19 Observation and Interviewing

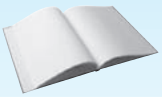
OBJECTIVES **Studying this chapter should enable you to:**

- Explain what is meant by the term "observational research."
- Describe at least four different roles an observer can take in a qualitative study.
- Explain what is meant by the term "participant observation."
- Explain what is meant by the term "nonparticipant observation."
- Explain what is meant by the term "naturalistic observation."
- Describe what a simulation is and how it might be used by a researcher.
- Describe what is meant by the term "observer effect."
- Explain what is meant by the term "observer bias."
- Describe the type of sampling that occurs in observational studies.
- Describe briefly four types of interviews qualitative researchers use.
- Explain what a "key actor" is.
- List at least three expectations that exist for all interviews.
- Explain what a focus group interview is.
- Describe briefly why an informed consent form is needed in interview research.
- Give at least four procedures qualitative researchers use to check on or enhance validity and reliability in qualitative studies.

INTERACTIVE AND APPLIED LEARNING After, or while, reading this chapter:

Go to the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/fraenkel8e to:

- Learn More About Interviews and Observations



Go to your online Student Mastery Activities book to do the following activities:

- Activity 19.1: Observer Roles
- Activity 19.2: Types of Interviews
- Activity 19.3: Types of Interview Questions
- Activity 19.4: Do Some Observational Research

"What was it like to be a student teacher?"

"Well, uh, (laughs), it's sort of, uh, hard to describe. I guess I liked it, now that it's all over (laughs). But there were times, uh, . . . I had a lot of trouble at first with discipline. You know, controlling the kids. Couldn't seem to manage them. Especially when they wouldn't sit down and started wandering around the room. Teaching isn't easy, you know, even for the old pros. And there I was, just a beginner. Not even sure I wanted to be a teacher. I was older, too, than most of the other student teachers. Didn't have a lot in common with them, me having been in the military and all. But then, things changed."

"What happened?"

"Well, I sort of got the hang of it. I learned some things. Began to learn my craft, you might say (smiles). I learned to control them better. I, uh, didn't take any guff, you know (laughs). Oh, I wasn't mean or anything like that, just firm. Yeah! You know, uh, uh, they respect it if you're firm. You got to be. They don't like wishy-washy teachers. Took me a while to learn that. But then I got better at explaining things too, and that made it easier to control the kids. And I set up some rules. They had to be in their seats when the bell rang, and they got points if they were. I had an election for a class president who I had sit at the front of the room and whose job was to keep order. That worked great. And then I had a weekly class meeting where we talked about things they liked and things they thought could be improved. And I also . . ."

The above conversation is part of an in-depth interview between a qualitative researcher and a 55-year-old retired Air Force Major who has returned to school to get a middle school teaching credential. In-depth interviewing is one of the staples of qualitative research. It is one of the things we shall discuss in some detail in this chapter.

Qualitative researchers use three main techniques to collect and analyze their data: observing people as they go about their daily activities and recording what they do; conducting in-depth interviews with people about their ideas, their opinions, and their experiences; and analyzing documents or other forms of communication (content analysis). Interviews can provide us with information about people's attitudes, their values, and what they think they do. If you want to know what they actually do, however, there is no substitute for watching them or examining documents and other forms of communication that they create. In this chapter, we discuss observation and interviewing in some detail. We will discuss the analysis of documents in Chapter 20.

Observation

Certain kinds of research questions can best be answered by *observing* how people act or how things look. For example, researchers could interview teachers about how their students behave during class discussions of sensitive issues, but a more accurate indication of their activities would probably be obtained by actually observing such discussions while they take place.

The degree of observer participation can vary considerably. There are four different roles that a researcher can take, ranging on a continuum from complete participant to complete observer.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

In **participant observation** studies, researchers actually participate in the situation or setting they are observing.

When a researcher takes on the role of a *complete participant* in a group, his identity is not known to any of the individuals being observed. The researcher interacts with members of the group as naturally as possible and, for all intents and purposes (so far as they are concerned), is one of them. Thus, a researcher might arrange to serve for a year as an actual teacher in an inner-city classroom and carry out all of the duties and responsibilities that are a part of that role, but not reveal that he is also a researcher. Such covert observation is suspect on ethical grounds.

When a researcher chooses the role of *participant-as-observer,* he participates fully in the activities of the group being studied, but also makes it clear that he is doing research. As an example, the researcher described above might tell the faculty that he is a researcher and intends to describe as thoroughly and accurately as he can what goes on in the school over the course of a year's time.

Participant observation can be *overt,* in that the researcher is easily identified and the subjects know that they are being observed; or it can be *covert,* in which case the researcher disguises his or her identity and acts just like any of the other participants. For example, a researcher might ask a ninth-grade geography teacher to allow him to observe one of that teacher's classes over the course of a semester. Both teacher and students would know the researcher's identity. This would be an example of overt observation. Overt participant observation is a key ingredient in ethnographic research, which we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 21.

On the other hand, another researcher might take the trouble to become certified as an elementary school teacher and then spend a period of time actually teaching in an elementary school while observing what is going on. No one would know the researcher's identity (with the possible exception of the district administration from whom permission would have been obtained beforehand). This would be an example of covert observation. Covert participant observation, although likely to produce more valid observations of what really happens, is often criticized on ethical grounds. Observing people without their knowledge (and/or recording their comments without their permission) seems to some a highly questionable practice.

Is it ethical to observe people without their knowledge? What about so-called passive deception, such as that involved in observing people as they go about their business in public places, like restaurants and airports? Or what about observing children's schoolyard activities from a distance using a telephoto lens? What do you think?

NONPARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

In a **nonparticipant observation** study, researchers do not participate in the activity being observed but rather "sit on the sidelines" and watch; they are not directly involved in the situation they are observing.

When a researcher chooses the role of *observer-as-participant,* she identifies herself as a researcher but makes no pretense of actually being a member of the group she is observing. An example might be a university professor who is interested in what goes on in an inner-city school. The researcher might conduct a series of interviews with teachers in the school, visit classes, attend faculty meetings and collective bargaining negotiations, talk with principals and the superintendent, and talk with students, but she would not attempt to participate in the activities of the group other than superficially. She remains essentially (and does not hide the fact that she is) an interested observer who is doing research.

Finally, the role of *complete observer* is just that—a role at the opposite extreme from the role of complete participant. The researcher observes the activities of a group without in any way participating in those activities. The subjects of the researcher's observations may, or may not, realize they are being observed. An example would be a researcher who observes the daily activities in a school lunchroom.*

Each of the observer roles we have described has both advantages and disadvantages. The complete participant is probably most likely to get the truest picture of a group's activities, and the others less so, but the ethical question involving covert observation remains. The complete observer is probably least likely to affect the actions of the group being studied, the others more so. The participant-as-observer, since he or she is an actual member of the group being studied, will have some (and often an important) effect on what the group does. The participant-as-observer and the observer-as-participant are both likely, in varying degrees, to focus the attention of the group on the activities of the researcher and away from their normal routine, thereby making their activities no longer typical. Figure 19.1 indicates how approaches to observation can vary.

*Note that many of the techniques described in Chapter 7 are also examples of nonparticipant observation frequently used in both qualitative and quantitative studies.

Role of the Observer		
Full-participant observation	Partial participation	Onlooker; observer is an outsider
How the Observer Is Portrayed to Others		
Participants know that observations are being made and they know who is making them.	Some but not all of the participants know the observer.	Participants do not know that observations are being made or that there is someone observing them.

How the Purpose of the Observation Is Portrayed to Others			
The purpose of the observation is fully explained to all involved.	The purpose of the observation is explained to some of the participants.	No explanation is given to any of the participants.	False explanations are given; participants are deceived about the purpose of the observation.

Duration of the Observations	
A single observation of limited duration (e.g., 30 minutes).	Multiple observations; long-term duration (e.g., months, even years).
Focus of the Observations	
Narrow focus: Only a single element or characteristic is observed.	Broad focus: Holistic view of the activity or characteristic being observed and all of its elements sought.

Figure 19.1 *Variations in Approaches to Observation*

NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION

Naturalistic observation involves observing individuals in their natural settings. The researcher makes no effort whatsoever to manipulate variables or to control the activities of individuals, but simply observes and records what happens as things naturally occur. The activities of students at an athletic event, the interactions between students and teachers on the playground, or the activities of very young children in a nursery, for example, are probably best understood through naturalistic observation.

Much of the work of the famous child psychologist Jean Piaget involved naturalistic observation. Many of his conclusions on cognitive development, which grew out of watching his own children as they developed, have stimulated further research in this area. Insights obtained as a result of naturalistic observation, in fact, often serve as the basis for more formal experiments.

SIMULATIONS

To investigate certain variables, researchers sometimes will *create* a situation and ask subjects to act out, or *simulate,* certain roles. In **simulations**, the researcher, in effect, actually tells the subjects what to do (but not how to do it). This permits a researcher to observe what happens in certain kinds of situations, including those that occur fairly infrequently in schools or other educational settings. For example, individuals might be asked to portray a counselor interacting with a distraught parent, a teacher disciplining a student, or two administrators discussing their views on enhancing teacher morale.

Two main types of role-playing simulations are used by researchers in education: individual role playing and team role playing. In individual role playing, a person is asked to role-play how he or she thinks a particular individual might act in a given situation. The researcher then observes and records what happens. Here is an example:

> You are an elementary school counselor. You have an appointment with a student who is frequently abusive toward his teachers. The student has just arrived for his 9:00 A.M. appointment with you and is sitting before you in your office. What do you say to this student?

In team role playing, a group of individuals is asked to act out a particular situation, with the researcher again observing and recording what goes on. Particular

attention is paid to how the members of the group interact. Here is an example:

> You and five of your faculty colleagues have been appointed as a temporary special committee to discuss and come up with solutions to the problem of students cutting classes, which has been increasing this semester. Many of the faculty support a "get tough" policy and have openly advocated suspending students who are frequent cutters. The group's assignment is to come up with other alternatives that the faculty will accept. What do you propose?

The main disadvantage to simulations, as you might have recognized, is their artificiality. Situations are being acted out, and there is no guarantee that what the researcher sees is what would normally occur in a real-life situation. The results of a simulation often serve as hypotheses in other kinds of research investigations.

OBSERVER EFFECT

The presence of an observer can have a considerable impact on the behavior of those being observed and, hence, on the outcomes of a study; this is known as an **observer effect**. Also the **observational data** (that which the observer records) inevitably to some extent reflect the biases and viewpoints of the observer. Let us consider each of these facts a bit further.

