# Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods

# 3
EDITION

# Michael Quinn Patton

# 6

# Fieldwork Strategies
# and Observation Methods

## Folk Wisdom About Human Observation

*In the fields of observation, chance favors the prepared mind.*

·Louis Pasteur (1822-1895)

*People only see what they are prepared to see.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Every student who takes an introductory psychology or sociology course learns that human perception is highly selective. When looking at the same scene or object, different people will see different things. What people "see" is highly dependent on their interests, biases, and backgrounds. Our culture shapes what we see, our early childhood socialization forms how we look at the world, and our value systems tell us how to interpret what passes before our eyes. How, then, can one trust observational data?

In their classic guide for users of social science research, Katzer, Cook, and Crouch (1978) titled their chapter on observation "Seeing Is Not Believing." They open with an oft-repeated story meant to demonstrate the problem with observational data.

Once at a scientific meeting, a man suddenly rushed into the midst of one of the sessions. Another man with a revolver was chasing him. They scuffled in plain view of the assembled researchers, a shot was fired, and they rushed out. About twenty seconds had elapsed. The chairperson of the session immediately asked all present to write down an account of what they had seen. The observers did not know that the ruckus had been planned, rehearsed, and photographed. Of the forty reports turned in, only one was less than 20 percent mistaken about the principal facts, and most were more than 40 percent mistaken. The event surely drew the undivided attention of the observers, was in full view at close

range, and lasted only twenty seconds. But the observers could not observe all that happened. Some readers chuckled because the observers were researchers, but similar experiments have been reported numerous times. They are alike for all kinds of people. (Katzer et al. 1978:21-22)

Using this story to cast doubt on all varieties of observational research manifests two fundamental fallacies: (1) These researchers were not trained as social science observers, and (2) they were not prepared to make observations at that particular moment. **Scientific inquiry using observational methods requires disciplined training and rigorous preparation.**

The fact that a person is equipped with functioning senses does not make that person a skilled observer. The fact that ordinary persons experiencing any particular incident will highlight and report different things does not mean that *trained and prepared observers* cannot report with accuracy, authenticity, and reliability that same incident.

Training to become a skilled observer includes

- learning to pay attention, see what there is to see, and hear what there is hear;
- practice in writing descriptively;
- acquiring discipline in recording field notes;

- knowing how to separate detail from trivia to achieve the former without being overwhelmed by the latter;

- using rigorous methods to validate and triangulate observations; and

- reporting the strengths and limitations of one's own perspective, which requires both self-knowledge and self-disclosure.

Training observers can be particularly challenging because so many people think that they are "natural" observers and therefore have little to learn. Training to become a skilled observer is a no less rigorous process than the training necessary to become a skilled survey researcher or statistician. People don't "naturally" know how to write good survey items or analyze statistics—and people don't "naturally" know how to do systematic research observations. All forms of scientific inquiry require training and practice.

Careful preparation for entering into fieldwork is as important as disciplined training. Though I have considerable experience doing observational fieldwork, had I been present at the scientific meeting where the shooting scene occurred my recorded observations might not have been significantly more accurate than those of my less trained colleagues because *I would not have been prepared to observe what occurred* and, lacking that preparation, would have been seeing things through my ordinary eyes rather than my scientific observer's eyes.

Preparation has mental, physical, intellectual, and psychological dimensions. Pasteur said, "In the fields of observation, chance favors the prepared mind." Part of preparing the mind is learning how to concentrate during the observation. Observation, for me, involves enormous energy and concentration. I have to "turn on" that concentration—"turn on" my scientific eyes

and ears, my observational senses. A scientific observer cannot be expected to engage in systematic observation on the spur of the moment any more than a world-class boxer can be expected to defend his title spontaneously on a street corner or an Olympic runner can be asked to dash off at record speed because someone suddenly thinks it would be nice to test the runner's time. Athletes, artists, musicians, dancers, engineers, *and* scientists require training and mental preparation to do their best. Experiments and simulations that document the inaccuracy of spontaneous observations made by untrained and unprepared observers are no more indicative of the potential quality of observational methods than an amateur community talent show is indicative of what professional performers can do.

Two points are critical, then, in this introductory section. First, the folk wisdom about observation being nothing more than selective perception is true in the ordinary course of participating in day-to-day events. Second, the skilled observer is able to improve the accuracy, authenticity, and reliability of observations through intensive training and rigorous preparation. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to helping evaluators and researchers move their observations from the level of ordinary looking to the rigor of systematic seeing.

