate your argument to toss aside the survey with the wrong questions and instead explore the narratives of people intimately involved with the problem. Demonstrating the value of qualitative inquiry's "toolbox that enables researchers to develop concepts" (Morse, 2004) in fields with inadequate conceptualizing and theory building can buttress your proposal. Using humorous analogies and wit can be effective, if done judiciously. For example, you might use Morse's criticism of medical research's insistence on the use of quantitative methods even for qualitative questions, which she compared to "trying to put in a nail using a chainsaw" (p. 1030).

Feminist, postmodern, and critical theorists invite us to engage in research that does not "otherize" participants and has **liberatory potential**. Research derived from these theoretical frameworks seeks to discover and create, often collaboratively, knowledge that benefits those marginalized from the mainstream. Thus, emerging criteria lend special credence and value to proposals that challenge dominant (and *dominating*) practice or that include participants whose meaning making has been overlooked in previous policy and research (Carspecken, 1996; Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Marshall, 1997b; Scheurich, 1997). And, increasingly, the practical utility of research is becoming a valued criterion, especially for action research and when pressing problems need research-based recommendations (Hammersley, 1990).

Thus, the value to be derived from using qualitative methodologies needs to be convincingly explicated. As the proposal writer, you need to anticipate reviewers' concerns and walk them through your overall reasoning and specific design choices with rationales and examples. Vignettes 29 and 30 show how two researchers developed rationales for their work. Vignette 29 describes how a proposal writer anticipated a funding agency's challenge to the usefulness of qualitative research.

Vignette 30 shows how a doctoral student successfully withstood challenges to his right to alter the design during fieldwork if it became necessary or prudent.

In this vignette, the researchers developed a sound logic for the major aspects of the study. Justification for the substantive focus grew from the conceptual framework and the potential significance of the study. The major research approach —long-term engagement in the social world—could best be justified through demonstrating the need for exploration.

The quest for cultural understandings requires intense and lengthy involvement in the setting and design flexibility. For example, in their research on Fijian communities, Laverack and Brown (2003) discuss their need to adapt, given the different cultural styles of group dynamics; facilitative, spatial arrangements; gender dynamics; and protocols and perceptions of time. Without altering traditional Western assumptions, their research would have flopped. Convincing the uninitiated critic that design flexibility is crucial can be a tough hurdle for the proposer of qualitative research. Vignette 30 shows how a fictitious doctoral student in economics successfully countered challenges to the need for design flexibility.

In Vignettes 29 and 30, each proposal demanded a well-thought-out, thorough, and logical defense. When the proposal is understood as an argument, the need to provide a clear organization, document major design decisions, and demonstrate the overall soundness of the study becomes clear. Following our advice will help you think through the conceptual and methodological justifications and rationales for the proposed study. In planning a defense of the proposal, we suggest that you anticipate the questions that may come from a funding agency or dissertation committee.

Having well-prepared and well-rehearsed answers will facilitate the defense. Tables 10.1 and 10.2 present the types of questions we have encountered. Those in Table 10.1 come from reviewers with little experience with qualitative methods; those in Table 10.2 are from those who are familiar with the methods and seek justifications for the decisions in the proposal.

Table 10.1 Questions From Reviewers With Little Qualitative Experience

I'm not used to this; could you explain this qualitative approach you're taking?
Why don't you include any surveys in this research study?
I don't see any numbers here—how is this real research?
What is your control group?
How can this be generalized?
If you're the one collecting and analyzing the data, how will we know you're right?
How can you be objective?
How can you verify your findings?
Can you explain this idea of "grounded theory"?
Explain this concept of emergent sampling (or emergent data analysis).
It looks like you're using stories as part of your data collection. Are stories really data?
How can you start this research without knowing what you're looking for?
How will you use any of these findings? How will you explain how this small sample can be OK?
I think this will be a fun study, but I worry about whether you'll be able to publish it in a journal.
I don't see how you can have findings that give real answers for policymakers.

Table 10.2 Questions From Reviewers Attuned to Qualitative Methodology

I like your research design, but what's the significance of your findings?
How have you made a good match of topic and qualitative or quantitative approaches?
Is it feasible to believe that you can finish this study in a year?
What processes will you go through to categorize your data?
How will you talk about and handle validity and reliability in this qualitative research?
Could you give me an example of going from concepts to data collection? Going from interpretations to generalizable findings? What about other naturalistic inquiries or dealing with negative instances?
What if you don't get access to your study population? What if people won't talk to you?
How can you justify, ethically, your plan to muck around in peoples' lives?
What is the final product going to look like?
Can you give me some examples of comparable work?
How can you condense your qualitative research into a publishable 12-page journal article?
How will you make time in your life to really focus on this research?
Are you going to go out "in the field," never to be seen again?
How will you know when to stop collecting data?
How will policymakers or practitioners make use of your findings?
What philosophical assumptions guide you in your efforts to ensure the "goodness" of your research?
Shouldn't you try some of those neat new things, such as performance ethnography?
Autoethnography is the craze now; why not try that?
Everybody's into mixed methods now, so couldn't you find a way to be efficient with the qualitative part and throw in a survey?

Although some of these questions may never be articulated, they may be present in the minds of foundation officials or dissertation committee members. Building a logic in support of the proposed qualitative study, both in writing and orally, will help reassure skeptics and strengthen your argument. And to ease worries and tense questioning, you can even tell stories. For example, to explain the flexibility and reflectiveness of the human research instrument, you might read a bit from Narayan's (1993) account of fieldwork in the Himalayan foothills—of how she was variously identified as being from her mother's village, from Bombay, a native, and an outsider. But when she appeared at weddings, "where a splash of foreign prestige added to the festivities, I was incontrovertibly stated to be 'from America . . . she came *all* the way from there for this function, yes, with her camera and her tape recorder!'" (p. 674). Thus, she was viewed as an honored guest, even though many people present thought that Americans were savages because television revealed that they didn't wear many clothes. Find your own such good stories to help reviewers imagine the delights possible in your plan of action and to lighten up their day.

Vignette 29 Justifying Time for Exploration

Very exciting! The grant proposal, to conduct three in-depth case studies of the culture of high schools undergoing improvement (Rossman, Corbett, & Firestone, 1984) had received favorable internal review. It could be a major portion of the group's work over the next 5 years. But one administrator expressed worries about the value of qualitative research, and it was going to a federal agency where it would receive close scrutiny.

As the research team sat on a train heading to Washington, D.C., they pondered the type of questions they would be required to answer. Surely their sampling plan would be challenged: The criterion of "improvement" would have to be quite broadly construed to locate the kinds of high schools they wanted. The notion of studying a school's culture was new to many in the research community, never mind the Washington bureaucrats. The team anticipated questions about the usefulness of that concept, as well as the presentation of theoretical ideas on cultural change and transformation.

So the team prudently prepared a rationale grounded in the applied research of others rather than relying on anthropological constructs. As they reviewed that logic, three points seemed most salient. First, the research proposal assumed that change in schools could not be adequately explored through a snapshot approach. Rather, the complexity of interactions among people, new programs, deeply held beliefs and values, and other organizational events demanded a long-term, in-depth approach. Second, at that time, little was known about change processes in secondary schools. Most of the previous research focused on elementary schools and had been generalized, perhaps inappropriately, to secondary schools. The proposed research was intended to fill the gap. Finally, much had been written about teachers' resistance to change. The rationale for and significance of the study would be in uncovering some of that construct, in delving beneath the surface and exploring the meaning perspectives of teachers involved in profound change.

The proposal called for long-term engagement in the social worlds of the three high schools selected for study. The team anticipated a challenge to their time allocation and decided to defend it through the rationale presented above, as well as with the idea that complex processes demand adequate time for exploration; that is, interactions and changes in belief systems occur slowly.

After the 2-hour hearing, the team felt that they had done a credible job but realized the funding agent had not yet come to accept the longer time frame of qualitative research. In the negotiations, the research team had to modify the original plan to engage in participant observation over the course of a single school year. To save the project from rejection, they had agreed to 6 months of data collection, over the winter and spring terms.

Vignette 30 Defending Flexibility

Katz had been fascinated with families' financial decision making long before he first took a course in microeconomics as a college sophomore. That exposure to theory crystallized his interest and gave it an intellectual home. During his doctoral coursework, however, he had pursued this interest from a cross-cultural perspective, enrolling in as many anthropology courses as his adviser would permit.

Katz's interest grew as he read case studies of families in other cultures. Quite naturally, he became interested in the methods anthropologists used to gather their data; they seemed so different from econometrics or even economic history methods. As he immersed himself in these methods, his fascination grew. Now, about to embark on his dissertation, he had convinced one committee member to support his proposal to engage in a long-term, in-depth study of five families in very different socioeconomic circumstances. As he prepared for a meeting with the other two committee members, he reviewed the strengths of his proposal.

First, he was exploring the inner decision-making processes of five families—something no economics research had done. The value of the research would rest, in part, on the contribution it would make to the understanding of beliefs, values, and motivations of certain financial behaviors. Second, he was contributing to methodology because he was approaching a topic using new research methods. He could rely on the work of two or three other qualitative economists, well-established scholars in their fields, to demonstrate that others had undertaken such risky business and survived!

Third, he had thoroughly combed the methodological literature for information that would demonstrate his knowledge of many of the issues that would arise: The design section of the proposal was more than 60 pages long and addressed every conceivable issue. He had not attempted to resolve them all but, rather, to show that he was aware they might arise, knowledgeable about how others had dealt with them, and sensitive to the trade-offs represented by various decisions.

During the committee meeting, the thoroughness and richness of the design section served him well. The fully documented topics and sensitive discussion revealed a knowledge and sophistication not often found in doctoral students. What Katz had not anticipated, however, was the larger question brought up by one committee member: With such a small sample, how could the research be useful?

Fortunately, Katz recalled the argument developed by Kennedy (1979) about generalizing from single case studies. He had conceptualized his study as a set of family life histories from which he would draw analytic categories, carefully delimiting the relationships among them. Not unlike a multisite case study, Katz's proposal could be evaluated from that perspective. This logic proved convincing enough for Katz's committee to approve his proposal.

■ Demonstrating Precedents

Now, in the 21st century, with a burgeoning number of academic journals and handbooks devoted to qualitative inquiry and with doctoral programs sometimes requiring qualitative skills, researchers have plentiful resources to draw on. While we honor old traditions, such as those of Margaret Mead and other classical ethnographers going into the field and inventing strategies, now you can, and should, draw on the more recent wisdom gleaned from those inventions—especially studies in your own field whose use of qualitative methodology has led to important new understandings.

Qualitative research has gained **respectability** and has proliferated in practice disciplines such as nursing and those dealing with health, illness, and life transitions (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). In psychology, a field traditionally associated with the controlled experiment and statistical analysis for creating mathematical models of psychological processes, some scholars recognize the need for qualitative inquiry as a way to delve into "the personal 'lifeworlds' . . . and the range of social interpretations of events" (Ashworth, 2003, p. 4). The fields of social work and journalism are naturals for qualitative inquiry and have developed literatures and courses to hone skills and goodness criteria (Morse, 2003; Shaw, 2003; Shaw & Ruckdeschel, 2002). Ninety-five percent of the articles submitted to an English-teaching journal in a 5-year period were qualitative in nature (Smagorinsky, 2007). Other fields may still see only the rare one-per-year qualitative publication.

Probably the best strategy for demonstrating the value of your proposed qualitative study is to share copies of important qualitative handbooks, textbooks (such as this one!), and journal articles from your own or similar fields with a possibly skeptical committee member or reviewer. While some (quantitative) sociologists might still challenge the understandings of professional enculturation in the classic studies *Boys in White* (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961) and *The Silent Dialogue* (Olesen & Whittaker, 1968), or see little value in the methodological carefulness demonstrated in the detailed appendices of *Work and the Family System* (Piotrkowski, 1979) or Lareau's (1989) *Home Advantage*, others would be open to learning. While some might wonder why Kanter (1977) would want to spend so much time studying one business, others would find her representation of the effects of stunted career mobility in *Men and Women of the Corporation* valuable for individuals, women and minorities, and personnel managers, too. You may find more recent examples, such as Hunter's (2010) *Love in the Time of AIDS* or Doucet's (2006) *Do Men Mother?* Best of all, find a decent qualitative study on a topic closely connected to your topic. Citing such books and even showing copies of well-managed and significant qualitative studies will impress and reassure evaluators and reviewers.