There is always the problem of reactivity in observational research. Getting around the reactivity problem involves staying around long enough to get people used to the observer's presence. As Bernard suggests, eventually "people just get plain tired of trying to manage your impression and they act naturally. In [spot sampling] research, the trick is to catch a glimpse of people in their natural activities before they see you coming on the scene—before they have a chance to modify their behavior."[1]

Unless a researcher is concealed, it is quite likely that he or she will have some effect on the behavior of those individuals who are being observed. Two things can happen, particularly if an observer is unexpected. First, he or she is likely to arouse curiosity and result in a lack of attention to the task at hand, thus producing other-than-normal behavior. An inexperienced researcher who records such behavior might easily be misled. It is for this reason that researchers who observe in classrooms, for example, usually alert the teacher beforehand and ask to be introduced. They then may spend four to five days in the classroom before starting to record observations (to enable the students to become accustomed to their presence and go about their usual activities).

The second thing that can happen is that the behavior of those who are being observed might be influenced by the researcher's purpose. For example, suppose a researcher is interested in observing whether social studies teachers ask "high-level questions" during class discussions of controversial issues. If the teachers are aware of what the researcher is looking for, they may tend to ask more questions than normal, thus giving a distorted impression of what really goes on during a typical class discussion. The data obtained by the researcher's observation would not be representative of how the teachers normally behave. It is for this reason that many researchers argue that the participants in a study should not be informed of the study's purposes until after the data have been collected. Instead, the researchers should meet with the participants before the study begins and tell them that they cannot be informed of the purpose of the study since it might affect the study's outcomes. As soon as the data have been collected, however, the researcher should reveal the findings to those who are interested.

OBSERVER BIAS

Observer bias refers to the possibility that certain characteristics or ideas of observers may bias what they "see." Over the years, qualitative researchers have continually had to deal with the charge that it is very easy for their prejudices to bias their data. But this is something with which all researchers must deal. It is probably true that no matter how hard observers try to be impartial, their observations will possess some degree of bias. No one can be totally objective, as we all are influenced to some degree by our past experiences, which in turn affect how we see the world and the people within it. Nevertheless, all researchers should do their best to become aware of, and try to control, their biases.

What qualitative researchers try to do is to study the subjective factors objectively. They do this in a number of ways. They spend a considerable amount of time at the site, getting to know their subjects and the environment (both physical and cultural) in which they live. They collect copious amounts of data and check their perceptions against what the data reveal. Realizing that most situations and settings are very complex, they do their best to collect data from a variety of perspectives, using a variety of formats. Not only do they prepare extremely detailed field notes, but they attempt to reflect on their own subjectivity as a part of these field notes. Often they work in teams so that they can check their observations against another's (Figure 19.2). Although

Figure 19.2 *The Importance of a Second Observer as a Check on One's Conclusions*

they realize (as should all researchers) that one's biases can never be completely eliminated from one's observations, the important thing is to reflect on how one's own attitudes may influence what one perceives.

A related concern here is **observer expectations**. If researchers know they are to observe subjects who have certain characteristics (such as a certain IQ range, ethnicity, or religion), they may "expect" a certain type of behavior, which may not be how the subjects normally behave. It is in this regard that audiotapings and videotapings are so valuable, as they allow researchers to check their observations against the impressions of others.

CODING OBSERVATIONAL DATA

Over the years, quantitative researchers have developed a number of coding schemes to use when they observe. A **coding scheme** is a set of categories (e.g., "gives directions"; "asks questions"; "praises") that an observer uses to record the frequency of a person's or group's behavior. Coding schemes have been used to measure interactions between parents and adolescent children in a laboratory setting;[2] interactions of college students drinking alcohol in a group setting;[3] doctor-patient interactions in the office of family physicians;[4] and student-teacher interactions in a classroom.[5] One such coding scheme, primarily used in quantitative research, was developed by Amidon and Flanders more than 30 years ago but is still in use.[6] It is shown in Figure 19.3.

These schemes require the observer to judge and categorize behavior as it occurs. This is in contrast to more qualitative approaches that attempt to describe all or most of what occurs in a given situation. At a later time, these data are coded into categories that emerge as the analysis proceeds. This is particularly true in ethnographic research. We shall give an example of this type of coding in Chapter 20.

THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Even with a fixed coding scheme like the one shown in Figure 19.3, however, the observer must still choose from among alternatives when coding the behavior of people. When is someone being "critical," for example, or "encouraging"? Recording the behavior of people using video or digital recording devices permits the researcher to repeatedly view the behavior of an individual or a group and then decide how to code it at a later, usually more relaxed and convenient time.

Furthermore, a major difficulty in observing people is the fact that much that goes on may be missed by the observer. This is especially true when several behaviors of interest are occurring rapidly in an educational setting. In addition, sometimes a researcher wants to have

Teacher Talk	Indirect Influence	1. *Accepts feeling:* accepts and clarifies the feeling tone of the students in a nonthreatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting and recalling feelings are included. 2. *Praises or encourages:* praises or encourages student action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, not at the expense of another individual, nodding head or saying "uh huh?" or "go on" are included. 3. *Accepts or uses ideas of student:* clarifying, building, or developing ideas or suggestions by a student. As teacher brings more of his or her own ideas into play, shift to category five. 4. *Asks questions:* asking a question about content or procedure with the intent that a student answer.
	Direct Influence	5. *Lectures:* giving facts or opinions about content or procedure; expressing his or her own ideas; asking rhetorical questions. 6. *Gives directions:* directions, commands, or orders with which a student is expected to comply. 7. *Criticizes or justifies authority:* statements, intended to change student behavior from nonacceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he or she is doing, extreme self-reference.
Student Talk		8. *Student talk-response:* talk by students in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits student statement. 9. *Student talk-initiation:* talk by students, which they initiate. If "calling on" student is only to indicate who may talk next, observer must decide whether student wanted to talk. If he or she did, use this category.
		10. *Silence or confusion:* pauses, short periods of silence, and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.

Figure 19.3 *The Amidon/Flanders Scheme for Coding Categories of Interaction in the Classroom*

Source: E. J. Amidon and J. B. Hough (1967). *Interaction analysis: Theory, research, and application.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

someone else (such as an expert on the topic of interest) offer his or her insights about what is happening. A researcher who observes a number of children's play sessions in a nursery school setting, for example, might want to obtain the ideas of a qualified child psychologist or an experienced teacher of preschool children about what is happening.

To overcome these obstacles, researchers may use recording devices to record their observations. These have several advantages. The tapes or digital files may be replayed several times for continued study and analysis. Experts or interested others can also hear and/or see what the researcher observed and offer their insights accordingly. And a permanent record of certain kinds of behaviors is obtained for comparison with later or different samples.

A few disadvantages to such recordings, however, should also be noted. A good video record is not always the easiest to obtain and usually requires some training or prior experience by the researcher or technician. Sometimes several microphones must be set up for audio recordings, which can distort the behavior of those being observed. Prolonged recording can be expensive. Audio recordings are somewhat easier to do, but they of course record only verbal behavior. Furthermore, sometimes it is difficult to distinguish specific speakers in a recording of many voices. Noise is difficult to control and often seriously interferes with the understanding of content. Nevertheless, if these difficulties can be overcome, the use of audio and video recording offers considerable promise to researchers as a way to collect, store, and analyze data.

Interviewing

A second method used by qualitative researchers to collect data is to **interview** selected individuals. Interviewing (i.e., the careful asking of relevant questions) is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy of—to verify or refute—the impressions he or she has gained through observation. Fetterman, in fact, describes interviewing as the most important data collection technique a qualitative researcher possesses.[7]

The purpose of interviewing people is to find out what is on their minds—what they think or how they feel about something. As Patton has remarked:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational data is more desirable, valid, or meaningful than self-report data. The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things.[8]

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are four types of interviews: structured, semistructured, informal, and retrospective. Although these different types often blend and merge into one another, we shall describe them separately in order to clarify how they differ.

Structured and **semistructured interviews** are verbal questionnaires. Rather formal, they consist of a series of questions designed to elicit specific answers from respondents. Often they are used to obtain information that can later be compared and contrasted. For example, a researcher interested in how the characteristics of teachers in urban and suburban schools differ might conduct a structured interview (i.e., asking a set of structured questions) with a group of urban high school teachers to obtain background information about them—their education, their qualifications, their previous experience, their out-of-school activities, and so on—in order to compare these data with the same data (i.e., answers to the same questions) obtained from a group of teachers who teach in the suburbs. In qualitative research, structured and semistructured interviews are often best conducted toward the end of a study, as they tend to shape responses to the researcher's perceptions of how things are. They are most useful for obtaining information to test a specific hypothesis that the researcher has in mind.

Informal interviews are much less formal than structured or semistructured interviews. They tend to resemble casual conversations, pursuing the interests of both the researcher and the respondent in turn. They are the most common type of interview in qualitative research. They do not involve any specific type or sequence of questions or any particular form of questioning. The primary intent of an informal interview is to find out what people think and how the views of one individual compare with those of another.

"How do I feel? I feel that your question is trivial, courts sensationalism, and is designed to appeal to appallingly base instincts. Additionally, it demeans my intelligence. Next question."

Although at first glance they seem like they would be easy to conduct, informal interviews are probably the most difficult of all interviews to do well. Issues of ethics appear almost immediately. Researchers often need to make some sensitive decisions as an informal interview progresses. When, for example, is a question too personal to pursue? To what extent should the researcher "dig deeper" into how an individual feels about something? When is it more appropriate to refrain from probing further about an individual's response? How, in fact, does a researcher establish a climate of ease and familiarity while at the same time trying to learn in some detail about a respondent's life?

Although informal interviews offer the most natural type of situation for the collection of data, there is always some degree of artificiality present in any type of interview. A skillful interviewer, however, soon learns to begin with nonthreatening questions to put a respondent at ease before he or she poses more personal and (potentially) threatening questions. Always, the researcher must establish an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect if he or she is to obtain accurate information. Planning and asking good questions, while developing and maintaining an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, is an art that anyone who wishes to do competent qualitative research must master.

Retrospective interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or informal. A researcher who conducts a retrospective interview tries to get a respondent to recall and then reconstruct from memory something that has happened in the past. A retrospective interview is the least likely of the four interview types to provide accurate, reliable data for the researcher.

Table 19.1 summarizes some of the major interviewing strategies used in educational research. The first three strategies are more likely (although not exclusively) to be utilized in qualitative studies, the fourth more likely (but again, not exclusively) in quantitative studies. The reader is reminded, however, that it is not uncommon to find several of these strategies employed in the same study.