## The Value of Direct Observations

I'm often asked by students: "Isn't interviewing just as good as observation? Do you really have to go see a program directly to evaluate it? Can't you find out all you need to know by talking to people in the program without going there and seeing it firsthand?"

I reply by relating my experience evaluating a leadership development program with

two colleagues. As part of a formative evaluation aimed at helping staff and funders clarify and improve the program's design before undertaking a comprehensive follow-up study for a summative evaluation, we went through the program as participant observers. After completing the six-day leadership retreat, we met to compare experiences. Our very first conclusion was that we would never have understood the program without personally experiencing it. It bore little resemblance to our expectations, what people had told us, or the official program description. Had we designed the follow-up study without having participated in the program, we would have completely missed the mark and asked inappropriate questions. To absorb the program's language, understand nuances of meaning, appreciate variations in participants' experiences, capture the importance of what happened outside formal activities (during breaks, over meals, in late-night gatherings and parties), and feel the intensity of the retreat environment—nothing could have substituted for direct experience with the program. Indeed, what we observed and experienced was that participants were changed as much or more by what happened outside the formal program structure and activities as by anything that happened through the planned curriculum and exercises.

The first-order purposes of observational data are to *describe* the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities, and the meanings of what was observed from the perspectives of those observed. The descriptions should be factual, accurate, and thorough without being cluttered by irrelevant minutiae and trivia. The quality of observational reports is judged by the extent to which that observation permits the reader to enter into and understand the situation described. In this way, evaluation users, for example, can come to understand program activities and impacts through detailed descriptive information about what has occurred in a program and how the people in the program have reacted to what has occurred.

Naturalistic observations take place *in the field*. For ethnographers, the field is a cultural setting. For qualitative organizational development researchers, the field will be an organization. For evaluators, the field is the program being studied. Many terms are used for talking field-based observations including *participant observation, fieldwork, qualitative observation, direct observation*, and *field research*. "All these terms refer to the circumstance of being in or around an on-going social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting" (Lofland 1971:93).

Direct, personal contact with and observations of a setting have several advantages. First, through direct observations the inquirer is better able to understand and capture the context within which people interact. Understanding context is essential to a holistic perspective.

Second, firsthand experience with a setting and the people in the setting allows an inquirer to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive because, by being on-site, the observer has less need to rely on prior conceptualizations of the setting, whether those prior conceptualizations are from written documents or verbal reports.

A third strength of observational fieldwork is that the inquirer has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting. For someone to provide information in an interview, he or she must be aware enough to report the desired information. Because

**Fieldwork Variations**
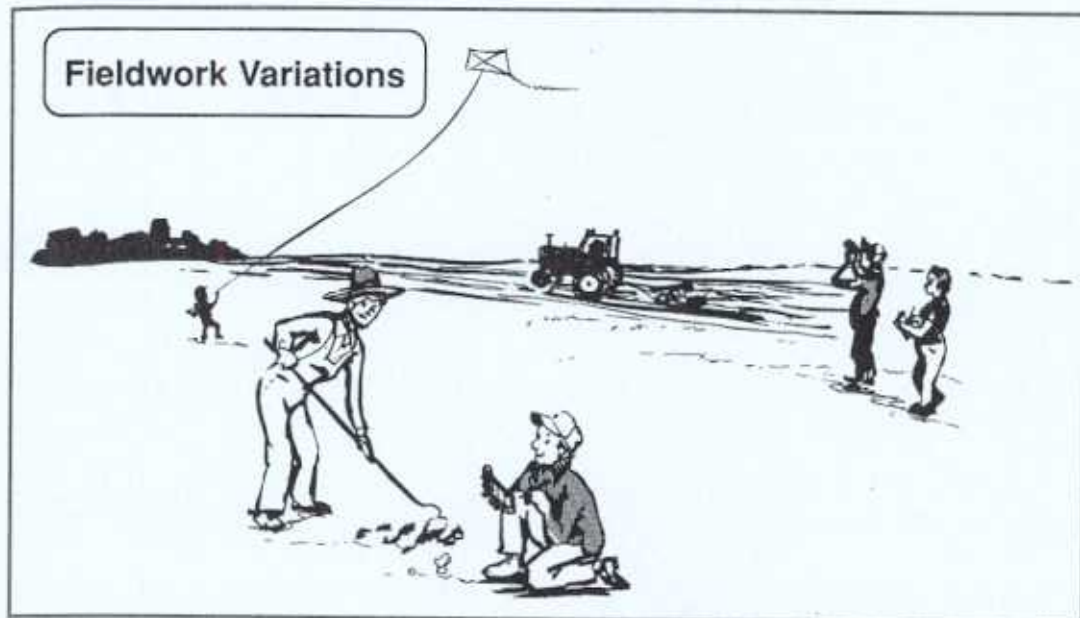
all social systems involve routines, participants in those routines may take them so much for granted that they cease to be aware of important nuances that are apparent only to an observer who has not become fully immersed in those routines.