Show off how well-read you are in qualitative methodological approaches, in styles of final research reports in your own discipline, and in the books and articles of prestigious and well-known scholars. This provides excellent support for arguing the value of a proposal and reassuring those who worry about whether it can be done. Precedents are useful, too, for demonstrating that conducting qualitative inquiry is a viable career choice for a budding academic. Academic presses are more likely to be open to qualitative publications in the following fields: African studies, anthropology, art history, Asian studies, classical studies, cultural studies, European history, film, fine arts, gender studies, geography, Jewish studies, Latin American studies, law, linguistics, literary studies, Middle Eastern studies, music, natural history, philosophy, photography, political science, religious studies, science, sociology, and women's studies (Wolcott, 2009). Ironically, even as the federal government devalues qualitative genres, universities are advertising professorial positions for teaching them!

■ Envisioning the Final Report, the Dissertation, or the Book

As we showed in Chapter 8, data analysis and writing are intertwined: “Writing gives form to the researcher’s clumps of carefully categorized and organized data” (Glesne, 2005, p. 173). Make choices at the proposal stage about what modalities you will use for the final reporting. For dissertations, this is typically done by outlining the chapters to be included in the final document. For funded research proposals, reporting may entail periodic written reports as well as conferences, newsletters, documentary films, or exhibitions. But what would be the best ways to present a study of boys’ body image in locker room spaces or one of teen “sexting” (as in Kehler & Atkinson, 2013, and Ringrose & Harvey, 2013, respectively)? Researchers working in artistic genres often present alternative, experimental formats for presenting and re-presenting their findings. Thus, theater skits, poetry, and multimedia presentations could all form the “final product” of work in these genres, as we have noted. Despite interest in alternative dissemination strategies and reporting formats, however, the written report remains the primary mode for reporting the results of research.

Organization and Writing Styles

So what are the acceptable writing styles for qualitative studies? What are ways of balancing description, analysis, and interpretation? Too often, the first start is a muddle, then “balancing description and interpretation, noting that ‘endless description becomes its own muddle.’ . . . Description provides the skeleton frame for analysis that leads to interpretation” (Patton, 2002, p. 503).

Genre dictates particular approaches to presentation. Generally, in the more explicitly descriptive life history, the author presents one person’s account of his life, framing that description with an analysis of the social significance of that life. Ethnographies and case studies are reports of data gathered through multiple methods, typically in-depth interviews and participant observation, where the participants’ perspectives are presented and their worldviews provide the thematic structure for the report. Some relate practice (the reality of social phenomena) to theory; descriptive data are summarized and then linked to more general theoretical constructs. The most theoretical studies aim primarily to explore and add to and challenge theory. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) conducted one such study of institutions for individuals with severe cognitive challenges. The sociological theory on institutionalization and the symbolic management of conditions in total institutions tries to build theory with data from several types of institutions gathered under a variety of research conditions.

In his well-known work *Tales of the Field*, Van Maanen (1988) identifies three different genres in qualitative writing. *Realist tales*, the most easily recognized, display a realistic account of a culture and are published in journals or as scholarly monographs in a third-person voice with a clear separation between the researcher and the researched. Established by the grandparents of ethnography—Margaret Mead, William Foote Whyte, Howard Becker, and Branislaw Malinowski—this tradition set the standards and criteria for credibility, quality, and respectability in qualitative work. Van Maanen views these as frequently “flat, dry and sometimes unbearably dull” (p. 48).

Confessional tales are highly personalized accounts with “mini-melodramas of hardships endured in fieldwork” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 73). This genre aims to display the author’s powers of observation and the discipline of good field habits to call attention to the ways building cultural description is part of social science. Powdermaker’s (1966) *Stranger and Friend* is a classic example of this genre.

In *impressionist tales*, the field-worker displays his own experiences as a sort of autoethnography. Bowen’s (1964) work provides a classic example; more current ones include Krieger (1985) and Thorne (1983). The separation of the researcher from the researched is blurred in this genre, and the tale is told through the chronology of fieldwork events, drawing attention not only to the culture under study but also to the experiences that were integral to the cultural description and interpretation.

Considerations of your positionality, ethics, and political stance affect how you will write a report. You may choose to present many truths or multiple perspectives, or claim to identify a single truth. Choosing to say, "I interpreted this event" rather than "The data revealed . . ." must be a clear decision. Postmodern and feminist discussions help researchers clarify such decisions. Writing *your* truth about others' lives is an assertion of power and can violate earlier claims about working ethically and sensitively with participants (Lather, 1991; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997).

A useful listing of criteria for judging well-done and well-written dissertations is provided by Piantanida and Garman (1999) and includes the following:

- Integrity—provides "a well-reasoned connection between how the inquiry was conducted and the knowledge generated from it" (p. 147)
- Verité—presents "evidence that the researcher has . . . a mind-set conducive to an authentic enquiry" (p. 147)
- Rigor—shows "carefulness, precision and elegance of the researcher's thinking" (p. 149)
- Utility—is "presented in ways that are useful to the intended audience" (p. 152)
- Vitality—creates "a vicarious sense of the phenomenon and context of the study" (p. 152)
- Aesthetics—makes connections to universals, to the spiritual
- Ethics—shows a strong, intimate bond of trust and ethical sensibility

Some dissertation writers will be excused if they have difficulty with aesthetics, admittedly, but the other criteria are essential elements in a worthy dissertation report.

What quotes or illustrations should the researcher include? One answer is, choose one that is very similar to 10 others you have but sounds the most natural. Help for this decision can be found in guidelines for reporting interview quotes. In anticipating the "look of a final report, thinking ahead to ways data will be interspersed with explanation and context," Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, pp. 279–280) provide useful guidelines:

- Quotes should be related to the general text.
- Quotes should be contextualized.
- Quotes should be interpreted.
- There should be a balance between quotes and text.
- The quotes should be short.
- Use only the best quotes.
- Interview notes should generally be rendered into a written style.
- There should be a simple signature system for the editing of quotes.

While these guidelines refer to interviews, they can help you consider how to present any kind of data. There are many styles of presentation, so you will need to develop your own—one that suits your genre, audience, and writing abilities.

On a very different note, the insights of Flyvbjerg (2001) urge research report writers to push toward pragmatic and action-oriented writing and to consider their values with reference to praxis. He draws from Aristotle's **phronesis**, which requires an "interaction between the general and the concrete; it requires consideration, judgment, and choice . . . experience" (p. 57) and is about intellectual virtue, above and beyond technical know-how. It requires deep pondering of questions such as, "Where are we going?" "Is this desirable?" and "What should be done?" so that your reporting is much more than a straightforward objective social science report. Such pondering is especially poignant when, for example, conducting research on marginalized or historically or presently colonized communities, where, too often, research is conducted that benefits the researcher—perhaps you—but results in few positive outcomes for the researched. Dunbar (2008) reported a quote from a study on Aboriginals: "Every time research is done a piece of my culture is erased" (p. 91).

Methods of Representation

Various ways of representing within specific genres are detailed in the next few sections. All begin with the assumption that research must begin in natural settings and incorporate sociopolitical contexts; they may use the full array of data collection strategies, but their typical reporting formats are often quite different.

Narratives, Life Histories, Ethnographies, and Case Study Representation

Various forms of narratives and life histories are often represented through a focus on one person but often are presented in the context of a much wider sampling and data collection from other people. For example, the rich description focusing on Delilah, in Sandy's (2014) study of homelessness, is actually a report of a study with many more participants. Reports of research on a specific organization, program, or process (or some set of these) are often called case studies (Yin, 2014); those with an explicit grounding in cultural anthropology are ethnographies. In fact, ethnographies can be seen as special instances of case studies. Ethnographies and case study reports, replete with historical, document, and artifact analysis, interviewing, and some forms of observation or participant observation, have a rich tradition. Community studies, organizational research, and program evaluations document the illustrative power of research that focuses in depth and in detail on specific instances of a phenomenon. Ethnographies and case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more traditional analytic reporting formats. A case study or ethnographic report may use just one setting—maybe a village or corporation—that is selected for explicit reporting from those within a larger study.

Mixed-Methods Reporting

Most case studies and ethnographies use multiple data collection methods. In representing the findings in a final report, decisions are made about how much of the observational data and interview quotes will be used, and if there was a survey or content analysis with numerical findings, how much emphasis they will have in the reporting. As with any study using more than one method, decisions have to be made about which set of findings will be foregrounded. Should themes from interviews be highlighted, supplemented by observational findings? Vice versa? These decisions shape how the reader engages with the material; therefore, careful thought should go into how to present which findings as the foreground, which as supplement, and how they relate to one another.

But we make a distinction between the case study that uses multiple sources of data and mixed-methods studies. Mixed-methods studies are designed with the overt plan to decide whether the quantitative or qualitative data collection phase of the research will dominate. Several excellent texts are devoted to describing "how-tos" of mixed-methods studies. See, for example, Creswell and Kuckartz (2012), and Creswell and Plano Clark (2010).

Action Research Representation

Action research, or the more emancipatory participatory action research, often relies on questions or inquiries that are collaboratively developed. Since the goal of much of this work is improvement (action research) or transformation (participatory action research), there may be no "final report" per se. In fact, a report is often less important than the process that leads to improvement or transformation. Since the researcher's role is often that of a facilitator who expands the questions through consultation, problem posing, and knowledge of existing literature, the report is less about "findings" and more about lessons learned and changes made. Although action research follows the traditions of systematic inquiry, the flexible, innovative, and evolving data collection strategies may shift as the inquiry proceeds (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Noffke & Somekh, 2009; Selener, 1997; Stringer, 2007). A written report may be collaboratively produced, depending on the interests and needs of participants. Frequently, short oral reports or displays of lessons learned in photo montages, exhibitions, or documentary films are preferred. Since the design is cyclical and very responsive and flexible on purpose, the researcher-as-collaborator may be only one of several authors of any report or mode of representing what has been learned and accomplished.

Because action research is fundamentally determined by participants—for their own uses—rather than by the scholarly needs of the researcher, the reporting should be true to that guiding principle. Reporting, whatever form it takes, has a built-in relevance. Usefulness to participants may be more important than methodological rigor. The researcher, as participant, may become a trusted insider with access seldom possible in more traditional observer roles. Often, action researchers take an activist, critical, and emancipatory stance, using the research process as an empowering event in an organization or community (Cancian & Armstead, 1992; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1970; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; World Health Organization, 2011).

Researchers hope that their reports will contribute to societal improvement, either directly in action and participatory approaches or indirectly by enhancing policy or programmatic decisions. (See the discussion of a study's potential significance in

Chapter 2.) Choosing participatory action research, however, can be an ideological stance—a determination to try to change the world in direct ways—as Vignette 31 illustrates.

Vignette 31 Planning Reporting for Qualitative Participatory Evaluation

Research design and data collection strategies can be structured to facilitate the active participation of the individuals being researched. An example of this is the work of Paul Castelloe, a graduate student in social work who designed a participatory evaluation study of the Learning Together program in North Carolina (Castelloe & Legerton, 1998). The program was designed to serve two purposes: (1) to increase the school preparation of children, from ages 3 to 5, with no other preschool experience and (2) to strengthen their caregivers' capacity to provide education and development support.

Paul designed his research project with a democratic philosophy to create an evaluation process committed to sharing power with the research participants. Participatory action research brings the individuals being studied into the research process. With his interest in grassroots change and democratic processes, Paul planned to use data collection techniques designed to include individuals at all levels (such as those traditionally silenced in a study, the individuals whom a policy is supposed to help—caregivers and students).

He planned to teach the program staff and community members the skills required to conduct an evaluation, and he would serve as facilitator and "colaborer" in the collaborative evaluation process. The primary data collection techniques selected were in-depth interviews, observational methods, and focus-group interviews. Paul developed interview questions in collaboration with program administrators, program staff, and community members, and asked them to provide feedback on data transcripts.

Even in the final report, he and the community participants determined how and when reporting would take place, strengthening the democratic principles embedded in the genre.

Artistic Forms or Presentation

Arts-based or arts-informed research may be used both as a data collection method and to represent findings, as we discussed in Chapter 7. The appeal comes particularly from the power to evoke emotions and alternative forms of understanding (Pink, 2012). Within this specialized genre, portraiture was pioneering work, combining artistic sensibilities with case studies (see Dixson, 2005; Lightfoot, 1985; Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Emerging modes of representation include collage, poetry, and photographic collections as visual narratives of a study's findings (Butler-Kisber, 2010). At times, presentations are considered experiments, and criteria for judging such presentations are based on aesthetic rather than social science criteria. "Found poetry is the rearrangement of words, phrases and sometimes whole passages that are taken from other sources and reframed as poetry” (p. 84), and generated poetry is created from nuggets of images and words from data.