TABLE 19.1 *Interviewing Strategies Used in Educational Research*

Type of Interview	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Informal conversational interview	Questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things; there is no predetermination of question topics or wording.	Increases the salience and relevance of questions; interviews are built on and emerge from observations; the interview can be matched to individuals and circumstances.	Different information collected from different people with different questions. Less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions do not arise "naturally." Data organization and analysis can be quite difficult.
Interview guide approach	Topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in outline form; interviewer decides sequence and wording of questions in the course of the interview.	The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.	Important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses.
Standardized open-ended interview	The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order. Questions are worded in a completely open-ended format.	Respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing comparability of responses; data are complete for each person on the topics addressed in the interview. Reduces interviewer effects and bias when several interviewers are used. Permits evaluation users to see and review the instrumentation used in the evaluation. Facilitates organization and analysis of the data.	Little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances; standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers.
Closed, fixed-response interview	Questions and response categories are determined in advance. Responses are fixed; respondent chooses from among these fixed responses.	Data analysis is simple; responses can be directly compared and easily aggregated; many questions can be asked in a short time.	Respondents must fit their experiences and feelings into the researcher's categories; may be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant, and mechanistic. Can distort what respondents really mean or have experienced by so completely limiting their response choices.

KEY-ACTOR INTERVIEWS

Some people in any group are more informed about the culture and history of their group, as well as more articulate, than others. Such individuals, traditionally called **key informants**, are especially useful sources of information. Fetterman prefers the term **key actors** to avoid the stigma attached to the term *informant,* as well as the historical roots that underlie the term.[9] Key actors are especially knowledgeable individuals and thus often excellent sources of information. They can often provide detailed information about a group's past and about contemporary happenings and relationships, as well as the everyday nuances—the ordinary details—that others might miss. They offer insights that are often invaluable to a researcher. Fetterman gives an example of a key actor who proved helpful to him in a study of school dropouts.

> James was a long-term janitor in the Detroit dropout program [a program that Fetterman was studying]. He grew up in the local community with many of the students and was extraordinarily perceptive about the differences between the serious and less serious students in the program, as well as between the serious and less serious teachers. I asked him whether he thought the students were obeying the new restrictions against smoking, wearing hats in the building, and wearing sneakers. He said, "You can tell from the butts on the floor that they is still smokin', no matter what dey tell yah. I know, cause I gotta sweep 'em up. . . . It's mostly the new ones, don't yah know, like Kirk, and Dyan, Tina. You can catch 'em almost any ol' time. I seen 'em during class in the hallways, here (in the cafeteria), and afta hours." He provided empirical evidence to support his observations—a pile of cigarette butts he had swept up while we were talking.[10]

Here is another example from Fetterman's research.

> In a study of a gifted and talented education program, my most insightful and helpful key actor was a school district supervisor. He told about the politics of the school district and how to avoid the turf disputes during my study. He drove me around the community to teach me how to identify each of the major neighborhoods and pointed out corresponding socioeconomic differences that proved to have an important impact on the study. He also described the cyclical nature of the charges of elitism raised against the program by certain community members and a former school board member. He confided that his son (who was eligible to enter the program) had decided not to enter. This information opened new doors to my perception of peer pressure in that community.[11]

As you can see, a key actor can be an extremely valuable source of information. Accordingly, researchers need to take the time to seek out and establish a bond of trust with these individuals. The information they provide can serve as a cross-check on data the researcher obtains from other interviews, from observations, and from content analysis. But the musings of a key actor must also be viewed with some caution. Care must be taken to ensure that a key actor is not merely providing information he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear. This is why a researcher needs to seek out multiple sources of information in any study.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Patton has identified six basic types of questions that can be asked of people. Any or all of these questions might be asked during an interview. The six types are background (or demographic) questions, knowledge questions, experience (or behavior) questions, opinion (or values) questions, feelings questions, and sensory questions.[12]

Background (or **demographic**) **questions** are routine sorts of questions about the background characteristics of the respondents. They include questions about education, previous occupations, age, income, and the like.

Knowledge questions pertain to the factual information (as contrasted with opinions, beliefs, and attitudes) respondents possess. Knowledge questions about a school, for example, might concern the kinds of courses available to students, graduation requirements, the sorts of extracurricular activities provided, school rules, enrollment policies, and the like. From a qualitative perspective, what the researcher wants to find out is what the respondents consider to be factual information (as opposed to beliefs or attitudes).

Experience (or **behavior**) **questions** focus on what a respondent is currently doing or has done in the past. Their intent is to elicit descriptions of experience, behaviors, or activities that could have been observed but (for reasons such as the researcher not being present) were not. Examples might include, "If I had been in your class during the past semester, what kinds of things would I have been doing?" or, "If I were to follow you through a typical day here at your school, what experiences would I be likely to see you having?"

Opinion (or **values**) **questions** are aimed at finding out what people *think* about some topic or issue. Answers to such questions call attention to the respondent's goals, beliefs, attitudes, or values. Examples

might include such questions as, "What do you think about the principal's new policy concerning absenteeism?" or, "What would you like to see changed in the way things are done in your U.S. history class?"

Feelings questions concern how respondents *feel* about things. They are directed toward people's emotional responses to their experiences. Examples might include such questions as, "How do you feel about the way students behave in this school?" or, "To what extent are you anxious about going to gym class?"

Feelings and opinion questions are often confused. It is very important for anyone who wishes to be a skillful interviewer to be able to distinguish between the two types of questions and to know when to ask each. To find out how someone feels about an issue is not the same thing as finding out their opinion about the issue. Thus, the question, "What do you think (what is your opinion) about your teacher's homework policy?" asks for the respondent's *opinion*—what he or she thinks—about the policy. The question, "How do you feel (what do you like or dislike) about your teacher's homework policy?" asks how the respondent *feels* about (his or her attitude toward) the policy. The two, although they appear somewhat similar, ask for decidedly different kinds of information.

Sensory questions focus on what a respondent has seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or touched. Examples might include questions such as, "When you enter your classroom, what do you see?" or, "How would you describe what your class sounds like?" Although this type of question could be considered as a form of experience or behavior question, it is often overlooked by researchers during an interview. Further, such questions are sufficiently distinct to warrant a category of their own.

INTERVIEWING BEHAVIOR

A set of expectations exists for all interviews. Here are some of the most important.

- *Respect the culture of the group being studied.* It would be insensitive, for example, for a researcher to wear expensive clothing while conducting an interview with an impoverished, inner-city high school youth. Of course, a researcher may commit an occasional faux pas inadvertently, which most interviewees will forgive. A constant disregard for a group's traditions and values, however, is bound to impede the researcher's efforts to obtain reliable and valid information.
- *Respect the individual being interviewed.* Those who agree to be interviewed give up time they might spend elsewhere to answer the researcher's questions. An interview, therefore, should not be viewed as an opportunity to criticize or evaluate the interviewee's actions or ideas; rather, it is an opportunity to learn from the interviewee. A classroom teacher, a student, a counselor, a school custodian—all have work to do, and hence every researcher is well reminded not to waste their time. Interviews should start and end at the scheduled times and be conducted courteously. Further, the researcher should pick up on cues given by the interviewee. As Fetterman points out, "repeated glances at a watch are usually a clear signal that the time is up. Glazed eyes, a puzzled look, or an impatient scowl is an interviewee's way of letting the questioner know that something is wrong. The individual is lost, bored, or insulted. Common errors involve spending too much time talking and not enough time listening, failing to make questions clear, and making an inadvertently insensitive comment."[13] (Figure 19.4 illustrates an example of an interviewee who is *not* being respected.)
- *Be natural.* "Acting like an adolescent does not win the confidence of adolescents, it only makes them suspicious."[14] Deception in any form has no place in an interview.
- *Develop an appropriate rapport with the participant.* Here you have to be careful, for dangers lurk. Seidman points out the problem: "Rapport implies getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, an affinity for one another. The problem is that, carried to an extreme, the desire to build rapport with the participant can transform the interviewing relationship into a full 'We' relationship in which the question of whose experience is being related and whose meaning is being made is critically confounded."[15] He goes on to describe an incident that occurred in a study he conducted in a community college:

> In our community college study, one participant invited my wife and me to his house for dinner after (an) interview . . . I had never had such an invitation from a participant . . . and I did not quite know what to do. I did not want to appear ungracious, so we accepted. My wife and I went to dinner at his home. We had a wonderful California backyard cookout and it was a pleasure to spend time with the participant and his family. But a few days later, when I met him at his faculty office for the third interview, he was so warm and familiar toward me, that I could not retain the distance that I needed to explore his responses. I felt tentative as an interviewer because I did not want to risk violating the spirit of hospitality that he had created by inviting us to his home.[16]

Figure 19.4 *An Interview of Dubious Validity*

- *Ask the same question in different ways during the interview.* This enables the researcher to check his or her understanding of what the interviewee has been saying, and may even shed new light on the topic being discussed.
- *Ask the interviewee to repeat an answer or statement when there is some doubt about the completeness of a remark.* This can stimulate discussion when an interviewee tends to respond with terse, short answers to the researcher's questions.
- *Vary who controls the flow of communication.* In a formal, structured interview, it is often necessary for the researcher to control the asking of questions and the pace of the discussion. In informal interviews, particularly during the exploratory or initial phase of an interview, it is often wise to let the interviewee ramble a bit in order to establish a sense of trust and cooperation.
- *Avoid leading questions.* Leading questions presume an answer, as in questions like "You wanted to do that, of course?" or "Your friends talked you into that, didn't they?" or "How much did that upset you?" Each of these questions leads the participant to respond in a certain way. More appropriate versions of these questions would be "What did you want to do?" and "Why did you do that?" and "How did you feel about that?"

Instead of leading questions, interviewers often ask **open-ended questions**. Open-ended questions indicate an area to be explored without suggesting to the participant how it should be explored. They do not presume an answer. Here are some examples: "What was the meeting like for you?" or "Tell me what your student teaching experience was like?" There are many possibilities for open-ended questions and many ways of asking them. Perhaps none is better than simply asking "What was that like for you?" when an interviewer wants to get at a participant's subjective experience.

- Do not ask **dichotomous questions**, that is, questions that permit a yes-no answer, when you are trying to get a complete picture. Here are some examples: "Were you satisfied with your assignment?" "Have you changed as a result of teaching at Adams School?" "Was that a good experience for you?" "Did you know what to do when you were asked to do that?" And so forth.

The problem with dichotomous questions is that they do not encourage the respondent to talk. Oftentimes, when an interviewer is having trouble getting a participant to talk, it is because he or she is asking a string of dichotomous questions.