The participant observer can also discover things no one else has ever really paid attention to. One of the highlights of the leadership training program we experienced was the final evening banquet at which staff was roasted. For three nights, after training ended, participants worked to put together a program of jokes, songs, and skits for the banquet. Staff were never around for these preparations, which lasted late into the night, but they had come to count on this culminating event. Month after month for two years each completely new training group had organized a final banquet event to both honor and make fun of staff. Staff assumed that either prior participants passed on this tradition or it was a nat-

ural result of the bonding among participants. We learned that neither explanation was true. What actually occurred was that, unbeknownst to program staff, the dining hostess for the hotel where participants stayed initiated the roast. After the second evening's meal, when staff routinely departed for a meeting, the hostess would tell participants what was expected. She even brought out a photo album of past banquets and offered to supply joke books, costumes, music, or whatever. This 60-year-old woman had begun playing what amounted to a major staff role for one of the most important processes in the program—and the staff didn't know about it. We learned about it by being there.

A fourth value of direct observation is the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview. Interviewees may be unwilling to provide information on sensitive topics, especially to strangers. A fifth advantage of fieldwork is

the opportunity to move beyond the selective perceptions of others. Interviews present the understandings of the people being interviewed. Those understandings constitute important, indeed critical, information. However, it is necessary for the inquirer to keep in mind that interviewees are always reporting perceptions—selective perceptions. Field observers will also have selective perceptions. By making their own perceptions part of the data—a matter of training, discipline, and self-awareness—observers can arrive at a more comprehensive view of the setting being studied than if forced to rely entirely on secondhand reports through interviews.

Finally, getting close to the people in a setting through firsthand experience permits the inquirer to draw on personal knowledge during the formal interpretation stage of analysis. Reflection and introspection are important parts of field research. The impressions and feelings of the observer become part of the data to be used in attempting to understand a setting and the people who inhabit it. The observer takes in information and forms impressions that go beyond what can be fully recorded in even the most detailed field notes.

> Because [the observer] sees and hears the people he studies in many situations of the kind that normally occur for them, rather than just in an isolated and formal interview, he builds an ever-growing fund of impressions, many of them at the subliminal level, which give him an extensive base for the interpretation and analytic use of any particular datum. This wealth of information and impression sensitizes him to subtleties which might pass unnoticed in an interview and forces him to raise continually new and different questions, which he brings to and tries to answer in succeeding observations. (Becker and Geer 1970:32)

## Observation-Based Evaluation and Applied Research in a Political World

The preceding review of the advantages of fieldwork strikes me as fairly straightforward but a bit abstract. In a moment, we'll consider the details of how to do fieldwork, but to inform that transition and reinforce the importance of direct observation in the real world, let me offer a perspective from the world of children's stories. Some of the most delightful, entertaining, and suspenseful fairy tales and fables concern tales of kings who discard their royal robes to take on the apparel of peasants so that they can move freely among their people to really understand what is happening in their kingdoms. Our modern-day kings and political figures are more likely to take television crews with them when they make excursions among the people. They are unlikely to go out secretly disguised, moving through the streets anonymously, unless they're up to mischief. It is left, then, to applied researchers and evaluators to play out the fable, to take on the appropriate appearance and mannerisms that will permit easy movement among the people, sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, but always with the purpose of better understanding what the world is really like. They are then able to report those understandings to our modern-day version of kings so that policy wisdom can be enhanced and programmatic decisions enlightened. At least that's the fantasy. Turning that fantasy into reality involves a number of important decisions about what kind of fieldwork to do. We turn now to those decisions.

## 🔢 Variations in Observational Methods

> W e shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.[1]
>
> -T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Observational research explores the world in many ways. Deciding which observational approaches are appropriate for evaluation or action research involves different criteria than those same decisions made to undertake basic social scientific research. These differences emerge from the nature of applied research, the politics of evaluation, the nature of contract funding in most evaluations, and the accountability of evaluators to information users. Thus, while field methods have their origins in basic anthropological and sociological field methods, using these methods for evaluation often requires adaptation. The sections that follow will discuss both the similarities and differences between evaluation field methods and basic research field methods.