Similarly, collage and photography exhibits are created as ways of evoking the feeling of phenomena. Photo-elicitation methods for both data collection and presentation are a powerful way to embed sounds, images of context, and emotion. In one example, the report of a study of autism included numerous pictures showing the child participants choosing pictograms that portray emotional states from anxious to neutral to happy (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Eisner is the grandfather of such experimentation, which clearly requires materials, training, imagination, and talents that are seldom nurtured in the typical social scientist’s graduate courses. It took imagination to evaluate a gardening program for fifth graders using PhotoVoice (Sands, Reed, Harper & Shar, 2009). Clearly, such approaches as representations of qualitative studies are open to challenge when the usual criteria of goodness are applied, but they hold promise as expansions of the drier 200-page report.

Performance Ethnography as Representation

Performance ethnography is the “staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes” (Alexander, 2005, p. 411) in which culture is represented in performed, embodied ways rather than exclusively textual ones. The notion of performance comes from the idea that cultural materials and understandings can be presented as drama, with the attendant scripts, props, sets, costumes, and movement. Thus, representation in performance ethnography is not only a text (the ethnography, the script) but also an embodied, transient depiction of cultural knowledge in a performative or dramatic form, such as a staged production, artwork, dance, storytelling, street theater performance, or film (Conrad, 2008). Recent writing about performance ethnography, however, asserts its critical, liberatory potential. Some, but not all, of the work in this genre is politically and practically allied with the principles of critical pedagogy (Alexander, 2005).

Representation in Autoethnography

Autoethnography takes up some of the challenges offered by performance ethnography to disturb and challenge traditional notions of representation in qualitative research. Expressing her work and political stances through poetry, Holman Jones (2005) notes that autoethnography “overlaps with, and is indebted to, research and writing practices in anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary criticism, journalism, and communication . . . to say nothing of our favorite storytellers, poets, and musicians” (p. 765).

Representation in autoethnography may take a traditional form such as text, often closely resembling a research report in which the author and his voice are central to the narrative. Other forms may be poetry or a theatrical performance or musical production. Representation in autoethnography is presenting one's own story with the implied or explicit assertion that such personal narrative instructs, disrupts, incites to action, and calls into question politics, culture, and identity. In one example, the representation includes a discussion of "my awareness and developing Asperger's syndrome through my personal narratives" (Hughes, 2012, p. 95) and of how "at the university, small talk, chit chat, and conversation fillers were often, to me, a complete waste of time" (p. 99). Often, efforts are made to directly link the personal experience to larger issues cited in previous literature. In this genre, the traditional validity criteria do not apply: "Validity means that a work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what was presented could be true" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 282).

As examples of writing strategies, Vignettes 32 and 33 depict the challenges and considerations the researchers brought to writing up their reports. Vignette 32 shows how analysis and writing are interwoven throughout a study, and Vignette 33 comes from a study of incest in which the challenges of writing were substantial.

Although we have discussed ethics frequently, we must revisit them now in discussing the plan for the final report. Even while managing the entry and data collection with deep concern for ethics, new issues can arise as you plan out a reporting format. But plan you must: No researcher should get toward the end of his project and be shocked with the realization that, in the act of publishing, he will do harm. Vignette 33 presents the ethical dilemmas of reporting on taboo topics.

Vignette 33 reveals a highly ethical sensitivity to the participants of the study. Kiegelmann (1997) honored their life stories and voices throughout the process. This involved several iterations: writing biographies, sending them to the participants for commentary, incorporating their feedback, sending the full draft for further commentary, and incorporating the women's final comments in the final document. Although this process was time-consuming, it expressed Kiegelmann's deep commitment to the women and to the ethical conduct of her study.

Philosophical inquiry and shifting paradigms highlight the subjectivity of the researcher and his relationship to the research process. Placing analytic memos, methodological notes, or interludes in the report makes these processes transparent. Traditions of science, in the past, dictated a rather lifeless final report. Qualitative inquiry, however—usually full of earthy, evocative quotes and titles and subtitles derived from some combination of scholarly wording and colloquial quotes—allows researchers to be creative. Thus, a final report on the care of elderly veterans might be titled *Veteran Care: “Who Cares About Us?”* and thus provoke more curiosity than would a typical report.

Advisors of graduate students do not relish providing their doctoral candidates constant advising on multiple drafts and sustained **handholding** through the analysis and writing. Among Wolcott’s (2009) many hints, we especially like the one where he tells his students to write as if he were looking over their shoulder.

As you ponder over the “look” of your final report, consider what to include and what format to use, based on how you imagine the report will be used. Studies funded by a foundation, government agency, or business probably have prescribed formats. Final dissertations usually mimic formats derived from positivist traditions but are altered so the “findings” chapters are lengthy, and there may be numerous chapters named to represent two or three major themes. Studies written with the intention of finding a publisher will use formats that publishers deem appealing—whether for airport kiosk marketing or scholarly libraries. Scholars with long track records may be more playful and creative. Robert Coles’s (1977) series on children of crisis includes children’s crayon drawings, along with rich description. He managed to convince the publishers that these data were crucial to the report and also that the 500-page books were worth the cost. He even said, in writing about his method of writing, “I tried to embrace, within my limits, the tradition of the social essay. . . . I suppose this book is a mixture of clinical observation, narrative description, oral history, psychological analysis, social comment” (p. 59). With his scholarly track record, he could get away with this, but few dissertation students can do the same. Regarding the format for reporting, our bottom-line advice is that it depends on what works best for your desired audience and for the purpose and passion that drove your research intentions from the beginning!

It may seem presumptuous, at the proposal stage, to be planning for the “look” of the final report; however, all aspects of the proposal have implications for the final report. Decisions about the genre, “do-ability,” your role, ethics, the setting, data collection, management and analysis strategies—all affect the final report. To plan for that writing, think ahead—using how you will begin to make the big leap from doing research to the actual writing. Wolcott’s (2009) simple advice is still useful: Begin with description, or begin with method, but *do* begin! Whenever the challenges seem insurmountable, pause, walk in the woods, and remember the delight of conducting research that engages with real people, as we see in this last vignette. Vignette 34 was originally written by Kirandeep Sirah and has been adapted by Marshall and Dalyot.

Vignette 32 Interspersing Reporting and Analysis

Often, data analysis and writing up the research are thought of and portrayed as two discrete processes. Increasingly, however, researchers are using the writing up of research as an opportunity to display, in the body of the report, how data analysis evolved. Gerstl-Pepin (1998) accomplished this quite elegantly in her study of educational reform.

Gerstl-Pepin constructed a theoretical framework to critically examine whether an arts-based educational reform movement in North Carolina functioned as a counterpublic sphere (Fraser, 1997) and led to democratically structured educational policy and reform. Although interested in examining theoretical issues concerning the prospects for democratically structured reform, she was also interested in telling the story of the reform movement.

To balance these two interests, Gerstl-Pepin decided to take an approach similar to that of Lather and Smithies (1997) and weave her shifts in thinking about research questions into the body of the text. Her interest in including the researcher's evolving thought processes arose out of an awareness of the shifting research paradigms that highlight the subjectivity of the researcher. While analyzing the data, Gerstl-Pepin encountered teachable moments in the research process in which her conceptualization and understanding of the research developed and shifted. Within the narrative story about the reform movement, she included these pieces as separate boxes of text and titled them "Interludes: Reflections on the Research." They were included at various points in the narrative, depicting shifts in her thinking process and research focus. These pieces served as stories within the story and were intended to allow the reader to participate not only in the story of the reform process but also in the researcher's discovery process.

Vignette 33 Talking Taboo: Continuing the Research Relationship

During analysis and reporting of the data, Kiegelmann (1997) was inventive with methods to protect her research participants. This is always important, but for her research on brother–sister incest she was particularly attuned to how the participants had trusted her with emotion-laden and highly sensitive aspects of their lives. One had even shared her childhood journal, in which she had written just minutes after the incest occurred. Kiegelmann and the participants had become a support group, continuing to meet after the research was completed.

As the data analysis proceeded, Kiegelmann identified themes and noted the range of nuances in the study participants' talk. Previous literatures guided her, especially writings about girls' views of femininity, of "good girls," and of girls' ways of knowing. Three voice clusters emerged: (1) silent voices, (2) embodied voices, and (3) naming voices. Anticipating the need to report, to have validity checks, and to regain permission for using their words, Kiegelmann created a biography for each woman participant and sent it to her, inviting her comments. She received feedback and commentary from them, which she incorporated into her writing. As the research neared completion, she sent a draft of the full study to all of them. Each participant used this opportunity to offer more details but not to change the interpretations. Furthermore, she invited the participants to write statements directly to the readers of the research, giving the women the final word. Thus, the trusting relationships were maintained beyond the time of the study, the study's truthfulness was increased, and the researcher avoided taking away the participants' power and control over the representation of their own lives.

Vignette 34 Finding “The Expressive Realm” With Johnny

Johnny is an elderly man who was staying at Chapel Hill’s homeless shelter for men, a community I have steadily come to know through my year-long participatory research. In contrast to surface conversations with people in my liberal academic community, my conversations with Johnny developed as honest cultural exchanges. Eventually, I met with Johnny at the shelter. Sitting outside with cigarettes, this became our shared space, neither fully outside nor inside, allowing us to just sit and share time together. In this liminal space, we talked about the world around us, our personal circumstances and struggles.

He’d speak about his knee disability, his desire to move to a different community, and his preference for distancing himself from the shelter and its residents. Johnny told me about his past and about the era when he “jammed to Clapton,” the food he cooked, the family and friends he once had, and about his life in the past and the life he wanted for his future. In time, Johnny’s speech seemed to become more natural, even exuberant. He began to share funny moments from his life. One day, as I turned off my recording of a more formal interview, he started to tell me how the trees nearby reminded him of a place up in the Black Mountains. I loved how we swapped stories about mountains and parks in Scotland, my home. We had moved beyond ethnographer and consultant, and in one of these conversations, he called me his only friend.

From that moment it became evident that these conversations were moving beyond just a dialogic experience for both of us. I began to listen more attentively to Johnny, allowing myself to take fuller notice of the ways these conversations were revealing more than just answers to my questions. Johnny’s stories seemed to offer a way for him to talk through his personal challenges, and perhaps counter the internalized stigma of homelessness. They became a way to help bring into the expressive realm of conversation a construction of possible identities; new and possible life directions were beginning to unfold for both of us.

With Johnny, I discovered how ethnography itself can be like a homeless story—a venturing into the unknown, taking on the challenge of becoming accepted, a process of finding place—and therefore one that requires a kind of homelessness on the part of the ethnographer. I realize that Johnny’s stories were not entirely unlike the stories of other people I meet—people with homes, students and professors alike. From that point I began to see ethnographic journeys as a means to earn validation with those whom I engage. There Johnny taught me that our consultants are not only our greatest teachers but also primary audiences in any study of group.

On Thanksgiving Day, I went to find Johnny at the shelter to share in the Thanksgiving meal. No Johnny. Someone said that he had gone back up to the mountains. I felt a sense of personal loss. I can only hope that wherever he is, my friend has now found home.

■ A Final Word

The process of developing a qualitative research proposal—the revisions necessitated by the interrelatedness of the sections—will create a final product that convinces readers and develops a rationale for your own and others' guidance. The proposal justifies the selection of qualitative methods and demonstrates your ability to conduct the study. The writing and creating processes will help you develop a logic and a plan that will guide and direct the research. The time, thought, and energy expended in writing a proposal will reap rewards. A proposal that is theoretically sound, methodologically ethical, efficient, and thorough will be impressive. A proposal that demonstrates your capacity to articulate the arguments for "goodness" to conduct the fieldwork and to find sound, credible, and convincing ways to analyze and present the research will truly prepare you for your research endeavor.

Prepare a great proposal, and get ready to plunge into your research. You will be ready for your journey into the delightful and challenging "disciplined messiness" (Lather, 2009, p. 10) of qualitative inquiry.