Patton presents what is perhaps the classic example of a series of dichotomous questions in the following conversation between a teenager and his parent. The teen has just returned home from a date:

Do you know that you're late?
Yeah.
Did you have a good time?
Yeah.

Did you go to a movie?
Yeah.
Was it a good movie?
Yeah, it was okay.
So, it was worth seeing?
Yeah, it was worth seeing.
I've heard a lot about it. Do you think I would like it?
I don't know. Maybe.
Anything else you'd like to tell me about your evening?
No, I guess that's it.
(Teenager goes upstairs to bed. One parent turns to the other and says: "It sure is hard to get him to talk to us.")[17]

As you can see, the problem with asking dichotomous questions is that they can easily turn an interview into something more like a test or interrogation.

- *Ask only one question at a time.* Asking more than one question is a common error made by novice interviewers, and you sometimes see this on poorly designed questionnaires as well. Rather than asking only a single question and allowing the participant to respond, the interviewer asks several questions one after the other without allowing the interviewee to answer (Figure 19.5). Here is an example:

What was that like for you? Did you participate? You said you found it difficult. Was it difficult for you or for the other people who were participating as well? And how do you think they felt about it?

- *Listen actively*. Experienced interviewers are patient and listen attentively from beginning to end in order to evaluate if a participant's answer is sufficient. If an answer is incomplete, the seasoned interviewer quickly assesses the possible cause and then asks a follow-up or redirective question to get more precise and complete information.
- *Don't interrupt.* This is perhaps the most important feature of good interviewing. Don't interrupt participants when they are talking. And this is especially true when a participant says something that the interviewer finds particularly interesting. Often it is tempting to interrupt the speaker to pursue this interesting item, but to do so may interrupt the participant's train of thought. It is better to simply jot down a brief note and then follow up on it later, when there is a pause in the conversation.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

In a **focus group interview**, the interviewer asks a small group of people (usually four to eight) to think about a series of questions. The participants are seated together

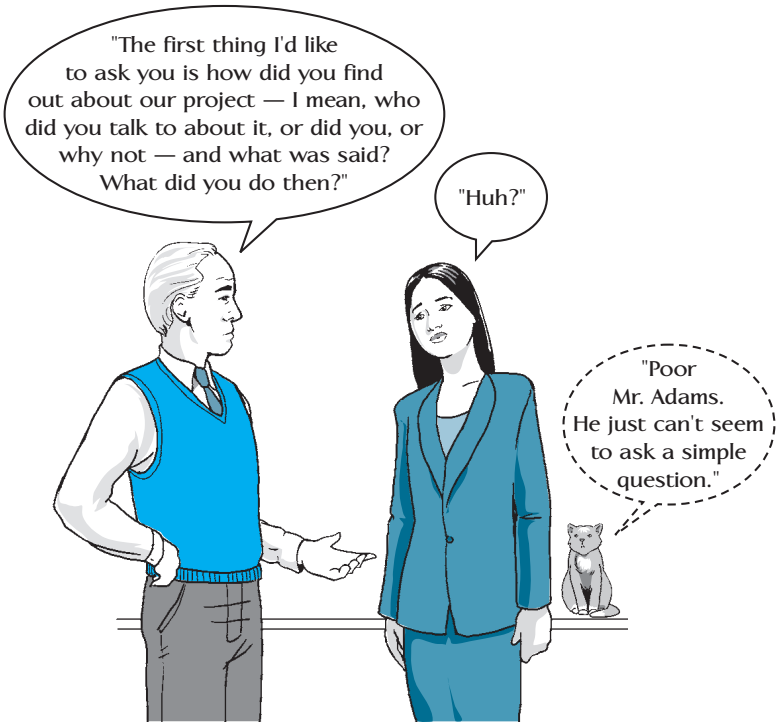


Figure 19.5 *Don't Ask More Than One Question at a Time*

RESEARCH TIPS

How Not to Interview

Following is a hypothetical situation involving a researcher interviewing a teacher who has just finished using her district's new mathematics curriculum.

RESEARCHER: *This is a very important topic, but don't be nervous. (Fails to establish rapport)*

TEACHER: *Okay.*

RESEARCHER: *I assume you had prior experience working with this type of mathematics materials?*

TEACHER: *Well, yes, a little.*

RESEARCHER: *That's too bad. I was hoping you would be more experienced. (Indicates desired response)*

TEACHER: *Well, actually, now that I think about it, I did use similar materials a year or so ago. (Gives desired response)*

RESEARCHER: *Oh, where was that? (Irrelevant comment)*

TEACHER: *In Utah.*

RESEARCHER: *Really? I'm from Utah—how did you like it there? (Loses focus)*

TEACHER: *I loved it. Skiing was great!*

RESEARCHER: *I'm a tennis player myself.*

TEACHER: *What's this got to do with math?*

in a group and get to hear one another's responses to the questions. Often they offer additional comments beyond what they originally had to say once they hear the other responses. They may agree or disagree; consensus is neither necessary nor desired. The object is to get at what people really think about an issue or issues in a social context where the participants can hear the views of others and consider their own views accordingly.

We should stress, however, that a focus group interview is not a discussion. Neither is it a problem-solving session, nor is it a decision-making group. It is an *interview.*[18]

Focus groups generally last one to two hours, and can cover five to six core questions. There are typically three parts to a focus group discussion guide that are similar to the three parts of an interview. The opening part is when the focus group facilitator or moderator welcomes and introduces members of the group and explains the purpose, context, and rules of the focus group. The middle part is reserved for asking participants to answer the main research questions, and the closing section is typically for thanking and debriefing participants and giving them an opportunity for further input.

Thus, the role of the focus group moderator is critical especially in terms of facilitating interaction between group members, drawing out differing perspectives, and keeping the session focused. In some instances, facilitators will need to challenge participants, especially to tease out differing opinions about a topic. Skilled moderators know when to probe for more details and how to move the discussion forward when it veers off course. Moderators should also be knowledgeable about the project and research in general.

RECORDING INTERVIEW DATA

No matter what kind of interview one conducts, and no matter how carefully one prepares the interview questions, all will be to no avail if the interviewer does not capture what the interviewee actually says. While the interview is going on, therefore, it is essential to record as faithfully as possible what the participant has to say. Some method for recording an interviewee's words exactly is required.

A recording device, therefore, is often considered an indispensable part of any qualitative researcher's equipment. "Tape recorders do not 'tune out' conversations, change what has been said because of interpretation (either conscious or unconscious), or record words more slowly than they are spoken."[19]

Using a recording device, however, does not eliminate the need for taking notes. As Patton points out:

> Notes can serve at least two purposes: (1) Notes taken during the interview can help the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview moves along, particularly where it may be appropriate to check out something that was said earlier; and (2) taking notes about what is said will facilitate later analysis, including locating important quotations from the tape itself . . . the failure to take notes will often indicate to the respondent that nothing of importance is being said.[20]

ETHICS IN INTERVIEWING: THE NECESSITY FOR INFORMED CONSENT

In-depth interviews ask participants to reveal much about their lives. During such interviews, a measure of intimacy can develop between interviewers and

participants that can lead participants to share information about events in their lives that, if misused, could leave them very vulnerable. Participants deserve to be protected from such vulnerability. Furthermore, interviewers also need to be protected against any misunderstanding on the part of participants as to the nature and purpose of the interview itself.

Thus, we believe that it is ethically desirable in this instance for interviewers to require participants to sign an informed consent form. We suggest that any such form include points similar to those shown in Figure 4.1.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As pointed out in Chapter 18 and described previously, there are important differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Although qualitative research can, and sometimes does, make use of structured instruments such as those described in Chapter 7, the preference is for less structured, open-ended data collection with structuring taking place later through content analysis or emergent themes (Chapter 20) as the means of data analysis. While other descriptive statistics are often relevant, the most commonly used is reporting of frequencies. As the use of mixed-methods designs continues to increase, we expect to see more use of quantitative analysis in conjunction with more customary qualitative analyses.

Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

In Chapter 8, we introduced the concepts of validity and reliability as they apply to the use of instruments in educational research. These two concepts are also very important in qualitative research, only here they apply to the observations researchers make and to the responses they receive to the interview questions. A fundamental concern in qualitative research, in fact, revolves around the degree of confidence researchers can place in what they have seen or heard. In other words, how can researchers be sure that they are not being misled?

You will recall that **validity** refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the inferences researchers make based specifically on the data they collect, while **reliability** refers to the consistency of these inferences over time, location, and circumstances.

Note that qualitative researchers often use the term **credibility** to encompass not only instrument validity and reliability but internal validity as well.

In a qualitative study, much depends on the perspective of the researcher. All researchers have certain biases. Accordingly, different researchers see some things more clearly than others. Qualitative researchers use a number of techniques, therefore, to check their perceptions to ensure that they are not being misinformed—that they are, in effect, seeing (and hearing) what they think they are. These procedures for checking on or enhancing validity and reliability include the following:

- *Using a variety of instruments to collect data.* When a conclusion is supported by data collected from a number of different instruments, its validity is thereby enhanced. This kind of checking is often referred to as **triangulation**. (See Figure 21.1 in Chapter 21.)
- *Checking one informant's descriptions of something (a way of doing things or a reason for doing something) against another informant's descriptions of the same thing.* Discrepancies in descriptions may mean the data are invalid.*
- *Learning to understand and, where appropriate, speak the vocabulary of the group being studied.* If researchers do not understand what informants mean when they use certain terms (especially slang) or if they take such terms to mean something that they do not, the recording of invalid data will surely result.
- *Writing down the questions asked (in addition to the answers received).* This helps researchers make sense at a later date out of answers recorded earlier, and helps them reduce distortions owing to selective forgetting.
- *Recording personal thoughts while conducting observations and interviews.* (Also referred to as *researcher reflexivity.*) Responses that seem unusual or incorrect can be noted and checked later against other remarks or observations.
- *Asking one or more participants in the study to review the accuracy of the research report.* This is frequently referred to as **member checking**.
- *Obtaining an individual outside of the study to review and evaluate the report.* This is called an **external audit**, or peer debriefing.
- *Documenting the sources of remarks whenever possible and appropriate.* This helps researchers make

*Not necessarily, of course. It may simply mean a difference in viewpoint or perception.

sense out of comments that otherwise might seem misplaced.
- *Documenting the basis for inferences.*
- *Describing the context in which questions are asked and situations are observed.* Also referred to as *thick description*.
- *Using audio and video recordings when possible and appropriate.*
- *Drawing conclusions based on one's understanding of the situation being observed and then acting on these conclusions.* If these conclusions are invalid, the researcher will soon find out after acting on them.
- *Interviewing individuals more than once.* Inconsistencies over time in what the same individual reports may suggest that he or she is an unreliable informant.
- *Observing the setting or situation of interest over a period of time.* The length of an observation is extremely important in qualitative research. Consistency over time with regard to what researchers are seeing or hearing is a strong indication of reliability. Furthermore, there is much about a group that does not even begin to emerge until some time has passed and the members of the group become familiar with, and willing to trust, the researcher.
- *Analyzing negative cases*. Attempting to eliminate instances that do not fit the pattern by revising that pattern until the instance fits.