### Variations in Observer Involvement: Participant or Onlooker or Both?

The first and most fundamental distinction that differentiates observational strategies concerns the extent to which the observer will be a *participant* in the setting being studied. This involves more than a simple choice between participation and nonparticipation. The extent of participation is a continuum that varies from complete immersion in the setting as full participant to complete separation from the setting as spectator, with a great deal of variation along the continuum between these two end points.

Nor is it simply a matter of deciding at the beginning how much the observer will participate. The extent of participation can change over time. In some cases, the researcher may begin the study as an onlooker and gradually become a participant as fieldwork progresses. The opposite can also occur. An evaluator might begin as a complete participant to experience what it is like to be initially immersed in the program and then gradually withdraw participation over the period of the study until finally taking the role of occasional observer from an onlooker stance.

Full participant observation constitutes an omnibus field strategy in that it "simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection" (Denzin 1978b: 183). If, on the other hand, an evaluator observes a program as an onlooker, the processes of observation can be separated from interviewing. In participant observation, however, no such separation exists. Typically, anthropological fieldworkers combine in their field notes data from personal, eyewitness observation with information gained from informal, natural interviews and informants' descriptions (Pelto and Pelto 1978:5). Thus, the participant observer employs multiple and overlapping data collection strategies: being fully engaged in experiencing the setting

(participation) while at the same time observing and talking with other participants about whatever is happening.

In the leadership program I evaluated through participant observation, I was a full participant in all exercises and program activities using the field of evaluation as my leadership arena (since all participants had to have an arena of leadership as their focus). As did other participants, I developed close relationships with some people as the week progressed, sharing meals and conversing late into the night. I sometimes took detailed notes during activities if the activity permitted (e.g., group discussion), while at other times I waited until later to record notes (e.g., after meals). If a situation suddenly became emotional, for example during a small group encounter, I would cease to take notes so as to be fully present as well as to keep my note taking from becoming a distraction. Unlike other participants, I sat in on staff meetings and knew how staff viewed what was going on. Much of the time I was fully immersed in the program experience as a participant, but I was also always aware of my additional role as evaluation observer.

The extent to which it is possible for an evaluator to become a participant in a program will depend partly on the nature of the program. In human service and education programs that serve children, the evaluator cannot participate as a child but may be able to participate as a volunteer, parent, or staff member in such a way as to develop the perspective of an insider in one of those adult roles. Gender can create barriers to participant observation. Males can't be participants in female-only programs (e.g., battered women's shelters). Females doing fieldwork in nonliterate cultures may not be permitted access to male-only councils and ceremonies. Programs that serve special populations may also involve natural limitations on the extent to which the evaluator

can become a full participant. For example, a researcher who is not chemically dependent will not be able to become a full participant, physically and psychologically, in a chemical dependency program, even though it may be possible to participate in the program as a client. Such participation in a treatment program can lead to important insights and understanding about what it is like to be in the program; however, the evaluator must avoid the delusion that participation has been complete. This point is illustrated by an exchange between an inmate and a student who was doing participant observation in a prison.

*Inmate:* "What are you in here for, man?"

*Student:* "I'm here for a while to find out what it's like to be in prison."

*Inmate:* "What do you mean—'find out what it's like' ?"

*Evaluator:* "I'm here so that I can experience prison from the inside instead of just studying what it's like from out there."

*Inmate:* "You got to be jerkin' me off, man. 'Experience from the inside . . . ' ? Shit, man, you can go home when you decide you've had enough can't you?"

*Evaluator:* "Yeah."

*Inmate:* "Then you ain't never gonna know what it's like from the inside."

Social, cultural, political, and interpersonal factors can limit the nature and degree of *participation* in participant observation. For example, if the participants in a program all know each other intimately they may object to an outsider trying to become part of their close circle. Where marked social class differences exist between a sociologist and people in a neighborhood, access will be more difficult; likewise, when, as is often the

case, an evaluator is well educated and middle class while welfare program clients are economically disadvantaged and poorly educated, the participants in the program may object to any ruse of "full" participant observation. Program staff will sometimes object to the additional burden of including an evaluator in a program where resources are limited and an additional participant would unbalance staff-client ratios. Thus, in evaluation, the extent to which full participation is possible and desirable will depend on the precise nature of the program, the political context, and the nature of the evaluation questions being asked. Adult training programs, for example, may permit fairly easy access for full participation by evaluators. Offender treatment programs are much less likely to be open to participant observation as an evaluation method. Evaluators must therefore be flexible, sensitive, and adaptive in negotiating the precise degree of participation that is appropriate in any particular observational study, especially where reporting timelines are constrained so entry into the setting must be accomplished relatively quickly. Social scientists who can take a long time to become integrated into the setting under study have more options for fuller participant observation.