Dialogue Between Authors

“*Catherine:* Last week I sat through a long presentation about a 3-year study that focused on the achievement outcomes from an intervention training literacy teachers. After exquisite detailing of the careful measurements, they found good outcomes in Years 1 and 2 but not in Year 3. Their concluding statement was, “We were left wondering why teachers slacked off in that last year; I guess we should have been observing in the classrooms and interviewing teachers along the way.” I smiled to myself, but grimly, thinking: “Anyone who knew anything about school cultures and had a smidgen of qualitative insights could have fixed that from the get-go.”

Gretchen: A great example! It’s often the case that hindsight is 20/20, but with really solid proposals, we hope that our students are ahead of the game. I have heard, time and again, that rereading DQR (hopefully the most recent edition!) began to make sense as a student was thinking through what the proposal is meant to accomplish. That and several in-depth conversations have led to solid proposals, more often than not. I guess our work on this book over the years has been valuable.”

Further Reading

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Key Concepts

confirmability
credibility
criteriology
critical friend
dependability
emic perspectives
handholding
liberatory potential
multiple understandings
phronesis
politics of knowledge
proposal defense
replicability
respectability
running record
“scientifically based research”
second decision span in generalizing
transferability
triangulation
“truth value”

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Author Index

Adams, T. E., 279
Ajodhia-Andrews, A., 161
Alemán, E., 264
Alexander, B. K., 17, 24, 278, 279
Alibali, M. W., 189
Allen, C., 25
Altman, D., 27
Alvarez, R., 110
Alvesson, M., 106
Anderson, A. L., 219, 220
Anderson, G. L., 24, 277
Anderson, J., 151
Anfara, V. A., Jr., 264
Argyris, C., 74
Armstead, C., 277
Ashcroft, B., 21
Ashworth, P., 273
Atkinson, M., 274
Atkinson, P., 15, 16, 23, 183
Atkinson, R., 156
Auerbach, C., 218

Bâ, M., 24
Ball, S. J., 79
Banks, M., 185
Bargar, R. R., 65, 68, 75
Barone, T., 20, 24, 184, 187, 188
Barroso, J., 272
Barthes, R., 30
Basit, T., 132, 217, 224, 225
Baucom, D. H., 189
Baym, N., 181
Bechkoff, J., 30, 31
Becker, H. S., 273
Bell, D., 27
Bennie, A., 26
Bennis, W. G., 160
Berelson, B., 166

Berger, M. T., 121
Berman, R., 161
Bhana, D., 28
Bhattacharya, K., 56
Bignante, E., 186
Biklen, S. K., 47, 123
Birdwhistell, R. L., 190
Bishop, R., 21
Bloomberg, L., 69
Boal, A., 24
Bochner, A. P., 24, 279
Bogdan, R., 119, 274
Bogdan, R. C., 47, 123
Borg, W. R., 16
Borgatti, S., 19, 223
Bousefield, L., 158
Bowen, E. S., 121, 274
Boylorn, R. M., 24
Brainard, J., 52
Brantlinger, E. A., 141, 142, 145
Brice Heath, S., 168
Briggs, J., 75
Brinkmann, S., 47, 147, 148, 275
Brissett, N. O. M., 165
Bronfenbrenner, U., 80
Brown, K. M., 264, 269
Brown, L., 148, 151
Browne, A., 81
Bruner, J. S., 18
Brydon-Miller, M., 26
Buchanan, E. A., 183
Burda, A., 152
Burrell, G., 41
Burris, M. A., 186
Busch, C., 166
Busher, H., 151, 181
Bustelo, M., 79, 260
Butler, J., 26
Butler-Kisber, L., 20, 184, 187, 188, 278

Campbell-Nelson, K., 71

Campos, J., 191
Cancian, F. M., 277
Cannella, G. S., 29
Capra, F., 84
Carspecken, P. F., 268
Casey, M. A., 154
Castelloe, P., 277
Cautherly, J., 186
Ceja, M., 18
Chaplin, E., 188
Chapman, T. K., 28
Charmaz, K., 19, 215
Chase, S. E., 22, 108, 209
Chaudhry, L. N., 131
Cho, J., 48, 49
Christians, C. G., 128
Clair, J. F., 102
Clandinin, D. J., 157, 158
Clarricoates, K., 28
Coffey, A., 183
Cohen-Mitchell, J. B., 211
Cole, A. L., 156, 187
Coles, R., 281
Collins, P. H., 28
Connelly, F. M., 157, 158
Connor, S., 21
Conrad, D. H., 279
Conwell, C., 157
Cooper, H. M., 86
Copp, M. A., 118, 130
Corbett, H. D., 268
Corbin, J., 19, 47, 214, 215, 223
Corson, D., 189
Crabtree, B. F., 69, 70, 215, 216
Crenshaw, K. W., 22
Creswell, J. W., 16, 19, 46, 47, 153, 277
Cui, Y., 30, 31

Dalyot, K., 12, 116, 122, 282
Davidson, J., 180
Davidson, R. J., 191

Davies, D., 51
Davis, A., 109
Davis, J. H., 28, 278
Deemer, D. K., 264
de Gregorio, S., 180
Delamont, S., 15, 16, 23, 132
Delaney, K. J., 159, 160
Delgado, R., 22
Dempster, P. G., 181, 182, 183, 209
Denzin, N. K., 2, 15, 16, 21, 24, 110, 124, 180, 196, 278
de Waal, F., 191
DeWalt, B. R., 143
DeWalt, K. M., 143
Dey, I., 229
Dicks, B., 183
Dixson, A. D., 28, 278
Dobbert, M. L., 109
Dodd, J., 51
Dollard, J., 156
Donmoyer, R., 48
Donnor, J., 22
Doppler, J., 53, 54
Doucet, A., 273
Douglas, J. D., 151
Dunbar, C., 276
Duncan, J. K., 65, 68, 75
Durrheim, K., 148, 151

Eisner, E., 20, 24, 184, 187, 188
Eisner, E. W., 17, 158
Ekman, P., 191
Ellingson, L. L., 46, 50
Elliott, J., 158
Ellis, C., 24, 25, 279
Emerson, R. M., 145
Esposito, N., 210
Everhart, R. B., 24

Fahmi, K., 56
Fairclough, N., 25
Fals-Borda, O., 277

Faris, R., 208
Fielding, N. G., 223
Figenschou, T. U., 160
Fine, G. A., 162
Fine, M., 23
Firestone, W. A., 268
Flanders, N. A., 189
Flick, U., 30, 47
Flicker, S., 159
Flinders, D. J., 260
Flores, L. Y., 163
Flores, S. Y., 24
Flyvbjerg, B., 19, 20, 275
Forester, J., 168
Forgione, P., 247
Foster, M., 163
Fothergill, A., 154
Foucault, M., 25
Fraser, N., 279
Freire, P., 26, 277
Fretz, R. I., 145
Friend, R. A., 28
Friesen, W. V., 191
Frisoli, P. S., 26, 29, 30, 71
Furman, R., 185

Gall, J. P., 16
Gall, M. D., 16
Galletta, A., 150
Ganesh, T. G., 188
Gannon, S., 30
Garcia, A. C., 30, 31
Gardner, B. B., 109
Gardner, M. R., 109
Garman, N. B., 275
Gaskell, J., 24
Gatson, S. N., 181, 182
Geer, B., 104, 111, 273
Geertz, C., 10
Gelman, S. A., 28
Gerstl-Pepin, C. I., 56, 246, 279, 280

Gillam, L., 51, 58
Gilligan, C., 192
Given, L. M., 229
Gladwell, M., 190, 191
Glaser, B., 18, 19, 222
Glazier, J. A., 101
Glesne, C., 145, 273
Goldman, S. R., 189
Goode, W. J., 226
Gough, S., 132
Graciano, M., 189
Grasseni, C., 188
Gray, A., 29, 30
Green, A., 23
Green, C., 161
Green, J. L., 26, 189
Greene, S. M., 161
Greenwald, J., 71
Grey, A., 29
Griffin, C., 28
Griffiths, G., 21
Grumet, M. R., 158
Guba, E. G., 26, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 100, 225, 261, 263
Gubrium, A. C., 159
Guillemin, M., 51, 58
Gunzenhauser, M. G., 56

Hall, B., 26
Hall, E. T., 191
Hammersley, M., 15, 16, 23, 268
Hammonds-White, S., 247
Haraway, D., 44
Harding, S., 22, 268
Harper, D., 186
Harper, K., 278
Harry, B., 215
Harvey, L., 274
Henderson, A., 188
Herr, K., 24, 277
Herr, R. S., 28
Hill, A. I., 159

Hill, D. A., 28
Hill, M., 161
Hine, C., 31, 181
Hobbs, J., 189
Hoffman, B., 75
Hollingshead, A. B., 109
Hollingsworth, S., 26
Holman Jones, S., 279
hooks, b., 23, 29
Huberman, A. M., 111, 114, 115, 218, 264
Hughes, E. C., 273
Hughes, P., 279
Hunter, M., 273
Hurdley, R., 185
Husserl, E., 17

Iannaccone, L., 147
Inman, A. G., 107

Jackson, T., 26
Jacob, E., 15, 16
Jagose, A., 26, 27
James, N., 151, 181
Jeffery, R., 208
Jewitt, C., 184
Johnson, B., 210
Jones, D. M., 71
Jones, M. C., 156
Jones, S. H., 17
Jordan, B., 188
Jørgensen, M., 25, 26

Kahn, A., 107
Kalnins, Z. G., 196, 197
Kanter, R., 106, 108, 273
Kanuha, V. K., 106
Kaplan, A., 65
Keats, P. A., 158
Keddie, N., 23
Kehler, M. D., 274
Keller, L., 111, 112

Kelly, D., 24
Kemmis, S., 26, 277
Kendall, L., 181
Kennedy, M. M., 19, 261, 270
Kerig, P. K., 189
Kiegelmann, M., 280, 281
Kinsella, E. A., 161
Kirkhart, K. E., 49, 57
Kleinman, S., 118
Klingner, J. K., 215
Knight, P. T., 221, 254
Knowles, J. G., 156, 187
Kohlberg, L., 192
Kohli, R., 71
Kong, T. S., 27
Koro-Ljungberg, M., 49
Kreiswirth, B., 168
Krieger, S., 131, 274
Krueger, R. A., 154
Kuckartz, U., 277
Kuntz, A., 57–58
Kuntz, A. M., 43, 49
Kvale, S., 43, 47, 147, 148, 275

Ladson-Billings, G. J., 22, 27
Laible, J., 29
Lambert, J., 158
Langer, C., 185
Laplenta, F., 187
Lareau, A., 273
Larkin, B., 186
Larsen, J., 24
Lather, P., 28, 49, 81, 260, 268, 275, 280, 283
Laverack, G. R., 269
Lawless, E. J., 156
Lawrence, C. R., 22
Lawrence, R., 111, 112, 114
Lawrence, R. B., 20–21, 183, 185, 187
LeCompte, M. D., 22, 110, 166
Lee, R. M., 122, 223
Lee, T. S., 70, 79

Lees, S., 28
Legerton, M., 277
Lerum, K., 124, 126, 162
Lester, J. N., 181, 182, 183, 209
Levinas, E., 23
Lewins, A., 217
Libby, W., 75
Lifton, R. J., 131
Lightfoot, S. L., 28, 278
Lincoln, Y. S., 2, 15, 16, 21, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52, 100, 180, 261, 263, 267, 275
Locke, L. F., 117, 249
Luker, K., 10, 21
Luna, R., 264
Lutz, F., 147

MacDougall, D., 188
MacIntyre, A. C., 92
MacJessie-Mbewe, S., 55, 211
Madison, D. S., 23
Maguire, P., 26, 81, 168
Mahoney, D., 27
Maloy, R., 153
Mandelbaum, D. G., 157
Mangione, T. L., 264
Mann, C., 30, 31, 108
Manning, P. K., 128
Manuelito, K. D., 29
Margolis, E., 21
Markham, A. N., 30, 31, 180, 182
Marshall, C., 22, 24, 28, 29, 47, 79, 87–88, 89, 100, 116, 122, 130, 131, 193, 212, 218, 219, 220, 225, 246, 251, 253, 260, 264, 266, 268, 282
Mason, B., 183
Mason, M., 120
Matsuda, M. J., 22
Maxwell, J. A., 8, 47
McEachen, D., 189
McKee, H. A., 183
McLaughlin, M., 168
McNiff, J., 26
McTaggart, R., 26, 277