Table 19.2 summarizes a number of purposes, research questions, strategies, and data collection techniques used in qualitative research.

TABLE 19.2 *Qualitative Research Questions, Strategies, and Data Collection Techniques*

Purpose of the Study	Possible Research Questions	Research Strategies	Examples of Data Collection Techniques
Exploratory: • To investigate a little-understood event, situation, or circumstance • To identify or discover important variables • To generate hypotheses for further research	• What is happening in this school? • What are the important themes or patterns in the ways teachers behave in this school? • How are these themes or patterns linked together?	• Case study • Observation • Field study	• Participant observation • Nonparticipant observation • In-depth interviewing • Selected interviewing
Descriptive: • To document an event, situation, or circumstance of interest	• What are the important behaviors, events, attitudes, processes, and/or structures occurring in this school?	• Case study • Field study • Ethnography • Observation	• Participant observation • Nonparticipant observation • In-depth interviewing • Written questionnaire
Explanatory: • To explain the forces causing an event, situation, or circumstance • To identify plausible causal networks shaping an event, situation, or circumstance	• What events, beliefs, attitudes, and/or policies are shaping the nature of this school? • How do these forces interact to shape this school?	• Case study • Field study • Ethnography	• Participant observation • Nonparticipant observation • In-depth interviewing • Written questionnaire
Predictive: • To predict the outcomes of an event, situation, or circumstance • To forecast behaviors or actions that might result from an event, situation, or circumstance	• What is likely to occur in the future as a result of the policies now in place at this school? • Who will be affected, and in what ways?	• Observation • Interview	• In-depth interviewing • Written questionnaire

An Example of Qualitative Research

In the remainder of this chapter, we present a published example of an observational qualitative study, followed by a critique of its strengths and weaknesses. As we did in our critiques of the different types of research studies we analyzed in other chapters, we use concepts introduced in earlier parts of the book in our analysis.

RESEARCH REPORT

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Walk and Talk: An Intervention for Behaviorally Challenged Youths

Patricia A. Doucette

Abstract

This qualitative research explored the question: Do preadolescent and adolescent youths with behavioral challenges benefit from a multimodal intervention of walking outdoors while engaging in counseling? The objective of the Walk and Talk intervention is to help the youth feel better, explore alternative behavioral choices, and learn new coping strategies and life skills by engaging in a counseling process that includes the benefits of mild aerobic exercise, and that nurtures a connection to the outdoors. The intervention utilizes a strong therapeutic alliance based on the Rogerian technique of unconditional positive regard, which is grounded and guided by the principles of attachment theory. For eight weeks, eight students (aged 9 to 13 years) from a middle school in Alberta, Canada, participated weekly in the Walk and Talk intervention. Students' self-reports indicated that they benefited from the intervention. Research triangulation with involved adults supported findings that indicated the students were making prosocial choices in behavior, and were experiencing more feelings of self-efficacy and well-being. Limitations, new research directions, and subsequent longitudinal research possibilities are discussed.

Implied directional hypothesis

Western societies have seen an increase in violence and antisocial behavior in schools and communities (Pollack, 1998). Juvenile crime rates have increased four times since the early 1970s (Cook & Laub, 1997). After the shock of the Columbine school massacre in the United States and other violent incidents, communities are demanding interventions to help prevent similar occurrences.

Traditional approaches for various youth behavior challenges have assumed the behavior needs to be controlled and contained by using behavioral and social learning approaches (Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998). Many current interventions rely on adaptations of behavior modification strategies to provide structure and control. The tenets of some programs for troubled youth are based on a hierarchy of control,

Justification

authority, and power. The framework of behavior and behavioral boundaries is directed by coercive control with token economies and earned privileges that are enforced by systems involving revoking social and recreational activities (Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998). I question and challenge this type of philosophy. Intrinsic motivation for making positive behavioral choices and taking responsibility and ownership for behavior is unlikely to become the behavioral response when behavior is controlled by others. Research (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggests intrinsic motivation involves self-determination, self-awareness of one's needs and setting goals to meet those needs. I believe that many behaviorally challenged youths have experienced interactions with key adults that have been punitive, rejecting, and untrustworthy (Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998; Staub, 1996). Therefore, many current interventions based on behavioral strategies and coercice control have limited effectiveness (Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998; Staub, 1996).

New treatment methods that adopt a therapeutic approach that is grounded and guided by the principles of attachment theory may engage a therapeutic process with the results of youths' prosocial behavioral choices (Centers for Disease Control, 1991; Ferguson, 1999; Holland, Moretti, Verlaan, & Peterson, 1993; Keat, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998). By participating in a casual walk outdoors, there can be the physiological advantage of mild aerobic exercise (Franken, 1994; Hays, 1999; Fox, 1997; Baum & Posluszny, 1999; Kolb & Whishaw, 1996, 1998). I believe, as do others (Anderson, 2000; Glaser, 2000; Tkachuk & Martin, 1999; Real Age Newsletter, 2001a), that human beings have a natural bond with the outdoors and other living organisms. By nurturing this bond with a walk outdoors, positive well-being and health can result (Tkachuk & Martin, 1999; Hays, 1999; Orlick, 1993; Real Age Newsletter, 2001b).

Ambiguous

WALK AND TALK INTERVENTION

The Walk and Talk intervention has its fundamental philosophy in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological theory of behavior, which views the child, family, school, work, peers, neighborhood, and community as interconnected systems. Youths' problem behavior can be attributed to dysfunction between any one or more combinations of these systems (Borduin, 1999). By understanding these dynamics, the Walk and Talk intervention attempts to provide a support network that encourages youths to reconnect with self and the environment through an attachment process, a counseling process, and a physiological response resulting in feelings of self-efficacy.

The Walk and Talk intervention utilizes three components to engage youths. The counseling component of the Walk and Talk intervention borrows seven principles from the Orinoco program used at the Maples Adolescent Centre near Vancouver, British Columbia (Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998, pp. 10–18). These principles are driven by an underlying understanding of attachment theory. These principles are as follows:

1. All behavior has meaning. The meaning of the behavior is revealed by understanding the internal working model of the person generating the behavior.
2. Early and repeated experiences with people who care for us set a foundation for our internal working models of relationship with self and others. Our earliest experiences have a profound effect on how we approach relationships, school, work, and play.
3. Biological legacies such as cognitive, emotional, and physical capabilities are an interactive part of our experience and contribute to our working model of relationships with self and others.

4. Internal working models are constantly changing in the context of relationships and expertise. These models are constantly revised based on experience. Experience can be added to but not subtracted.
5. Interpersonal relationships are a process of continuous reciprocal interplay of each person's internal working model with others. It is not possible to hold oneself apart from this interplay.
6. We understand ourselves in relation to others. A sense of self includes our sense of how others view and respond to us.
7. Enduring change in an individual's behavior occurs only when there is change in the internal working model supported by change in the system one lives in and if there is sufficient time, opportunity, and support to integrate the new experience.

The counseling component of the Walk and Talk intervention is interlaced with new strategies for positive life skills and attempts to incorporate solution-focused brief therapy (Riley, 1999). Through counseling, youths discover solutions by way of simple interventions while experiencing positive regard in Rogerian fashion (Rogers, 1980). Focus is kept on the youths' strengths while collaborating for change (Riley, 1999; Orlick, 1993). Identifying highlights is an important element of each walk. Highlights are used to teach youths to think positively so they can reframe their experiences in a way that enhances well-being (Orlick, 1993). By being able to illuminate the good in things that happen in daily life, youths can find inner strength and resilience when experiencing negative events or reactions from others (Orlick, 1993). Youths who have an inner source of reworking setbacks in daily life will be more likely to cope with stress effectively.

The ecopsychology component of the Walk and Talk intervention is tied to the psychological processes that bring people closer to the natural world. Some research suggests that humans have a natural bond with other living organisms, and nurturing that connection may provide a health benefit (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995; Real Age Newsletter, 2001a). By walking outdoors, the outdoor connection is nurtured, facilitating youths' awareness of their environment.

Prior research

The physiological component engages the youths in aerobic exercise. Considerable research supports the use of exercise to alleviate many types of mental illness and enhance feelings of well-being (Tkachuk & Martin, 1999). Some research suggests that as little as ten minutes of daily exercise is enough to generate mood-elevating neurochemicals (Real Age Newsletter, 2001b). Recognizing the importance of exercise to well-being is a critical aspect of the Walk and Talk intervention.

Purpose

The intervention for behaviorally challenged youths combines the benefits of a strong therapeutic alliance based on the Rogerian technique of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1980), integrated with mild aerobic exercise that occurs outdoors in a place of natural beauty. The research goal is to discover if this combination has a beneficial effect on selected youths and their problem behaviors.

The impetus for this research is to understand the epidemiology and etiology of the problem behaviors while attempting to implement an effective preventative intervention. One objective is to provide fertile ground for the youths to explore and understand alternative behavioral choices. This phenomenological qualitative research approach assumes that the participants are existential individuals and as such, actions, verbalizations, everyday patterns, and ways of interacting can reveal an understanding of human behavior (Addison, 1992). A basic principle of existentialism suggests that each and every expression, even the most insignificant and superficial behavior, reveals and communicates who that individual is (Sartre, 1957). It is hoped that the participants will acquire a

stronger self-understanding via a therapeutic alliance, aerobic exercise, experiencing a connection to the outdoors, and be able to choose to make a behavior change.

By understanding and utilizing attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969; Centers for Disease Control, 1991; Ferguson, 1999; Holland, Moretti, Verlaan, & Peterson, 1993; Keat, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Moore, Moretti, & Holland, 1998) and Rogerian (1980) methods to guide the counseling with a walk outdoors, it is hoped that youths' self-esteem will increase as they become connected to another person—myself—and the outdoors.

Why do some young people sabotage themselves with nonproductive behaviors? I believe if an intervention can be introduced and then utilized by youths who have a history of these behaviors, they can be redirected to satisfying, productive lives regardless of their prior personal history. The intervention will help behaviorally troubled youths to feel better and do better by being internally motivated to choose prosocial behavior.