As these examples illustrate, full and complete participation in a setting, what is sometimes called "going native," is fairly rare, especially for a program evaluation. Degree of participation and nature of observation vary along a wide continuum of possibilities. **The ideal in evaluation is to design and negotiate that degree of participation that will yield the most meaningful data about the program given the characteristics of the participants, the nature of staff-participant interactions, the sociopolitical context of the program, and the information needs of intended evaluation users.** Likewise, in applied and basic re-

search, the purpose, scope, length, and setting for the study will dictate the range and types of participant observation that are possible.

One final caution: The researcher's plans and intentions regarding the degree of program involvement to be experienced may not be the way things actually turn out. Lang and Lang (1960) report that two scientific participant observers who were studying audience behavior at a Billy Graham evangelical crusade made their "decision for Christ" and left their observer posts to walk down the aisle and join Reverend Graham's campaign. Such are the occupational hazards (or benefits, depending on your perspective) of real-world fieldwork.

## Insider and Outsider Perspectives: Emic Versus Etic Approaches

People who are insiders to a setting being studied often have a view of the setting and any findings about it quite different from that of the outside researchers who are conducting the study. (Bartunek and Louis 1996)

Ethnosemanticist Kenneth Pike (1954) coined the terms *emic* and *etic* to distinguish classification systems reported by anthropologists based on (1) the language and categories used by the people in the culture studied, an emic approach, in contrast to (2) categories created by anthropologists based on their analysis of important cultural distinctions, an etic approach. Leading anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Edward Sapir argued that the only meaningful distinctions were those made by people within a culture, that is, from the emic perspective. However, as anthropologists turned to more comparative studies, engaging in cross-cultural analyses, distinctions that cut across cultures had to be made based on the anthro-

pologist's analytical perspective, that is, an etic perspective. The etic approach involved "standing far enough away from or outside of a particular culture to see its separate events, primarily in relation to their similarities and their differences, as compared to events in other cultures" (Pike 1954:10). For some years a debate raged in anthropology about the relative merits of emic versus etic perspectives (Pelto and Pelto 1978:55-60; Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990), but, as often happens over time, both approaches came to be understood as valuable, though each contributes something different. Nevertheless, tension between these perspectives remains:

> Today, despite or perhaps because of the new recognition of cultural diversity, the tension between universalistic and relativistic values remains an unresolved conundrum for the Western ethnographer. In practice, it becomes this question: By which values are observations to be guided? The choices seem to be either the values of the ethnographer or the values of the observed—that is, in modern parlance, either the *etic* or the *emic*. . . . Herein lies a deeper and more fundamental problem: How is it possible to understand the other when the other's values are not one's own? This problem arises to plague ethnography at a time when Western Christian values are no longer a surety of truth and, hence, no longer the benchmark from which self-confidently valid observations can be made. (Vidich and Lyman 2000:41)

Methodologically, the challenge is to do justice to both perspectives during and after fieldwork and to be clear with one's self and one's audience how this tension is managed.

A participant observer shares as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the setting under study in order to develop *an insider's view* of what is happening, the emic perspective. This means that the participant observer not only sees what is happening but feels what it is like to be a part of the setting or program. Anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker (1966) has described the basic assumption undergirding participant observation as follows: "To understand a society, the anthropologist has traditionally immersed himself in it, learning, as far as possible, to think, see, feel and sometimes act as a member of its culture and at the same time as a trained anthropologist from another culture" (p. 9).

Experiencing the setting or program as an insider accentuates the participant part of participant observation. At the same time, the inquirer remains aware of being an outsider. The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the setting as an insider while describing it to and for outsiders.