Mehta, Z., 152
Meza, R. R., 163
Miles, M. B., 111, 114, 115, 132, 218, 264
Miller, D., 181
Miller, D. L., 46
Miller, W. L., 69, 215, 216
Mills, S., 25
Milner, H. R., 11, 56
Mishna, F., 101
Mitchell, D., 251
Mohanty, C., 28
Mooney, R. L., 75
Morales, A., 163
Morgan, G., 41
Morse, J. M., 47, 268, 273
Mosselson, J., 153
Moustakas, C. E., 118
Murillo, E. G., Jr., 24
Murnen, T. J., 189

Nanus, B., 160
Narayan, K., 272
Nathan, M. J., 189
Nespor, J., 145
Nguyen, S., 28
Nielson, J., 261
Noblit, G. W., 24
Noffke, S. E., 277
Norr, K. F., 210
Norris, S., 184

Ochiel, M., 71
O'Halloran, K. L., 184
O'Hearn-Curran, M., 145
Ojeda, L., 163
Olesen, V., 29
Olesen, V. L., 273
O'Neill, J., 154
O'Neill, M., 188
O'Toole, P., 167

Park, P., 26
Patterson, J., 193
Patton, M. Q., 15, 16, 17, 47, 85, 118, 119, 150, 153, 164, 217, 218, 222, 225, 227, 228, 260, 274
Paulus, T. M., 181, 182, 183, 209
Pauwels, L., 21
Peek, L., 154
Peräkylä, A., 18
Phaik-Lah, K., 26
Phelan, S. K., 161
Phillips, L., 25, 26
Piantanida, M., 275
Pies, C. A., 186
Pine, G., 153
Pink, S., 21, 184, 278
Piotrkowski, C. S., 273
Plano Clark, V., 277
Plummer, K., 26, 27
Polkinghorne, D. E., 18
Polsky, N., 127
Poovey, M., 1
Porter, J. E., 183
Powdermaker, H., 274
Prior, L., 29
Prusak, A., 22
Pugsley, L., 128
Putney, L. G., 26

Rabinow, P., 121
Radinsky, J., 189
Rager, K. B., 122, 130
Rahman, M. A., 277
Rallis, S. F., 2, 3, 17, 23, 41, 43, 49, 56, 58, 84, 111, 112, 150, 211, 221, 239, 241, 242, 244, 267
Ramírez, G. B., 19–20
Reardon, K., 168
Reason, P., 57
Reed, L., 278
Rex, L. A., 189
Rhyne, R., 27
Richards, L., 47, 180, 262, 263

Richards, T. J., 180
Richardson, L., 50, 68, 221
Rieger, J. H., 188
Riessman, C. K., 155, 158, 163
Ringrose, J. L., 274
Rogers, D., 193
Rogers, R., 25
Rooney, L. K., 163
Rose, G., 21, 187, 188
Rosenau, P. M., 21
Rosenberg, L., 165
Rossman, G. B., 2, 3, 17, 23, 41, 43, 47, 49, 56, 58, 80, 84, 88, 150, 208, 211, 212, 221, 239, 241, 242, 244, 262, 267, 268
Roulston, K., 152
Rousseau, C. K., 28
Rowan, J., 57
Ruckdeschel, R., 273
Ryen, A., 29, 30

Safman, R. M., 108
Sagor, R., 26
Said, E. W., 24
Saldaña, J., 213, 218, 264
Sampson, H.., 105
Sandelowski, M., 44, 272
Sands, C., 278
Sandstrom, K. L., 162
Sandy, M., 108, 276
Sanjek, R., 259
Sariyant, T., 92
Sarr, K. G., 12, 211
Saukko, P., 29, 30
Saumure, K., 229
Schatzman, L., 196, 216, 221
Schensul, J. J., 90, 110, 166
Schensul, S. L., 110, 166
Scheurich, J., 22, 79, 260, 268
Schoenfeld, A., 144
Schön, D. A., 74
Schram, T. H., 10, 15, 66, 68, 74, 88
Schwandt, T. A., 43

Scott, J. W., 28
Scott, W., 132
Seidman, I., 153
Seidman, I. E., 148, 153
Seidman, S., 26, 27
Selener, D., 277
Senge, P., 84
Seymour, W. S., 181
Sfard, A., 21
Shadduck-Hernandez, J., 81, 82, 90, 91, 167, 195
Shar, M., 278
Sharp, R., 23
Shaw, H. L., 145
Shaw, I., 273
Shimpuku, Y., 210
Shostak, M., 179
Silver, C., 217
Silverman, D., 18, 267
Silverman, S. J., 117, 249
Silverstein, L. B., 218
Silverstein, M., 26
Singal, N., 208
Singer, M., 189
Sirah, K., 282
Skrla, L., 28
Slater, D., 181
Smagorinsky, P., 273
Small, B. B., 154
Smith, B. A., 184
Smith, C. S., 208
Smith, D. E., 70, 79
Smith, J. K., 264
Smith, M., 105
Smith, W. A., 18
Smithies, C., 81, 280
Sobal, J., 108
Solórzano, D. G., 18
Soloway, I., 127, 128
Somekh, B., 277
Soyinka, B., 183
Sparks, A., 156

Spirduso, W. W., 117, 249
Spradley, J. S., 108, 152
Stake, R. E., 19, 20
Standlee, A. I., 30, 31
Stanley, D., 184
Steadman, S., 189
Steedman, P. S., 92
Steele, J., 193
Stein, A., 26
Stephens, N., 160
Stewart, F., 30, 31
St. Pierre, E. A., 221
Strachan, J., 154
Strauss, A., 18, 19, 47, 66, 196, 214, 215, 216, 221, 222, 223
Strauss, A. L., 273
Stringer, E. T., 26, 277
Sturges, K. M., 215
Sue, D. W., 18
Sullivan, G., 20, 187, 188
Sutherland, E. H., 157
Szto, P., 185

Tate, W. F., 27
Taylor, M. G., 28
Taylor, S. J., 119, 274
Temple, B., 210
Tesch, R., 132
Tessier, S., 209
Thomas, G., 20, 102
Thorne, B., 125, 274
Tierney, W. G., 275
Tiffin, H., 21
Titchen, A., 26
Toma, J. D., 106, 124
Tong, R., 28
Trent, A., 48, 49
Tsing, A. L., 28
Tucker, B. J., 226
Tyldum, G., 51

Van Maanen, J., 274

Verloo, M., 79, 260
Villenas, S., 128
Viney, L. I., 157
Volpe, M., 69, 70

Walker, L., 186
Walters, J., 127, 128
Walters, S. D., 27
Wang, C., 186
Wang, C. C., 186
Warin, J., 161
Warren, C. A. B., 122
Wasserman, J. A., 102
Wax, R., 125, 266
Weick, K. E., 80
Weis, L., 23
Weitzman, E. A., 180, 227
Welland, T., 128
Welsh, B., 168
Wengraf, T., 148, 151, 208
Were, P., 167
Westby, C., 152
Westley, W. A., 128
Whitehead, J., 26
Whittaker, E. W., 273
Whyte, W. F., 109
Williams, M., 30
Wilson, B. L., 80, 88, 262
Wilson, S., 196
Winter, R., 193
Wirt, F., 251
Wiseman, F., 186
Witcher, C. G., 209
Wolcott, H. F., 47, 108, 124, 214, 221, 273, 281
Wortham, S., 26
Wronka, J., 79

Yeh, C. J., 107
Yihong, F., 83, 84
Yin, R. K., 19, 47, 197, 218, 276
Yosso, T. J., 18

Young, A., 210
Young, M. D., 28, 29
Young, M. F. D., 23

Zuckerman, H., 160
Zwerink, A., 181, 182

Subject Index

Academic armor, 124
Academic credibility, 267
Access
    data collection and, 104
    to elites, 160
    negotiating, 135
    sensitivity in gaining, 122–123
Accretion, 167
Action
    strategies, 223(table)
    study's significance for taking, 81–82
Action and applied research, 16
Action guide domains, 252–253(table)
Action research, 2, 26
    participatory, 26, 36, 78, 186, 264
    representing, 277–278
    suggested readings on, 36
Activist Educators (Marshall & Anderson), 220
Adolescents, conducting research with, 161–162
Agency, exercise of, 142
Alternative understandings, data analysis and, 228–230
Ambiguous Empowerment (Chase), 108
American Evaluation Association, 227
American Review of Public Administration, 69
Analyst-constructed typologies, 222, 225
Analytic categories, elements of, 223(table)
Analytic induction, 213, 229
Analytic memos, 217, 226
    writing, 221–222
Analytic procedures, 217–231
    alternative understandings, 228–230
    computer-assisted analysis, 226–228
    data coding, 218–221
    data organization, 217
    generating case summaries, categories, themes, typologies, matrices, and clusters, 222–226
    immersion in data, 217–218
    offering interpretations, 228

- use of numbers, 230
- writing analytic memos, 221–222
- writing report/representing inquiry, 230–231

Annual Review of Public Health, 69

Annual Review of Sociology, 69

Anonymity
- Internet sites and, 182–183
- participant, 126

Anthropology, visual, 185, 188

Appendices, 67(table)

Archival data, 165

Argument
- developing, 8–10
- proposal as, 11–12

Aristotle, 275

Artifacts, 143
- documents, 164–166
- ethical issues in using, 167
- material culture, 166–170
- suggested readings on, 175

Art/impressionist approach, to qualitative study goals and criteria, 45–46(table)

Artistic forms or presentation, 278

Arts, or data collection, 187–188

Arts-informed qualitative inquiry, 17, 20–21, 183, 184–185(table)
- representing, 278
- suggested readings on, 37, 202

Assumptive worlds, operative principles of, 252–253(table)

ATLAS.ti, 228

Audience, 142, 267

Audio recordings, 185(table)
- interaction analysis and, 188–190

Audit trails, 47, 230

Autobiographical element of study, 71–73

Autoethnography, 1, 15, 21, 22, 24–25, 30
- representation in, 279
- suggested readings on, 40

Avatars, 31

Axial coding, 19, 223, 226

Becker, Howard, 274

Bell, Derrick, 27
Beneficence, 52
Bias, researcher, 117–118
    limiting in interpretation, 263
Blink (Gladwell), 190–191
Book, envisioning, 273–281
Boys in White (Becker et al.), 273
Building grounded theory, 229

Calendar of research events, 245
Cartography, 188
Case studies, 3, 15, 16, 17, 19–20, 103, 274
    history in, 165
    representing, 276
    suggested readings on, 35
Case summaries, 217
    generating, 222–226
Catalytic validity, 49
Categories, 224(fig.)
    elements of, 223(table)
    generating, 222–226
    transcribing and translating and, 213
Causal conditions, 223(table)
Chaos theory, 15
Charts, 265
Children, conducting research with, 161–162, 174
Clarity, academic credibility and, 267
Classroom interaction analysis, 189–190
Clinical research, 16
Clinton, Bill, 246
Closeness of interaction, 103, 103(fig.)
Clustering, 223–225, 226
Clusters, 221
The Cocktail Waitress (Spradley & Mann), 108
Coconstructed interview, 150
Codes
    in vivo, 218, 219(table), 220
    theory-generated, 218, 219(table), 220
Coding, 218–221
    anticipating initial categories, 132
    axial, 19, 223, 226

- of notes, 213
- of observational data, 144
- open, 19, 222–223
- software and, 226

Cognitive anthropology, 15
Collaborative action research, 264
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules, 51
Collages, 278
Colonialism, critical genres and, 21
Communication, multimodal inquiry and analysis of, 184
Communities of practice, 249
Communities of support, 251
Compassion stress, 130
Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation (Bloomberg & Volpe), 69
Complexity of design, 103, 103(fig.)
Computer-assisted analysis, 226–228
Conceptual framework, 6, 67–85
- delineating study limitations, 85
- overview section, 68–69
- research questions and, 82–84
- significance and potential contributions of study, 78–82
- study purpose, 75–78
- topic introduction, 69–75

Conceptual funnel, 73, 73(fig.)
Confessional tales, 274
Confirmability, 46, 47, 262
Consent letter/forms, 52, 53, 54(fig.), 55, 56
Consequences, 223(table)
Constant comparative analysis, 213, 229
Content analysis, 166
Context, 223(table)
Contextual framework, summarizing literature review in, 87–94
Contrast questions, 152
Control, continuum between creativity and, 234
Controversy-generated agenda for research, 246
Convenience sampling, 115(table), 116
Convergence, 48
Conversational interview, 150
Conversation analysis, 18
Corroboration, 48
Counternarratives, 21