Possible researcher bias

The plasticity, resilience, and remarkable adaptability of youths to their unique selves and situations has been a catalyst for my research. The importance of attachment (as defined by Ainsworth, 2000) and understanding attachment theory (Ainsworth, 2000; Bowlby, 1969) cannot be understated. The Walk and Talk intervention provides a safe place for youths to discover new positive coping strategies that can benefit them throughout life.

METHOD

The middle school principal assigned the student outreach support worker to select appropriate individuals for the Walk and Talk intervention. The assistant superintendent, a licensed psychologist, was selected as a resource and liaison in case crises should arise. A consent form was signed by a school district representative. Further, consent forms were sent to the parents of participants.

Convenience sample

The eight intervention respondents chosen were coded by school assessors as behaviorally challenged and in need of special education. I first met with each of the eight youths for a preintervention interview that allows us to become acquainted and for me to familiarize myself with their understanding of their behavioral challenges. Specifically, the youths' problem behaviors as indicated by school representatives, parents and/or guardians were identified as conduct disorder as described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Conduct disorders include violating rules, aggressiveness that threatens or causes physical harm to others, bullying, extortion, lack of respect for self and others, suicide attempts, truancy, initiating frequent fights, and various charges by the police such as breaking and entering (DSM-IV, 1994). The problem behaviors were repetitive, resulting in unsuccessful functioning within the school, community, and often family setting.

Ages were 9–13

Good clarification

By utilizing a collaborative, qualitative approach, I disclosed the intentions of the Walk and Talk intervention. I believe this approach facilitated development of alliance, empowerment of the participant, and engagement as the expert (Creswell, 1998; Flick, 1998). My role as researcher was that of an active, interested learner (Creswell, 1998; Flick, 1998). This collaborative, qualitative approach bridges the gap between participant and researcher. A collaborative approach has been preferred for youths since it engages and honors them as their own expert (Axline, 1947/1969; Oaklander, 1978); youths are usually not in control of many decisions that affect them.

Unclear to us

Participant observer

Interviews were conducted before and after the six-week Walk and Talk intervention. The first interview included an introduction by myself and by the youths. They were asked to draw a picture of themselves performing any activity of their choice. Sheets of 8" by 11" white paper and ten assorted gel pens were provided. These pens were chosen because of their popularity with children of all ages. Upon completion of the drawings, the youths

Instrumentation

were asked to make a list of five of their strengths. Next they were asked to list at least five weaknesses. The final activity was to write a short autobiographical incident—about something that had made an impression whether positive or negative. After each activity, discussion was encouraged. A goal of the interview was to start the youths thinking about self, and for me, to learn what they think and feel. At the close of the interview, I prepared them for the week of walking and talking, emphasizing that it would be their opportunity to talk about whatever came to mind and the talks would be confidential—except in extreme situations, for instance, statements about harming themself or others.

By conducting the first interview in this manner, it was hoped the youths would start to self-disclose in some or all of the modalities. Also, it provides baseline insight as to how the youths feel at that time. The self-portraits of each youth were examined by a licensed art therapist, Maxine Junge, and myself. Maxine Junge (personal communication, February 18, 2002) provides the caution that what she offered were guesses, hypotheses, and impressions. The autobiographical pieces gave insight into issues considered important by these youths.

Good caution

The interview was fairly ambitious, but the researcher did not press the youths with the agenda. It was hoped that an alliance would be established wherein trust and respect would be shared. This started the counseling process. It is important to discover what this process is for the youths and report it. It is important to discover the meaning the youths give to events, and resulting actions (Maxwell, 1996). It was the youths' reality that this qualitative approach attempts to understand (Maxwell, 1996). The youths were the focus and their phenomenological experience was explored while psychoeducational interventions were suggested and discussed when appropriate.

It was the counselor's role to help the youths clarify and reframe belief constructs while helping to identify and translate the subconscious into the conscious (Hays, 1999). How youths behave and speak reflects subconscious thoughts and feelings (Hunter, 1987). It was the counselor's role to help the youths identify the connectedness to place and others, identify and verbalize one or more successful survival skills while introducing new conscious approaches that encourage the cognitive strategy of stop, think, do. Introducing young people to the hope of a future that is rewarding and positive and one they can manage and control is a paramount goal. When appropriate, they will be introduced to various life skills that can improve the quality of their life (Orlick, 1993). By learning about positive thinking, positive self-talk, stress management, relaxation skills, imagery, anger physiology, anger management, communication with "I statements," focusing and refocusing, new behavioral choices can be made (Orlick, 1993). Learning one, two, or more key life skills can enhance the youths' lives.

Procedures

I met with each respondent for six consecutive weeks, once a week, for approximately 30–45 minutes per session. Each session entailed a walk on the school grounds. This did not include the pre and post interviews. The eight participants began their first Walk and Talk between December 12, 2001 and January 28, 2002. This wide range of start times was due to the waiting period for parental consents and then arranging appropriate times with the teachers. Also, at the end of December and early January there was a two-week school break which caused a delay in beginning some first sessions. The total Walk and Talk time allotted was 45 minutes, but because of time needed to dress appropriately, actual Walk and Talk time was about 30 minutes. At the start of each walk I asked the youths what they wanted to discuss. If there wasn't anything in particular they wanted to say, I asked them for highlights in their lives since I last saw them a week ago. Highlights are positive events, positive experiences, comments, personal accomplishments or anything that has lifted the quality of the moment for that child (Orlick, 1993, 1998). Next, I asked them about their lowlights. Understanding and verbalizing

Good detail

that life is filled with highs and lows begins the journey of self-discovery and also allows the youth to discuss alternative strategies for dealing with problems.

Throughout the six-week Walk and Talk intervention, I introduced strategies for dealing with stress, identifying what was stressful for the youth, discussing the importance of positive self-talk, mental imagery, visualization techniques, and focusing and refocusing techniques (Orlick, 1993, 1998). Most of the youths chosen for this intervention had anger-management challenges. When appropriate, anger-management techniques, combined with the cognitive strategy of stop, think, do was introduced. Understanding anger cycles and the physiology of anger was discussed. One of the life skills introduced was learning the rules of using assertiveness rather than aggressiveness and utilizing I-statements to convey feelings to others. When appropriate these types of life skills were introduced and practiced in mock situations. Positive life skill techniques were woven into the counseling session during most sessions.

For more detail

Need more detail

The intervention was completed with a post interview. When gathering data from the youths, respondents were informed that the research was intended to help them in the future; therefore, answering honestly is important. Respondents were told there were no right or wrong responses. They were to feel free to talk openly. Similar to the pre intervention interview, youths were asked to draw a picture of themselves in an activity. Next they were asked to write their strengths and weaknesses. At that time, I showed each youth the drawing from their pre intervention interview, and we compared the strengths and weaknesses from before and after the intervention. Together we noted the differences. I asked each youth: What has changed since we started? What did you like about Walk and Talk? What didn't you like about it? What was helpful? What wasn't helpful? What are your concluding comments and remarks? Do you think it would be good for other youths to participate? I asked them what they thought about the art they produced and about the strengths and weaknesses they identified. I assessed self-esteem via the self-portrait they had drawn, comparing pre and post intervention responses. Several methods of communicating with the youths, i.e. art, structured exercise, open-ended questions, and discussion of their experience, made my report of their phenomenological experience more complete.

Good detail

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I chose a phenomenological approach because I wanted to capture the essence of the youths' experience as told by them. Did they feel better and do better? The youths' experience was reported as I observed it. I assessed their experience of the Walk and Talk intervention as told to me by them along with collateral observation and/or information given to me by parents, teachers, and other involved school personnel. The ecopsychology aspect of this intervention can be replicated in any safe outdoor environment.

How reported?

The only given variables in this research are the common denominators of age, youths from 9 to 13 years old, and the individual, problematic behaviors, although variations in etiology and epidemiology exist. The factors relating to the causes of the behaviors are individual. The systemic distribution of impacting incidents and contributing components to each youth's behavior vary. By offering a multimodal approach it was hoped that the youths' experience would be positive and result in prosocial behavior.

As the qualitative researcher it was my mandate to utilize rigorous data collection procedures (Creswell, 1998). As a researcher it was also my intent to maintain my distance in order to promote objectivity but still engage them as a counselor. To achieve this result requires walking a fine line. To preserve scientific clarity, conscious effort was required. However, a positive interpersonal relationship was necessary for the success

Good caution

of the research intervention and of the qualitative approach. The characteristics and assumptions of the phenomenological qualitative approach to research necessitates that the participant's view be the entire reality of the study (Creswell, 1998). As such, the reality was purely and subjectively portrayed as an experiential component of the study. To analyze the data, multiple approaches and multiple traditions were included. This was done to provide a fuller, holistic view and richer understanding of the process which occurred during time in the field.

Seven of eight

Combining the three components of counseling, ecopsychology, and physiological enhancement creates a new intervention for behaviorally challenged youths. The youths who completed the intervention stated that it helped them clarify feelings. Overall, I believe the Walk and Talk intervention benefited each youth who completed the intervention. The following discussion provides specifics about the individual participants.

Youth A

What evidence?

Youth A's participation helped him to become more self-aware of his struggles with sister and father. Although strategies were discussed, I do not believe that Youth A assimilated many new life skills. He needed much more individual time and attention to help him cope with the number of problems he faces outside of school. However, his art therapy work showed a definite improvement. The first drawing was very small, not grounded, and "floating," which the art therapist suggested indicated a feeling of smallness, powerlessness, and lack of self-esteem. The final drawing depicted a well-defined boy and girl—Youth A and little sister—in his bedroom with all his prized possessions. Both children were smiling and he looked like a protective big brother. His teacher's comments about Youth A indicated that the Walk and Talk intervention had benefited Youth A at least for the days of each Walk and Talk. The teacher believed Youth A needed more continuous intensive help. Youth A made positive comments about his experience in intervention: He liked talking about his feelings and learning focusing and refocusing skills. His before-and-after strengths ratio was 12/15, indicating that he believed he had more strengths on the completion day of Walk and Talk than on the starting day. His weaknesses ratio was 9/3, indicating that at the start of Walk and Talk he believed he had many more weaknesses than when he finished.