> Obtaining something of the understanding of an insider is, for most researchers, only a first step. They expect, in time, to become capable of thinking and acting within the perspective of two quite different groups, the one in which they were reared and—to some degree—the one they are studying. They will also, at times, be able to assume a mental position peripheral to both, a position from which they will be able to perceive and, hopefully, describe those relationships, systems and patterns of which an inextricably involved insider is not likely to be consciously aware. For what the social scientist realizes is that while the outsider simply does not know the meanings or the patterns, the insider is so immersed that he may be oblivious to the fact that patterns exist. . . . What fieldworkers eventually produce out of the tension developed by this ability to shift their point of view depends upon their sophistication, ability, and training. Their task, in any case, is to realize what they have experienced

and learned and to communicate this in terms that will illumine. (Wax 1971:3)

## Who Conducts the Inquiry?
## Solo and Team Versus Participatory and Collaborative Approaches

The ultimate in insider perspective comes from involving the insiders as coresearchers through collaborative or participatory research. Collaborative forms of fieldwork, participatory action research, and empowerment approaches to evaluation have become sufficiently important and widespread to make *degree of collaboration* a dimension of design choice in qualitative inquiry. Participatory action research has a long and distinguished history (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000; Whyte 1989). Collaborative principles of feminist inquiry include connectedness and equality between researchers and researched, participatory processes that support consciousness-raising and researcher reflexivity, and knowledge generation that contributes to women's liberation and emancipation (Olesen 2000; Guerrero 1999a:15-22; Thompson 1992). In evaluation, Cousins and Earl (1995) have advocated participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluation primarily to increase use of findings. Empowerment evaluation, often using qualitative methods (Fetterman 2000a; Fetterman, Kaftarian, and Wandersman 1996), involves the use of evaluation concepts and techniques to foster self-determination and help people help themselves by learning to study and report on their own issues and concerns.

What these approaches have in common is a style of inquiry in which the researcher or evaluator becomes a facilitator, collaborator, and teacher in support of those engaging in their own inquiry. While the findings from such a participatory process may be useful, a supplementary agenda is often to increase participants' sense of being in control of, deliberative about, and reflective on their own lives and situations. Chapter 4 discussed these approaches as examples of how qualitative inquiry can be applied in support of organizational or program development and community change.

Degrees of collaboration vary along a continuum. At one end is the solo fieldworker or a team of professionals; what characterizes this end of the continuum is that researchers completely control the inquiry. At the other end are collaborations with people in the setting being studied, sometimes called "coresearchers"; they help design the inquiry, collect data, and are involved in analysis. Along the middle of the continuum are various degrees of partial and periodic (as opposed to continuous) collaboration.

## Overt Versus Covert Observations

A traditional concern about the validity and reliability of observational data has been the effects of the observer on what is observed. People may behave quite differently when they know they are being observed versus how they behave naturally when they don't think they're being observed. Thus, the argument goes, covert observations are more likely to capture what is really happening than are overt observations where the people in the setting are aware they are being studied.

Researchers have expressed a range of opinions concerning the ethics and morality of conducting covert research, what Mitchell (1993:23-35) calls "the debate over secrecy." One end of the continuum is represented by Edward Shils (1959), who absolutely opposed all forms of covert research including "any observations of private behavior, however technically feasible, without the explicit

and fully informed permission of the person to be observed." He argued that there should be full disclosure of the purpose of any research project and that even participant observation is "morally obnoxious . . . manipulation" unless the observer makes explicit his or her research questions at the very beginning of the observation (Shils 1959, quoted in Webb et al. 1966:vi).

At the other end of the continuum is the "investigative social research" of Jack Douglas (1976). Douglas argued that conventional anthropological field methods have been based on a consensus view of society that views people as basically cooperative, helpful, and willing to have their points of view understood and shared with the rest of the world. In contrast, Douglas adopted a conflict paradigm of society that led him to believe that any and all covert methods of research should be considered acceptable options in a search for truth.

> The investigative paradigm is based on the assumption that profound conflicts of interest, values, feelings and actions pervade social life. It is taken for granted that many of the people one deals with, perhaps all people to some extent, have good reason to hide from others what they are doing and even to lie to them. Instead of trusting people and expecting trust in return, one suspects others and expects others to suspect him. Conflict is the reality of life; suspicion is the guiding principle. . . . It's a war of all and no one gives anyone anything for nothing, especially truth. . . .
>
> All competent adults are assumed to know that there are at least four major problems lying in the way of getting at social reality by asking people what is going on and that these problems must be dealt with if one is to avoid being taken in, duped, deceived, used, put on, fooled, suckered, made the patsy, left holding the bag, fronted out and so on. These four

problems are (1) misinformation, (2) evasions, (3) lies, and (4) fronts. (Douglas 1976:55, 57)