Counterstories, 28
Covert research, 119
The Crash Reel (Walker & Cautherly), 186
Creative literature review, 90–91, 92–93
Creativity, continuum between control and, 234
Credibility, 46, 47
    academic, 267
    discussion of, in proposal, 261
    of qualitative report, 260
    sampling and, 109
Crisis-generated agenda for research, 246
Criteria
    of goodness, 266
    qualitative study, 46(table)
    of soundness, 261–267
Criteriology, 267
Critical case sampling, 115(table)
Critical discourse analysis, 1, 18, 25–26
    suggested readings on, 35
Critical/ecological approach to inquiry, 70
Critical ethnography, 1, 23–24
    suggested readings on, 36–37
Critical friend, 262
Critical genres, 1, 21–23, 22(table), 65
    action research, 2, 26, 36, 277–278
    autoethnography, 1, 15, 21, 22, 24–25, 30, 40, 279
    critical discourse analysis, 1, 18, 25–26, 35
    critical ethnography, 1, 23–24, 36–37
    critical race theory and analysis, 1, 22, 27–28, 39
    cultural studies, 1, 22, 29–30, 39
    feminist theories and methodologies, 22, 28–29, 38, 156, 158, 163, 263, 268
    Internet/virtual ethnography, 2, 30–31, 37–38, 180–181, 183(fig.)
    participatory action research, 26, 36, 78, 186, 264
    queer theory and analysis, 1, 22, 26–27, 39–40, 163
    suggested readings on, 35–40
Critical legal studies, 27
Critical narrative analysis, 21–22
Critical race theory and analysis, 1, 22, 27–28
    suggested readings on, 39
Critical theory, 22, 263

  liberatory potential and, 268
  narrative inquiry and, 158
Critique of related research, 80, 86–94
Cross-cultural studies, proxemics and, 191–192
Crystallization, 50
Cultural studies, 1, 22, 29–30
  suggested readings on, 39
Culture
  ethnographic approaches, 17
  ethnographic interview and focus on, 152
  informed consent and, 55–59
  issues with translation and, 210–211
  kinesics and, 191
  life histories and, 156
  proxemics and, 191–192
  as unit of analysis, 16
Cycle of inquiry, 69, 70(fig.)

Data
  archival, 165
  coding (*see* Coding)
  historical, 165
  recording, managing, transcribing, and translating, 207–213
  relevance of, 265–266
Data analysis, 213–214
  analytic procedures (*see* Analytic procedures)
  continuum of strategies, 216(fig.)
  generic strategies, 214–217
  interspersing with reporting, 279–280
  suggested readings on, 233–234
  using computer software, 235
Data collection, 77(fig.)
  computer-mediated, 181
  data analysis and, 215–216
  sampling plan, 111, 113–117
  unobtrusive, 167
Data collection methods, 11, 141–176
  assumptions about nature of research and, 141–142, 142(table)
  challenges in using, 170(table)
  choosing, 7, 196–198
  combining methods, 195–198

  - conducting research with children and youth, 161–162, 174
  - digital storytelling, 155, 158–159, 173–174
  - dilemma analysis, 192–193, 203
  - documents, 164–166, 175
  - historical analysis, 164–166, 175
  - in-depth interviewing, 147–155, 172–173
  - interaction analysis, 188–192, 202–203
  - interviewing across differences in social identities, 162–164, 174–175
  - interviewing elites, 159–161, 174
  - life histories, 155, 156–157, 159, 173–174
  - multimodal approaches, 183–188, 201–202
  - narrative inquiry, 155, 157–158, 159, 173–174
  - objects and artifacts of material culture, 166–170, 175
  - observation, 143–147
  - overview, 141–142
  - primary methods, 141
  - rationale behind choice of, 7
  - specialized and focused, 179–180, 194(table), 195(table)
  - strengths of, 169(table)
  - using Internet and digital applications, 180–183, 200–201
  - using multiple methods, 168
- Data-gathering activity log, 214, 215(table)
- Data immersion, 217–218
- Data interpretation, 43–44, 217
  - limiting bias in, 263
- Data management, 77(fig.), 207–213, 225–226
- Data organization, 217
- Data quality, 234
- Data reduction, 217
- Data saturation, 229
- da Vinci, Leonardo, 20
- Deductive analysis, 222
- *Deep South* (Davis et al.), 109
- Defense of proposal, 270–272
- Democratic evaluation, 15
- Dependability, 46, 47, 262
- Descriptive questions, 152
- Descriptive study, 78(table)
- Design and research methods. *see* Research design and methods
- Design flexibility, 11, 196–197
- Developmental purpose, 49(table)

Dialogic interview, 150
Digital applications
    data collection and, 180–183, 201
    suggested readings on, 200–201
Digital storytelling, 152, 155, 158
    ethical issues in, 159
    suggested readings on, 173–174
Dilemma analysis, 192–193
    ethical issues, 193
    suggested readings on, 203
Direction of gaze, 142
Disconfirming evidence, searching for, 46
Discourse analysis, 18, 103
Dissertation
    criteria for judging, 275
    envisioning, 273–281
    proposal, 7
    proposal defense, 260
Dissertation research
    planning, 247–254
    resources for, 237
Distributive justice, 52
Do-ability, in qualitative research proposals, 4–5, 6
Documentary film, 277
Documents, 164–166
    ethical issues in using, 167
    suggested readings on, 175
Do Men Mother? (Doucet), 273
Dragon NaturallySpeaking, 209

Ecological psychology, 15
Editing analysis styles, 215, 216(table)
Educating Peter (film), 186
Education research, interaction analysis and, 189
Efficiency, 123–123
    of sampling method, 116
Einstein, Albert, 20
Elites
    interviewing, 159–161, 174
    ultra-elites, 160
e-mail interviewing, 151, 180, 181

e-mail requests for entry, 107, 108(table)
Emancipation, participatory action research and, 26
Emancipatory genres/studies, 65–66, 78(table)
Emic perspectives, 268
Emotions, researcher, 118, 130
Empathy, 123
Empowerment, 78
    photo-elicitation methods and, 186
Entry, 107–109
    negotiating, 120–123, 135
Entry letters and scripts, 107, 108(table)
Epoché, 153
e-Speaking, 209
Essays, literature review and, 86–87
Ethical issues/dilemmas, 126
    in all types of interviewing, 164
    anticipating, 57–58
    in arts-based data collection, 188
    in dilemma analysis, 193
    in focus-group interviews, 155
    in interaction analysis, 190
    Internet and, 31
    interviewing children and youth and, 162
    in life histories, narrative inquiry, and digital storytelling, 159
    in observation and participant observation, 146–147
    in proposal, 51
    in proxemics, 192
    qualitative research proposal and, 6, 7
    of reporting on taboo topics, 280–281
    suggested readings on, 135–136
    in transcribing and translating, 212–213
    in using documents and artifacts, 167
    in using software applications and Internet sites, 31, 182–183
    with videos and photographs, 187
Ethically important moments, 58–59
Ethical research practice, 3, 51
Ethics, 10, 51–59
    critical genres and, 23
    ethnographic fieldwork and, 127
    informed consent, 51, 54(fig.), 55–59
    institutional review boards, 51, 52–55

- power, politics, and, 128–129
- qualitative research proposal and, 5, 6
- research design and, 99, 126–129
- in sexual harassment research, 122–123
- trustworthiness and, 50–51

Ethnocentrism, 128
Ethnographic approaches, 17
Ethnographic interviewing, 152–153
- suggested readings on, 172

Ethnography, 3, 15, 16, 17, 274
- auto-, 24–25, 40
- of communication, 15
- critical, 23–24, 36–37
- film, 185
- Internet/virtual, 30–31, 37–38, 180–181
- long-term, 120–122
- mobile, 151
- performance, 24, 37, 264, 278–279
- postcritical, 24, 36–37
- representing, 276
- street, 122
- suggested readings on, 33–34

Ethnomethodology, 15–16
Ethnotheater, 264
Evernote, 181
Exercise of agency, 142
Exit strategy, 129–131
Experience, phenomenological approaches, 18
Expert opinions, literature review and, 86–87
Explanatory study, 78(table)
Explicit details
- about design and methods, 265–265
- about research questions and data relevance, 265–266

Exploratory study, 78(table)
Express Scribe, 209
External validity, 262
Extreme or deviant case sample, 115(table), 116

Feasibility, of qualitative research proposal, 4–5, 6
Feminism, 15
Feminist theories and methodologies, 22, 28–29, 263

    liberatory potential and, 268
    life histories and, 156
    multiplicity of identities and, 163
    narrative inquiry and, 158
    suggested readings on, 38
F4/F5 software, 209
Field notes, 117–118, 143, 145
    descriptive *vs.* judgmental, 265
    interview, 148, 149(fig.)
    sample, 144(fig.)
    software for, 181
Fieldwork
    ethics and, 127
    justifying, to explore organizational culture, 8–9
Film, as presentation format, 264
Film ethnography, 185
Final report
    credibility of, 260
    envisioning, 273–281, 273–282
    organization and writing styles, 274–276
    representation methods, 276–281
    writing, 230–231
Financial resources, projecting, 237, 244(table), 245
Financial support, for graduate research, 249–254
First days in the field, 104
"Fishiness," 21
Flexibility
    building into research design, 11, 100, 104
    defending research, 269–270
    role, 120
Fluidity concept, of gender, 27
Focus-group interviewing, 153–155
    suggested readings on, 173
Focusing, 74, 76(fig.)
    from open coding to, 222–223
Follow-up questions, 150
Forgione, Pat, 247
Framing argument, 10–11
Framing the research process, 74–75, 76–77(fig.)
Funding agencies, matching significance to needs and priorities of, 82
Funding opportunities, research question and, 79

Gantt chart, 240–241(table), 245
Gatekeepers, entry and, 107
Gender, feminist theory and, 28
Gender studies, 23
Gender Trouble (Butler), 26
Generalizability, 43, 47
    discussion of study's, 261–262, 266
Generalizing, second decision span in, 261–262
Genre, presentation style and, 274
Gesture research, 189
Global positioning systems, locating observations in space using, 181
Goals, qualitative studies', 45(table)
Government funding agencies, 246–247, 260
GPSLogger, 181
Graduate research
    financing, 249–254
    handholding and, 281
    materials needed for, 250
    mentors and peers, 248–249
    personal costs, 250–251
    planning, 247–254
    services needed for, 250
    time on small scale, 249
Graphic objects, 185(table)
Graphics, 265–266
Grounded theory, 15, 16, 17, 18–19, 213
    building, 229
    suggested readings on, 34–35
Guiding hypotheses, 88, 92

Handholding, 281
Health research, 108
Heinz dilemma, 192
Hermeneutics, 18
Herschel, Caroline, 20
High School (Wiseman), 186
Historical analysis, 165–166
Historical data, 165
Historical method, 16
Historical typologies, 15–17, 16(table)
Holistic ethnography, 15

Home Advantage (Lareau), 273
Homogenous sampling, 115(table), 116
Human ethnology, 15
Hypermedia, 183, 184, 185(table)
Hypotheses, guiding, 88, 92
Hypothesized model, 266
Hypothetical, researcher-generated dilemma, 192

Identity(ies)
    intersectionalities of, 28
    interviewing across differences in social, 162–164
    researcher, 117–118
Identity theory, multiplicity of identities and, 163
Ideological armor, 124
Illustrations, inclusion of, 275
Immersion in data, 217–218
iMovie, 158
Impressionist tales, 274
In-depth interviewing, 102, 147–155
    across social identities, 162–164, 174–175
    conducting research with children and youth, 161–162, 174
    e-mail, 151, 180, 181
    ethical issues in all types, 164
    ethnographic, 152–153, 172
    focus-group, 153–155, 173
    interviewing elites, 159–161, 174
    phenomenological, 153, 172–173
    relationship between interviewer and interviewee, 148
    suggested readings on, 172
Indigenous typologies, 222
Individual
    life histories and focus on, 156
    narrative inquiry and focus on, 157–158
Individual lived experience
    overall strategy for, 102, 102(table)
    phenomenological approaches, 17–18
    as unit of analysis, 16
Inductive analysis, 222
Informational adequacy of sampling method, 116
Informed consent, 51, 52, 126
    cultural challenges to, 55–59