Providing sources of information

Youth B

Good detail

I believe there was a significant improvement with Youth B. Each week he self-disclosed more and more. He was eager to talk about his problems and challenges as time went on. Toward the end of the intervention he was walking with his head held high rather than downcast. He was very pleased to report his new fun relationship with his big brother. His teacher told me throughout the intervention of his improved coping and social skills in the classroom. She gave me detailed accounts of how Youth B avoided confrontations by using newly acquired social skill strategies. In the last discussion with the teacher, on the last day of the intervention, she revealed a violent outburst in his classroom. It was on that day physical abuse charges were reported to social services regarding his mother. Although the teacher could not understand Youth B's incongruent behavior, I knew it all fit.

His before-and-after strengths ratio was 5/8, indicating that he believed he had more strengths on the completion day of Walk and Talk than on the starting day. In addition, three of the strengths mentioned were social skills. His weaknesses ratio was 4/0, indicating that at the start of Walk and Talk he believed he had four weaknesses, and

when he finished he had none. Youth B indicated Walk and Talk was a helpful intervention for him.

The art therapist's comments regarding his drawings indicate that he was a boy possibly filled with fear and anger. The drawings denoted a developmental problem, in that they depicted a small and insignificant figure.

Youth C

I think there was a huge improvement with Youth C. He seemed to self-disclose more and more each week. He utilized the life skill techniques we discussed, practiced them throughout the week, and eagerly reported back to me. His self-esteem soared with each new success he experienced. He would retell with enthusiasm his weekly attempts at new life skills, his successes along with some failures. His teacher echoed my sentiments, noticing a remarkable change of attitude in the classroom, his cooperation with peers, and positive choices in behavior. His brother commented on their newly improved relationship.

His before-and-after strengths ratio was 5/5. On completion day of Walk and Talk, three of his five strengths were social skills, whereas on starting day none were social skills. His weaknesses ratio was 5/2, indicating that at the start of Walk and Talk, he had many more weaknesses than when he finished. At the start he indicated that two of his five weaknesses were social skills and at completion, one of his two weaknesses was his temper. I viewed these changes as exemplifying a raised level of self-awareness. Youth C very enthusiastically claimed Walk and Talk was a positive event for him.

"Explaining away"?

The art therapist noted that his first drawing depicted a small, facetless, insignificant boy, and his final drawing was very similar. Sadly, after completion of the intervention, charges of parental child abuse were reported to social services.

Youth D

Youth D was reintegrated into the regular classroom toward the end of the Walk and Talk intervention. I think his participation in the intervention was one of many support efforts that helped him improve his overall success and well-being. During Walk and Talk he talked about his daily challenges. He seemed to develop a self-awareness over time. His teacher reported positive changes: he had started to react appropriately to accept "no" without bursting into tears. He utilized self-chosen time outs and self-talk to help him control his emotions. His teacher indicated that he was more polite and considerate with others. Youth D reported that Walk and Talk had been a great experience for him.

Internal validity

His before-and-after strengths ratio was 7/8. On completion day of Walk and Talk, one of his eight strengths was a social skill. His weaknesses ratio was 5/5. The art therapy assessment for his first drawing suggested an ineffectual, fearful, and avoidant child. His final drawing was grounded, but still revealed a faceless self. Youth D's before-and-after drawings lack depth and involvement.

Youth E

I believe Youth E benefited from his participation in the Walk and Talk intervention, but needed intensive ongoing help. He seemed to have a very low self-image that was controlled by external events. His troubled home life, parents' divorce, and taking a daily drug cocktail for various problems contributed to his need for external support. His teacher agreed. The teacher also said that Youth E had benefited greatly from participating in Walk and Talk. In the classroom he was much calmer and cooperative, thereby

experiencing more personal success, something he clearly needed. Youth E said Walk and Talk was good for him because he could get his feelings out.

Questions validity

The art therapist's assessment of his artwork was of a boy with high intelligence, with a good self image. This was contradictory to the boy I knew. Both of his pictures were grounded but showed an avoidant boy who did not know how to handle his impulses.

His before-and-after strengths ratio was 5/8. On completion day of Walk and Talk, seven of his eight strengths were social skills. This was impressive. His weaknesses ratio was 5/1. In his first meeting he identified two social skills weaknesses as being related to being bullied. In our final meeting he admitted that arguing was his weakness. I believe he had acquired more self-awareness over the intervention time and learned new coping strategies.

Youth F

It was difficult for me to assess whether Youth F, the only female participant, benefited from the intervention. I often wondered what she was learning and what bothered her. However, I found her participation in the ecopsychology aspect remarkable. She became transformed from a girl who threw rocks at birds to one who tried to gently approach them and stroke them. She became increasingly aware of the surrounding trees, an occasional wandering dog, and the variety of birds. She seemed to enjoy the physical aspects of the intervention. I believe she was extremely athletic and often mentioned this to her. Her teacher queried me after the second Walk and Talk to learn what life skills we were concentrating on. The teacher collaborated with me to help the girl control her impulsivity by reminding her when it was appropriate to focus, refocus, stop, think, do, rub her lucky penny, and apply any other life skill strategies I had mentioned. Also, Youth F's mother phoned me to offer collaboration in helping her daughter use life skills at home. Youth F experienced behavioral improvement during the intervention time as reported by all triangulation sources. Youth F told me that Walk and Talk was great.

Good detail

Helps to clarify term

Seems to contradict first sentence in paragraph

The art therapist's assessment of her artwork suggested possible organic problems. I agreed. Her before-and-after strengths ratio was 15/7. Her weaknesses ratio was 5/0. I believe Youth F could use ongoing outside support.

Youth G

Youth G was a total pleasure to have as a participant of Walk and Talk. Although he was mildly developmentally delayed, he was eager to learn new positive life skills. He readily became attached to the outdoor environment, becoming keenly aware of the birds, trees, and sounds. He often made observations that I found remarkable although his kind, gentle spirit was often squelched in his daily struggles with academics and interpersonal relationships, but because of his resilience and willingness to discuss his problems he could find solutions readily. His teachers believed Youth G's success was ongoing after he participated in behavioral program. Youth G's teachers concurred that the Walk and Talk intervention had probably helped to illuminate his positive choices.

Unclear to us

Youth G's art assessment denoted his developmental lag. The drawings before-and-after showed him wearing a sport shirt with the number twelve (his lucky number) and playing volleyball. Neither drawing reflected a grounded individual. His before-and-after strengths ratio was 5/5. In his first meeting he identified two social skills as being strengths. In the last meeting he identified three social skills as such. His weaknesses ratio was 1/3. I believe this indicated a keener self awareness. I believe Youth G benefited enormously from his participation in the Walk and Talk intervention.

"Explaining away"?

Youth H

Youth H identified seven strengths and two weaknesses. He liked to talk about playing and watching hockey. His art was not grounded and very simple. The art therapist noted that his drawing was very protected and defensive indicating possible anger and aggression.

Youth H was removed from the intervention after one meeting. At the time of our first meeting the teacher's aide strongly argued against his being a participant in the Walk and Talk intervention. Youth H had been selected by the student outreach worker and his parents had consented to his participation. The new school guidance counselor contacted me with concerns and recommended that he be pulled from the intervention. Due to these objections, Youth H was withdrawn. My advice to future Walk and Talk interventionists is to enlist the support of all people who are in favor of a youth's participation in the program. Otherwise what happened to Youth H could happen to others.

Overall, the research results were positive. From the teachers' perspective, my perspective, and the youths' comments, the intervention seemed to benefit them on many fronts. Introducing alternative life skill strategies was a key counseling component of the intervention. All youths found the focusing and refocusing exercise beneficial and many adopted the technique to everyday life. Focusing and refocusing can facilitate learning to experience life fully. By practicing focusing and refocusing exercises youths can learn to closely observe what is seen, listen intently to what is heard, feel fully and connect completely when interacting with others (Orlick, 1993). The focusing and refocusing technique utilized aspects of the intervention's ecopsychological component by weaving a life skill technique into a closer awareness of self and facets of the outdoors that otherwise would go unnoticed. After applying the technique outdoors it was readily transferable to indoor situations.

What evidence?

It is my belief that to varying degrees, the youths benefited from the experience of counseling outdoors enhanced by the physiological "boost" provided by aerobic exercise. Walking allowed for physical release, something very important for these active youths. Feelings, problems, and sometimes solutions to problems materialized. All respondents found talking about such problems to be beneficial. These respondents were chosen because of their difficulty in managing social situations.

Redundant

Assuming my findings are correct and the intervention can be deemed successful, will the intervention have long-term effects? I can only speculate. Follow-up longitudinal studies are recommended. Suggestions for future research include using control groups with various problem behaviors as well as groups with no problem behaviors, groups with and without the ecopsychological component, groups with and without the walking component. I also advise utilizing quantitative methods to measure success. Possibly my strongest recommendation is to do the Walk and Talk intervention in warm weather.

CONCLUSIONS

A possible limitation of this research could be its subjective nature. Further, my subjectivity presupposes that most people with attachment difficulties respond favorably to Carl Rogers' (1980) therapeutic approach of positive personal regard.

Good caution

Inclement weather could deter respondents from wholehearted participation. Unfortunately, the session times, once established, were not flexible, since they were incorporated into the school day.

This research approached behavioral challenges from an individual vantage point rather than a systemic or societal perspective. Some researchers (e.g., Grossman, 1999) view youths' turmoil and violence as resulting from the ills of society (i.e., television,

movies, and video game violence). The present research does not address these types of cultural concerns of society on a macro level.

In sum, I would like to see the Walk and Talk intervention used in middle schools and high schools, and utilized by mental health practitioners. Once youths have completed the intervention, I recommend periodical refreshers on a monthly basis. Walk and Talk refreshers will give the youths a time to reconnect with the outdoors, self, and reinstate positive behaviors and life skills.

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Analysis of the Study

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION

The purpose is found on page 462: "The research goal is to discover if this combination has a beneficial effect on selected youths and their problem behaviors." We would substitute "the Walk and Talk intervention" for "this combination," but the meaning is, we think, nonetheless clear.

The justification is extensive and clear (though somewhat redundant) with respect to both the societal/personal needs the study addresses and the rationale for the intervention. It includes limitations of other interventions and the philosophical and scientific bases of the method.

There appear to be no ethical issues regarding confidentially or deception. Risk to students appears minimal but parental consent forms were obtained and a psychologist was available if needed.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions are not explicit but are made reasonably clear through (sometimes extensive) description of major terms: *"Walk and Talk"; beneficial effect;* and *problem behaviors*. The meaning of both these and other terms such as: *counseling component; ecopsychology component; physiological component;* and *collaborative qualitative approach* would be clearer if references and justifications were not mixed in with descriptions.

PRIOR RESEARCH

The author provides extensive references in support of both rationale for the study and the intervention procedures. However, it is often unclear whether the reference is research, theory, or opinion, and whether the reference does, in fact, support the method. For example: "there can be the physiological advantage of mild exercise," page 461.