Just as degree of participation in fieldwork turned out to be a continuum of variations rather than an all-or-none proposition, so too is the question of how explicit to be about the purpose of fieldwork. The extent to which participants in a program under study are informed that they are being observed and are told the purpose of the research has varied historically from full disclosure to no disclosure, with a great deal of variation along the middle of this continuum (Junker 1960). Discipline-based ethics statements (e.g., American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association) now generally condemn deceitful and covert research. Likewise, institutional review board (IRB) procedures for the protection of human subjects have severely constrained such methods. They now refuse to approve protocols in which research participants are deceived about the purpose of a study, as was commonly done in early psychological research. One of the more infamous examples was Stanley Milgram's New Haven experiments aimed at studying whether ordinary people would follow the orders of someone in authority by having these ordinary citizens administer what they were told were behavior modification electric shocks to help students learn, shocks that appeared to the unsuspecting citizens to go as high as 450 volts despite the screams and protests heard from supposed students on the other side of a wall. The real purpose of the study, participants later learned, was to replicate Nazi prison guard behavior among ordinary American citizens (Milgram 1974).

IRBs also refuse to approve research in which people are observed and studied without their knowledge or consent, as in the infamous Tuskegee Experiment. For

40 years, physicians and medical researchers, under the auspices of the U.S. Public Health Service, studied untreated syphilis among Black men in and around the county seat of Tuskegee, Alabama, without the informed consent of the men studied, men whose syphilis went untreated so that the progress of the disease could be documented (Jones 1993). Other stories of abuse and neglect by researchers doing covert studies abound. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, schoolboys at the Walter E. Fernald State School in Massachusetts were routinely served breakfast cereal doused with radioactive isotopes, without permission of the boys or their guardians, for the dissertation of a doctoral student in nutritional biochemistry. In the 1960s, the U.S. Army secretly sprayed a potentially hazardous chemical from downtown Minneapolis rooftops onto unsuspecting citizens to find out how toxic materials might disperse during biological warfare. Native American children on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in the Dakotas were used to test an unapproved and experimental hepatitis A vaccine without the knowledge or approval of their parents. In the 1960s and 1970s, scientists tested skin treatments and drugs on prisoners in a Philadelphia county jail without informing them of potential dangers.

Doctoral students frustrated by having their fieldwork delayed while they await IRB approval need to remember that they are paying for the sins of their research forebears for whom deception and covert observations were standard ways of doing their work. Those most subject to abuse were often the most vulnerable in society—children, the poor, people of color, the sick, people with little education, women and men incarcerated in prisons and asylums, and children in orphanages or state correctional schools. Anthropological research was com-missioned and used by colonial administrators to maintain control over indigenous peoples. Protection of human subjects procedures are now an affirmation of our commitment to treat all people with respect. And that is as it should be. But the necessity for such procedures comes out of a past littered with scientific horrors for which those of us engaging in research today may still owe penance. At any rate, we need to lean over backward to be sure that such history is truly behind us—and that means being ever vigilant in fully informing and protecting the people who honor us by agreeing to participate in our research, whether they be homeless mothers (Connolly 2000) or corporate executives (Collins 2001).

However, not all research and evaluation falls under IRB review, so the issue of what type and how much disclosure to make remains a matter of debate, especially where the inquiry seeks to expose the inner workings of cults and extremist groups, or those whose power affects the public welfare, for example, corporations, labor union boards, political parties, and other groups with wealth and/or power. For example, Maurice Punch (1985, 1989, 1997), formerly of the Nijenrode Business School in the Netherlands, has written about the challenges of doing ethnographic studies of corruption in both private and public sector organizations, notably the police.

One classic form of deception in fieldwork involves pretending to share values and beliefs in order to become part of the group being studied. Sociologist Richard Leo carefully disguised his liberal political and social views, instead feigning conservative beliefs, to build trust with police and thereby gain admission to interrogation rooms (Allen 1997:32). Sociologist Leon Festinger (1956) infiltrated a doomsday cult by lying about his profession and pretend-

ing to believe in the cult's prophecies. Sociologist Laud Humphreys (1970) pretended to be gay to gather data for his dissertation on homosexual encounters in public parks. Anthropologist Carolyn Ellis (1986) pretended to be just visiting friends when she studied a Chesapeake Bay fishing culture. Her negative portrayals made their way back to the local people, many of whom were infuriated. She later expressed remorse about her deceptions (Allen 1997).