    Internet research and, 183(fig.)
Initial themes, 132
Initiating function, 88
InqScribe 2.1.1, 209
Inquiry
    conceptual funnel, 73, 73(fig.)
    critical/ecological approach to, 70
    cycle of, 69, 70(fig.)
    positionality, 71–73
    project of, 70–71
Institutional review boards (IRBs), 51, 52–55
    changes and review by, 104
    suggested readings on, 136
Instrumental case, 20
Interaction, closeness of, 103, 103(fig.)
Interaction analysis, 188–192
    classroom, 189–190
    ethical issues, 190
    kinesics, 190–191, 202–203
    proxemics, 191–192, 202–203
    suggested readings on, 202–203
Interaction frequency tallies, 146(table)
Interaction guides, 146(table)
Intercoder consistency, 264
Intercoder reliability, 230
Internet
    data collection and, 180–183
    data collection using, 200–201
    ethical issues, 31, 182–183
    uploading of digital stories to, 159
Internet and social media networking, 17
Internet ethnography, 2, 30–31, 180–181
    informed consent decision and, 183(fig.)
    suggested readings on, 37–38
Interpersonal validity, 57
Interpretation, data, 217, 228
Interpreter, 210
Intervening conditions, 223(table)
Intervention, interview as, 164
Interview guide, 150
Interviewing

  e-mail, 151, 180, 181
  mobile, 148
  using Internet for, 180
  See also In-depth interviewing
Interviews
  field notes, 148, 149(fig.)
  individual, 18
  structured, 146(table)
  types of, 150
  unstructured, 146(table)
Intrinsic case, 20
Introduction, 66, 67(table)
  drafting, 85
  introductory paragraph examples, 84
Intuition, framing the research process and, 75, 76–77(fig.)
In vivo codes, 218, 219(table), 220
"It depends," 111

"Jazz methodology," 28
Jottings, 145
Journalism, qualitative research and, 273
Journals, finding topic and review of, 69
Justice
  distributive, 52
  social, 49, 66

Kinesics, 190–191
  suggested readings on, 202–203
Knowledge
  critical genres and, 22
  cultural studies and, 29
  politics of, 260
  study's significance for, 79–80

Language and communication
  overall strategy for, 102(table), 103
  as unit of analysis, 16
Large research study, planning resources for, 238–245
"Leading Dynamic Schools for Newcomer Students" (Rossman & Rallis), 238–243
Liberatory potential, of qualitative research, 268

Lie to Me (television program), 191
Life histories, 16, 152, 155, 156–157, 179
    criteria for, 156–157
    ethical issues, 159
    representing, 276
    suggested readings on, 173–174
Limitations, of study, 85
Linguistic armor, 124
Listening, interviewing and, 151
Literature review and critique of related research, 66, 67(table), 86–94
    creative, 90–91, 92–93
    essays and expert opinions, 86–87
    identifying gaps in literature, 80
    purposes of, 91
    related research reviewed and critiqued, 86
    summarizing in contextual framework, 87–94
    theoretical traditions for framing question, 86
    transparency in use of conceptual and empirical literatures, 44
Livescribe smartpen, 209
Log, data-gathering activities, 214, 215(table)
Logical sampling, 111–117
Long-term ethnography, role maintenance and, 120–122
Love in the Time of AIDS (Hunter), 273
Lurking online, 31

Malinowski, Branislaw, 274
Management, data, 207–213
The Man in the Principal's Office (Wolcott), 108
Marxist-materialist assumptions, critical discourse analysis and, 25
Master's thesis research, planning, 247–254
Material culture
    objects and artifacts of, 166–170
    suggested readings on, 175
Material objects, 164
Materials, estimating, for graduate research, 250
Matrices, generating, 222–226
Maximum variation sampling, 114–115, 115(table)
MAXODA, 228
Mead, Margaret, 272, 274
Meaning structures, data collection and, 196
Member checking/checks, 46, 230

Memos
    analytic, 221–222, 226
    methodological, 221
    thematic, 221–222
    theoretical, 221–222
Men and Women of the Corporation (Kanter), 108, 273
Mentors, for graduate research, 248–249
Methodological currents of thought, 15
Methodological memos, 221
Microanalysis, 103–104
Microethnography, 18
Microexpressions, 191
Microsoft OneNote, 209
Middle-grounded approaches, to qualitative study goals and criteria, 45–46(table)
Miner approach to interview, 148
Mixed-methods reporting, 276–277
Mixed-methods research, 246
Mobile ethnography, 151
Mobile interviewing, 148
Models, 265
Movie Maker, 158
Multicultural validity, 49
Multimedia data, collection of, 183–184
Multimodal approaches to data collection, 183–188
    multimedia data in digital age, 183–184
    suggested readings on, 201
    using arts for data collection, 187–188, 202
    videos and photographs, 184–187, 201–202
Multimodal inquiry, 20–21, 183–184, 184–185(table), 264
Multiple case study, 20
Multiple methods for data collection, 168
Multiple understandings, 264
Multiresearcher, multifocal study, model for envisioning, 87, 89(fig.)
Multisite sampling, 111

Narrative analysis, 21, 28
    suggested readings on, 35
Narrative inquiry, 16, 152, 155, 157–158
    ethical issues in, 159
    suggested readings on, 173–174

Narrative Inquiry (journal), 157
Narratives, representing, 276
National Research Act, Public Law 93-348, 52
National Science Foundation, 82, 251
Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln & Guba), 44
Negative instances, 214
Neo-Marxist ethnography, 15
New sociology of childhood, 161
Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman (Shostak), 179
Nonverbal gestures, analysis of, 190–191
Numbers, in qualitative research, 230
NVivo 10, 228

Objectivity, 43, 47
Objects, material, 166–170
Observation, 143–147
    data collection methods related to, 146–147(table)
    ethical issues in, 146–147
    participant, 15, 145–147
    suggested readings on, 171–172
Olympus Digital Wave Player, 209
Online communities
    ethical issues in ethnographies of, 182
    qualitative research on, 181–182
Open coding, 19, 222–223
Open-ended interview, 150
Operational principles of assumptive worlds, 252–253(table)
Oral reports, 277
Oral testimony, 165
Organization, final report, 274–276
Organizational culture, justifying fieldwork to explore, 8–9
Organizing data, 217
Outliers, 214
Overall strategies, for research design, 102–104, 102(table)
Overview section, 68–69

Paper-and-pencil tests, 146(table)
Participantness, 119
Participant observation, 15, 145–147
    ethical issues in, 146–147
    suggested readings on, 171–172

Participants
    anonymity of, 126
    closeness of interaction with researcher, 103, 103(fig.)
    critical genres and, 23
    gaining access to, 51
    informed consent, 52, 53, 54(fig.), 55–59
    positioning of researcher to, 142
    rapport with, 107, 124–125
Participatory action research, 26, 264
    empowerment and, 78
    methodology, 186
    suggested readings on, 36
Participatory arts, 188
Participatory research, 2
Peer debriefing, 46, 230
Peers, graduate research, 248–249
Performance ethnography, 1, 15–16, 24, 264
    as representation, 278–279
    suggested readings on, 37
Personal biography, framing research question and, 71–73
Personal costs, for graduate research, 250–251
Personal essay, 49(table)
Personal reflections, suggested readings on, 135
Personal theories, 74, 76(fig.)
Personnel, planning and projecting needed, 237, 245
Phenomenological approaches, 17–18
Phenomenological interviewing, 153
    suggested readings on, 172–173
Phenomenological reduction, 153
Phenomenology, 15, 16, 17–18
    suggested readings on, 34
Phenomenon, 223(table)
    research design and, 105–109
Photo diaries, 188
Photo-elicitation methods, 186, 278
Photographs
    data collection and, 184–187
    ethical issues, 187
    suggested readings on, 201–202
Photography exhibits, 278
Photo montages, 277

Phronesis, 20, 275
Physical armor, 124
Pictorial model, 87
Pilot study, 105, 265, 266
Planning/projecting
    financial resources, 237, 244(table), 245
    master’s thesis or dissertation research, 247–254
    personnel, 237, 245
    resources, 237–2455
    time, 237, 244–245
Policy-focused research questions, 83
Policymakers, convincing of utility of qualitative methods, 9–10
Policy problems, study significance for, 80–81
Political positioning of researcher, 142
Politics and research, 246–247
    ethics and, 128–129
Politics of knowledge, 260
Population
    research design and, 105–109
    research questions focused on particular, 83
    sampling within a, 110–111
Positionality, 73, 118, 145–146
Positivist paradigm, 261
Postcolonial perspective, 1, 21, 22
Postcritical ethnography, 24, 36–37
Postmodern perspective, 1, 21, 22, 25
    liberatory potential and, 268
Postpositivist perspective, 21
Poststructural perspective, 1, 25
Power-and-politics feminisms, 28–29
Power dynamics
    conducting research with children/youth and, 162
    critical discourse analysis and, 25
    critical genres and issues of, 21, 23
    ethics and, 128–129
    focus-group interviews and, 154–155
    interaction analysis and, 189
    interviewing elites and, 159, 160–161
Practical problems, study significance for, 80–81
Praxis/social purpose, 49(table)
Precedents, demonstrating, 272–273

Presentation
    genre and choice of, 274
    research value and, 264
    suggested readings on, 284
Primum non nocere, 162
Privacy concerns
    focus-group interviews and, 155
    Internet and, 182–183
    life histories, narrative inquiry, and digital storytelling and, 159
    in use of videos and photographs, 187
Problematic, of everyday world issue, 70–71
Processed data, 208
Professional identity, shared, 163
The Professional Thief (Sutherland & Conwell), 157
Progressive sampling, 116
Prolonged engagement, 46
Proposal defense, 260, 270–272
Proposal hearing, 283
Protection, for researcher, 124
Proxemics, 191–192
    ethical issues, 192
    suggested readings on, 202–203
Psychology, qualitative research and, 272–273

Qualitative data analysis (QDA), 180
Qualitative evaluation, likelihood of funding, 246
Qualitative methodology, 2
Qualitative participatory evaluation, reporting, 277–278
Qualitative research, 1–3
    assumptions about nature of, 141–142, 142(table)
    challenges to soundness, validity, utility and generalizability of, 260
    characteristics of, 2, 3(table)
    convincing policymakers of utility of, 9–10
    covert, 119
    criteria of, 267
    ensuring rigor and usefulness of, 46–47
    justifying, 100–102
    purpose of, 75–78, 142
    rationale for, 259
    relation to qualitative research proposal, 65–66
    significance and potential contributions of, 78–82

  suggested readings on, 12–13
  value of approach, 267–272
  walking reviewers through, 251–253
Qualitative researchers, characteristics of, 2, 3(table)
Qualitative research genres
  action research, 26
  arts-informed and multimodal inquiry, 20–21
  autoethnography, 24–25
  case studies, 19–20
  critical discourse analysis, 25–26
  critical ethnography, 23–24
  critical genres, 21–31, 22(table)
  critical race theory and analysis, 27–28
  cultural studies, 29–30
  ethnographic approaches, 17
  feminist theories and methodologies, 22(table), 28–29
  grounded theory approaches, 18–19
  historical typology of, 15–17, 16(table)
  Internet/virtual ethnography, 22(table), 30–31
  overall strategy and, 102–105
  participatory action research, 26
  phenomenological approaches, 17–18
  queer theory and analysis, 22(table), 26–27
  sociolinguistic approaches, 18
Qualitative research proposals, 3–4
  arguing merits of, 259–273
  as argument, 11–12
  argument development, 8–10
  conceptual framework, 6
  consideration of potential significance and ethics, 5
  considerations of feasibility, 4–5
  considerations of sustained and sustaining interest, 5
  criteria of soundness in, 261–267
  demonstrating precedents, 272–273
  essential qualitativeness of research, 267
  introduction, 66, 67(table), 68 (*see also* Conceptual framework)
  literature review, 66, 67(table), 68, 86–94
  quantitative research proposals *vs.*, 92
  relation to qualitative research, 65–66
  research competence and, 7–8
  research design and methods, 7, 66, 67(table)