HYPOTHESES

No hypotheses are explicitly stated. The research question stated in the Abstract—"Do preadolescent and adolescent youths with behavioral challenges benefit from a multimodal intervention of walking outdoors while engaging in counseling?"—in conjunction with subsequent material clearly implies the directional hypothesis that the students do improve.

SAMPLE

The sample is clearly described as eight students (actually seven because one was withdrawn for reasons not entirely clear), aged 9 to 13 chosen from one school district as having problem behaviors. The method of selection is clear. Each of the students is further described in the section on individual outcomes. Replication of the study would be facilitated by more detail. For example, how many were primarily aggressive, suicidal, lawbreakers, etc. This convenience sample does not permit generalization, but that is presumably not the intent of the study.

INSTRUMENTATION

Instrumentation included listing of strengths and weaknesses as well as self-drawings by students and interviews by the researcher, all done pre- and post-intervention. It also included researcher observations and interpretations made during each of six intervention periods with each student. Whether a daily log or other recording mechanism was used is not reported; we must assume these are based on researcher recollection. Also included, as we discover in the results section, were comments from teachers and family members.

No discussion of reliability or validity is provided, which is not unusual in qualitative studies. The researcher acknowledges the subjective nature of the study as well as presents the justification for the methodology. Although the report states that "triangulation with involved adults supported findings that indicated the students were making prosocial choices in behavior, and were experiencing more feelings of self-efficacy and well-being," this is not clear to us. As we evaluate the reports on individual students, it appears that the researcher and teacher were in clear agreement on three, perhaps four of the seven students. Comments from family members were rare. There also seems to be a contradiction in one case with the researcher stating, "it was difficult for me to asess whether Youth F . . . benefited from the intervention . . ." but later stating that "Youth F . . . experienced behavioral improvement during the intervention time as reported by all triangulation sources."

PROCEDURES/INTERNAL VALIDITY

The intervention is, in general, well described although more detail would be helpful, especially in replication. Presumably a reader can turn to the Orlick reference on ways of reducing stress, but the anger management, cognitive strategies, and assertiveness strategies need further clarification, as is provided for "life-skills strategies" in the report on Youth F.

The author recognizes the problem of internal validity in discussing Youth D with the statement: "I think his participation in the intervention was one of many support effects that helped him improve . . . ." The effect of other variables on outcomes exists for all seven students. Although this type of study cannot effectively control extraneous variables, more discussion is appropriate. It seems to us that it is unlikely that many other threats to internal validity would exist during this particular six-week period, but assessment of such possibilities should be feasible for a researcher who is involved this closely with the schools. One instance of a significant event (physical abuse) and its probable impact is discussed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical analysis is not appropriate for this study. As is usual in studies of this type, the results from various instruments are described, in this case for individual students.

RESULT/INTERPRETATION

The author recognizes the possibilities for bias and subjectivity impacting her reporting and interpreting results. In numerous instances, she gives appropriate cautions. Given this limitation, we find the results impressive, particularly because she is often clear in stating "I believe" so that the reader should realize that this applies to many other statements as well. She also frequently cites sources: e.g., "Youth B made positive comments about . . ."; "His teacher told me . . ." and gives behavioral examples such as "She became transformed from a girl who threw rocks at birds to one who tried to gently approach them."

Although we think the totality of evidence and impressions justifies the conclusion that students benefited, we think the amount of benefit is overstated. It appears that the most common positive outcomes were increased self-awareness as perceived by the researcher and the more observable self-disclosure. These are considered desirable in counseling but may have influenced perception of other outcomes.

A problem exists in the interpretation of the pre-post self-listing of strengths and weaknesses. When strengths increased and weaknesses decreased, this is usually interpreted as positive. However, with two students where this is not the case, the result is "explained" as due to greater self-awareness, hence also positive. While this may be true, researchers cannot change their interpretation of data after the fact, at least not without more justification.

CONCLUSIONS

We agree, with the reservation mentioned above, that ". . . to varying degrees the youths in this study benefited from the experience. . . ." We think the results justify further research, as suggested by the author, and that this research is needed before the intervention is recommended on other than a trial basis.

This study illustrates both the richness of such research and the difficulty of making firm conclusions. It also illustrates a contrast in reporting styles. More "traditional" researchers are likely to prefer, as we do, clearer distinctions among purpose, justification, definition, procedures, results, and interpretations than are found in this report. Others argue that too much attention to such clarity can severely impair the narrative. We agree but believe a middle ground is attainable.

Go back to the **INTERACTIVE AND APPLIED LEARNING** feature at the beginning of the chapter for a listing of interactive and applied activities. Go to the **Online Learning Center** at **www.mhhe.com/fraenkel8e** to take quizzes, practice with key terms, and review chapter content.

Main Points

OBSERVER ROLES

- There are four roles that an observer can play in a qualitative research study, ranging from complete participant, to participant-as-observer, to observer-as-participant, to complete observer. The degree of involvement of the observer in the observed situation diminishes accordingly for each of these roles.

PARTICIPANT VERSUS NONPARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

- In participant observation studies, the researcher actually participates as an active member of the group in the situation or setting he or she is observing.
- In nonparticipant observation studies, the researcher does not participate in an activity or situation but observes "from the sidelines."
- The most common forms of nonparticipant observation studies include naturalistic observation and simulations.
- A simulation is an artificially created situation in which subjects are asked to act out certain roles.

OBSERVATION TECHNIQUES

- A coding scheme is a set of categories an observer uses to record a person's or group's behaviors.
- Even with a fixed coding scheme in mind, an observer must still choose what to observe.
- A major problem in all observational research is that much that goes on may be missed.

OBSERVER EFFECT

- The term *observer effect* refers to either the effect the presence of an observer can have on the behavior of the subjects or observer bias in the data reported. The use of audio and video recordings is especially helpful in guarding against this effect.

- For this reason, many researchers argue that the participants in a study should not be informed of the study's purpose until after the data have been collected.

OBSERVER BIAS

- Observer bias refers to the possibility that certain characteristics or ideas of observers may affect what they observe.

SAMPLING IN OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES

- Researchers who engage in observation usually must choose a purposive sample.

INTERVIEWING

- A major technique commonly used by qualitative researchers is in-depth interviewing.
- One purpose of interviewing the participants in a qualitative study is to find out how they think or feel about something. Another purpose is to provide a check on the researcher's observations.
- Interviews may be structured, semistructured, informal, or retrospective.
- The six types of questions asked by interviewers are background (or demographic) questions, knowledge questions, experience (or behavior) questions, opinion (or values) questions, feelings questions, and sensory questions.
- Respect for the individual being interviewed is a paramount expectation in any proper interview.
- Key actors are people in any group who are more informed about the culture and history of the group and who also are more articulate than others.
- A focus group interview is an interview with a small, fairly homogeneous group of people who respond to a series of questions asked by the interviewer.
- The most effective characteristic of a good interviewer is a strong interest in people and in listening to what they have to say.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- An important check on the validity and reliability of the researcher's interpretations in qualitative research is to compare one informant's description of something with another informant's description of the same thing.
- Another, although more difficult, check on reliability/validity is to compare information on the same topic with different information—triangulation.
- Efforts to ensure reliability and validity include use of proper vocabulary, recording questions used as well as personal reactions, describing content, and documenting sources.

Key Terms

background (demographic) question 453
coding scheme 449
credibility 458
dichotomous question 455
experience (behavior) question 453
external audit 458
feelings question 454
focus group interview 456
informal interview 451
interview 450
key actor (informant) 453
knowledge question 453
member checking 458
naturalistic observation 447

nonparticipant observation 446
observational data 448
observer bias 448
observer effect 448
observer expectations 449
open-ended question 455
opinion (values) question 453
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reliability in qualitative research 458
retrospective interview 452
semistructured interview 451
sensory question 454
simulation 447
structured interview 451
triangulation 458
validity in qualitative research 458

For Discussion

1. "Observing people without their knowledge and/or recording their comments without their permission is unethical." Would you agree with this statement? Explain your reasoning.
2. Which method do you think is more likely to produce valid information—participant or nonparticipant observation? Why?
3. Are there any kinds of behaviors that should *not* be observed? Explain your thinking. If so, give an example.
4. What would you say is the biggest advantage of participant observation? The biggest disadvantage?
5. "A major difficulty in observing people is that much that goes on may be missed by the observer." Is this always true? Are there any ways to decrease what is missed during observational research? If so, give an example of what might be done.
6. Is observer effect inevitable? Why or why not?
7. "What qualitative researchers try to do is to study the subjective objectively." What does this mean?
8. Is there any kind of data that cannot be obtained through observation? Through interviews? If so, explain.
9. Of the six types of questions we described on pages 453–454, which do you think interviewees would find the hardest to answer? The easiest? Why?
10. What would you say is the most important quality or characteristic an interviewer should possess? Why?
11. Which do you think would be hardest to master and do well, observing or interviewing? Why?
12. Interviewers are frequently advised to "be natural." What do you think that means? Is it possible? Desirable? Always a good idea or not? Explain your thinking.

Notes

1. H. R. Bernard (2000). *Social research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p. 388.
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3. R. Lindman, P. Jarvinen, and J. Vidjeskog (1987). Verbal interactions of aggressively and nonaggressively predisposed males in a drinking situation. *Aggressive Behavior, 13:* 187–196.
4. M. A. Stewart (1984). What is a successful doctor-patient interview? A study of interactions and outcomes. *Social Science and Medicine, 19:* 167–175.
5. B. Devet (1990). A method for observing and evaluating writing lab tutorials. *Writing Center Journal, 10:* 75–83.
6. E. J. Amidon and J. B. Hough (1967). *Interaction analysis: Theory, research, and application.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

7. M. Fetterman (1998). *Ethnography: Step by Step,* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
8. M. Q. Patton (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods,* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
9. Fetterman, op. cit., p. 72. Fetterman points out that the term *informant* has its roots in anthropological work conducted in colonial settings, specifically in African nations formerly within the British Empire.
10. Ibid., p. 73.
11. Ibid.
12. Patton, op. cit., pp. 348–351.
13. Fetterman, op. cit., p. 70.
14. Ibid., p. 71.
15. I. E. Seidman (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences,* 3rd ed. New York: Teacher's College Press, p. 68.
16. Ibid., pp. 73–74.
17. Patton, op. cit., pp. 354–355.
18. Patton, op. cit., p. 385.
19. Ibid., p. 380.
20. Ibid., p. 383.