  - revisions of, 283
  - sections, 66–67, 67(table)
  - value of qualitative approach and, 267–272
- Quality of data and analysis, 234
- Qualtrics, 181
- Quantitative research proposals, 92
- Queer theory and analysis, 1, 22, 26–27
  - multiplicity of identities and, 163
  - suggested readings on, 39–40
- Questionnaires, 147(table)
- Questions
  - detailed elaborations, 150
  - guiding, 76(fig.)
  - matching purpose to research, 78(table)
  - open-ended clarifications, 150
  - open-ended elaborations, 150
  - qualitative study, 45(table)
  - reflexive, 118(fig.)
  - reviewer, 271–272(tables)
  - types of, for ethnographic interviewing, 152
  - *See also* Research questions
- Quotes, inclusion of, 275

- Random purposeful sampling, 115(table), 116
- Rapport, 107, 124–125, 136
- Rationale, 99, 101
  - for site-specific research, 106
  - suggested readings on, 134–135
- Realist tales, 274
- Real-life, respondent-generated dilemma, 192–193
- Reciprocity, researcher role and, 125–126
- Recording
  - data, 207–213
  - direct quotations, 146(table)
- Recordkeeping, 266–267
- Reference, 67(table)
- Reflexive questions, 118(fig.)
- Reflexive screens, 118(fig.)
- Related research, critique of, 80, 86–94
- Relativism, 128
- Reliability, 43, 44, 47

  intercoder, 230
Rephotography, 188
Replicability, study, 263
Reporting findings, 77(fig.), 230–231
  interspersing with analysis, 279–280
Representation methods, 276–281
  action research, 277–278
  artistic forms or presentation, 278
  in autoethnography, 279
  case studies, 276
  ethnographies, 276
  life histories, 276
  mixed-methods reporting, 276–277
  narratives, 276
  performance ethnography, 278–279
  suggested readings on, 284
Representing the inquiry, 230–231
Research
  across differences in social identities, 162–164
  delineating limitations of study, 85
  politics and, 246–247
  in your own setting, 106–107
  See also Qualitative research
Research agenda, 245
Research design and methods, 6, 7–8, 66, 67(table), 77(fig.), 92, 99–138
  anticipating reviewers' concerns, 131–133
  continuum of, 45(table)
  data analysis strategies and, 214–215
  demonstrating traditions, 104–105
  entry, 107–109, 135
  entry letters and scripts, 107
  ethics, 126–129, 135–136
  explicit details on, 264–265
  field notes, 117–118
  flexibility in, 11, 100, 196–197
  justifying qualitative research, 100–102
  overall strategies, 102–104, 102(table)
  pilot studies, 105
  planning exit, 129–131
  purposes of, 99
  reciprocity, 125–126

  - researcher identity, voice, and biases, 117–118, 135
  - research in your own setting, 106–107
  - research rapport and interpersonal considerations, 124–125
  - research role considerations, 119–124, 136
  - sampling, 107–117
  - site-specific research, 105–106
  - suggested readings on, 13

Researcher
  - challenging one’s own interpretations, 228–229
  - closeness with participants, 103, 103(fig.)
  - concerns about subjectivity, 263
  - demonstrating competence, 7–8
  - as instrument, 118
  - political positioning of, 142
  - positionality of, 71–73, 118, 145–146
  - positioning relative to participant, 142
  - prejudgments and predilections, 261
  - qualitative study, 46(table)
  - rapport with participants, 107, 124–125, 136
  - shared social identity with participants, 163
  - views on agency, 142

Researcher’s role, 117–131
  - efficiency and, 123–124
  - ethics and, 126–129
  - exit planning, 129–131
  - field notes, 117–118
  - identity, voice, biases, 117–118
  - negotiating entry and role maintenance, 120–123
  - rapport and interpersonal considerations, 124–125
  - reciprocity and, 125–126
  - situating the self, 119–120

Research process, framing, 74–75

Research questions
  - conceptual framework and, 82–84
  - explicit details about, 265–266
  - focused on particular populations, 83
  - matching to purpose, 78(table)
  - policy-focused, 83
  - site-specific, 83
  - theoretical, 82
  - theoretical traditions for framing, 86

Research role, 136
Resources, planning and projecting needs, 7, 237–245
Respectability, of qualitative research, 272
Respect for persons, 51–52
Revealedness, of researcher role, 119
Reviewers
  anticipating concerns of, 131–133
  qualitative analysis and, 251–253
  questions from, attuned to qualitative methodology, 271–272(table)
  questions from, with little qualitative experience, 271(table)
Review of Educational Research, 69
Risk, 106, 107
Role boundaries, 126
Role dilemmas, 131–132
Role extensiveness, 119–120
Role intensiveness, 119–120
Role maintenance, 120–123
  ethics and, 126
Running records, 266

The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (Denzin & Lincoln), 180
Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences (Luker), 10
Sample size, 108–109
Sampling
  credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability and, 109
  data collection, 113–114(table), 113–117
  logical and systematic, 111–117
  plan, 113–114(table), 113–117
  within a population, 110–111
  strategies, 107–109, 115–116, 115(table)
  suggested readings on, 135
SAS, 227
Saturation of data, 229
Scales, 147(table)
Scholarly context, grounding in, 266
Science/realist approach, to qualitative study goals and criteria, 45–46(table)
“Scientifically based research,” 260
Searching for disconfirming evidence, 46
Second decision span in generalizing, 261–262
Self, situating, 119–120
Self-care strategies, 130

Self-reflections, field notes and, 117–118
Sensitizing concepts, 110, 132, 225
Services, for graduate research, 250
Setting, research design and, 106–107
Sexual harassment research, role and ethics in, 122–123
Shiva's circle of constructivist inquiry, 69, 70(fig.)
Should-do-ability, in qualitative research proposal, 5, 6
Significance, 5, 6
    building through literature review, 87–88
    for practice and policy, 68, 78–82
The Silent Dialogue (Olesen & Whittaker), 273
Simple conceptual model, 87–88, 90(fig.)
Site
    entry strategy, 107–109
    focusing within a, 110–111
    suggested readings on, 135
Site selection, 99
    negotiating, 112–113
Site-specific research, 105–106
Site-specific research questions, 83
Sketching/sketches, 184(table), 188
Skype, 180
Small-Scale Research (Knight), 221
Snowball sampling, 115, 115(table)
Social identities
    Internet and, 182
    interviewing across differences in, 162–164, 174–175
Socialist feminism, 28
Social justice
    emancipatory genres and, 66
    multicultural validity and, 49
Social networking, research on, 181–182
Social support networks, focus-group interviews and, 154
Social work, qualitative research and, 273
Society
    ethnographic approaches, 17
    overall strategy for, 102(table), 103
    as unit of analysis, 16
Sociolinguistics, 15
Sociolinguistic studies, 18
    suggested readings on, 34

Software
    for data analysis, 226–228, 235
    for data collection, 180–183, 201
    for data management, 225–226
    ethical issues, 182–183
    for transcription, 209–210
Sonocent Audio Notetaker 3, 209
Space, study of use of, 191–192
SPSS, 227
Storytelling
    critical race theory and, 28
    digital, 152, 155, 158–159, 173–174
Stranger and Friend (Powdermaker), 274
Stratified purposeful sampling, 115, 116
Street ethnography, 122
Stressors. *see* Politics; Resources; Time
Structural questions, 152
Structural synthesis, 153
Structured interview guides, 146(table)
Study purpose, 75–78
Study significance and potential contributions, 78–82
Subclusters, 221
Subjectivity, concerns about researcher, 263
SurveyMonkey, 181
Surveys, applications for, 181
Sustained/sustaining interest, qualitative research proposal and, 5
Symbolic interactionism, 15
Systematic inquiry, 66
Systematic sampling, 111–117
Systems theory, 15

Taboo topics, ethics of reporting on, 280–281
Tacit theories, 74
Tales of the Field (Van Maanen), 274
Talk and text, sociolinguistic approaches, 18
Template analysis, 213, 216(table)
Testimonio, 16, 21, 28
Text, 18, 185(table)
Textual analysis, 103
Thematic memos, 221–222
Themes, 224(fig.)

- generating, 222–226
Theoretical literature, 91
Theoretical memos, 221–222
Theoretical questions, 82
Theoretical saturation, 229
Theoretical sufficiency, 229–230
Theory-based, critical sampling, 115, 115(table)
Theory-generated codes, 218, 219(table), 220
Thick description, 10, 49(table), 264
Time
  for graduate research, 249
  justification of needed, 268–269
  planning and projecting, 237, 244–245
Time-management chart, 245
TIMSS. *see* Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
Topic, introducing, 69–73
Topical interview, 150
Traditions, demonstrating, 104–105
Transactional validity, 48–49
Transcription, 207–213
  costs of, 245
  ethical issues, 212–213
  general issues with, 208–210
  software for, 209–210
  suggested readings on, 233
Transferability, 46, 47
  discussion of, in proposal, 261–262
  sampling and, 109
Transformational validity, 48–49
Transgressive validity, 49–50
Transient population, negotiating and maintaining access to, 121
Translating, 207–213
  ethical issues, 212–213
  general issues with, 210–212
  suggested readings on, 233
Traveler approach to interview, 148
Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), 246–247
Triangulated inquiry, 118(fig.)
Triangulation
  generalizability and, 262
  theoretical sufficiency and, 229

- validity and, 46, 48

Trust
- building, 125
- interviewing and, 150–151
- narrative inquiry and, 157

Trustworthiness, 43, 44–50
- catalytic validity, 49
- crystallization, 50
- demonstrating in qualitative research proposal, 6, 7
- ensuring rigor and usefulness of study, 46–47
- ethics and, 50–51
- goals and criteria and, 45–46(table)
- recordkeeping and, 266
- reliability and, 44, 47
- research design and, 99
- sampling and, 109
- transactional validity, 48–49
- transformational validity, 48–49
- transgressive validity, 48–49
- validity and, 47–48

"Truth" seeking, 49(table)

Truth value, 261

Typologies, 222, 227(fig.)
- analyst-constructed, 225
- generating, 222–226

Ultra-elite, 160

Unit of analysis, 16, 78
- for case studies, 19–20

Unobtrusive data collection, 167

Unstructured interviews, 146(table)

U.S. Department of Education, 260

Usefulness, of proposal research, 9–10

Validity, 43, 44
- assumptions about, 49(table)
- catalytic, 49
- crystallization and, 50
- external, 262
- focus-group interviews and, 154
- interpersonal, 57

  multicultural, 49
  regulatory demand and, 47
  strategies to ensure, 47
  transactional, 48–49
  transformational, 48–49
  transgressive, 49–50
Videos
  data collection and, 184–187, 184(table)
  ethical issues, 187
  interaction analysis and, 188–190
  suggested readings on, 201–202
Videotaping focus-group interviews, 155
Vignettes, 11
Virtual ethnography. *see* Internet ethnography
Visual anthropology, 185, 188
Visual Anthropology Review, 185
Visual Anthropology Society, 185
Vocabularies, qualitative study, 46(table)
Voice
  narrative inquiry and elicitation of, 158
  researcher's, 117–118
Voice-recognition software, 209–210
Vulnerable population, negotiating and maintaining access to, 121

Want-to-do-ability, in qualitative research proposal, 5, 6
Whyte, William Foote, 274
Women's-ways feminism, 28
Work and the Family System (Piotrkowski), 273
Work schedule, sample, 240–241(table)
World Wide Web, Internet ethnography and, 31
Writing
  analytic memos, 221–222
  final report, 230–231, 274–276
  qualitative study, 45(table)
  suggested readings on, 13, 284

Youth, conducting research with, 161–162
YouTube, 184

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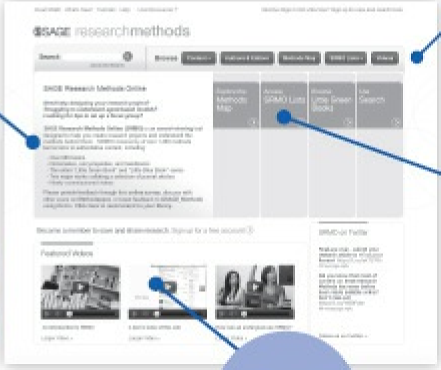

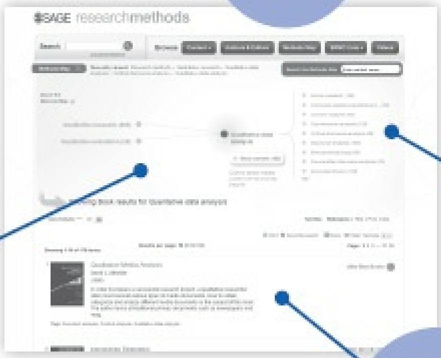

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