In traditional scholarly fieldwork, the decision about the extent to which observations would be covert was made by researchers balancing the search for truth against their sense of professional ethics. In evaluation research, the information users for whom the evaluation is done have a stake in what kind of methods are used, so the evaluator alone cannot decide the extent to which observations and evaluation purposes will be fully disclosed. Rather, the complexities of program evaluation mean that there are several levels at which decisions about the covert-overt nature of evaluation observations must be made. Sometimes only the funders of the program or of the evaluation know the full extent and purpose of observations. On occasion, program staff may be informed that evaluators will be participating in the program, but clients will not be so informed. In other cases, a researcher may reveal the purpose and nature of program participation to fellow program participants and ask for their cooperation in keeping the evaluation secret from program staff. On still other occasions, a variety of people intimately associated with the program may be informed of the evaluation, but public officials who are less closely associated with the program may be kept "in the dark" about the fact that observations are under way. Sometimes the situation becomes so complex that the evaluator may lose track of who knows and who doesn't

know, and, of course, there are the classic situations where everyone involved knows that a study is being done and who the evaluator is—but the evaluator doesn't know that everyone else knows.

In undertaking participant observation of the community leadership program mentioned earlier, my two evaluation colleagues and I agreed with the staff to downplay our evaluation roles and describe ourselves as "educational researchers" interested in studying the program. We didn't want participants to think that *they* were being evaluated and therefore worry about our judgments. Our focus was on evaluating the program, not participants, but to avoid increasing participant stress we simply attempted to finesse our evaluation role by calling ourselves educational researchers.

Our careful agreement on and rehearsal of this point with the staff fell apart during introductions (at the start of the six-day retreat) when the program director proceeded to tell participants—for 10 minutes—that we were *just* participants and they didn't have to worry about our evaluating them. The longer he went on reassuring the group that they didn't have to worry about us, the more worried they got. Sensing that they were worried, he increased the intensity of his reassurances. While we continued to refer to ourselves as educational researchers, the participants thereafter referred to us as evaluators. It took a day and a half to recover our full participating roles as the participants got to know us on a personal level as individuals.

Trying to protect the participants (and the evaluation) had backfired and made our entry into the group even more difficult than it otherwise would have been. However, this experience sensitized us to what we subsequently observed to be a pattern in many program situations and activities throughout the week, and became a major finding of

the evaluation: staff overprotection of and condescending attitudes toward participants.

Based on this and other evaluation experiences, I recommend full and complete disclosure. People are seldom really deceived or reassured by false or partial explanations—at least not for long. Trying to run a ruse or scam is simply too risky and adds to evaluator stress while holding the possibility of undermining the evaluation if (and usually when) the ruse becomes known. Program participants, over time, will tend to judge evaluators first and foremost as people not as evaluators.

The nature of the questions being studied in any particular evaluation will have a primary effect on the decision about who will be told that an evaluation is under way. In formative evaluations where staff members and/or program participants are anxious to have information that will help them improve their program, the quality of the data gathered may be enhanced by overtly soliciting the cooperation of everyone associated with the program. Indeed, the ultimate acceptance and usefulness of formative information may depend on such prior disclosure and agreement that a formative evaluation is appropriate. On the one hand, where program funders have reason to believe that a program is corrupt, abusive, incompetently administered, and/or highly negative in impact on clients, it may be decided that an external, covert evaluation is necessary to find out what is really happening in the program. Under such conditions, my preference for full disclosure may be neither prudent nor practical. On the other hand, Whyte (1984) has argued that "in a community setting, maintaining a covert role is generally out of the question" (p. 31).

Finally, there is the related issue of confidentiality. Those who advocate covert research usually do so with the condition that reports conceal names, locations, and other identifying information so that the people who have been observed will be protected from harm or punitive action. Because the basic researcher is interested in truth rather than action, it is easier to protect the identity of informants or study settings when doing scholarly research. In evaluation research, however, while the identity of who said what may be possible to keep secret, it is seldom possible to conceal the identity of a program, and doing so may undermine the utility of the findings.

Evaluators and decision makers will have to resolve these issues in each case in accordance with their own consciences, evaluation purposes, political realities, and ethical sensitivities.

## Variations in Duration of Observations

Another important dimension along which observational studies vary is the length of time devoted to data gathering. In the anthropological tradition of field research, a participant observer would expect to spend six months at a minimum, and often years, living in the culture being observed. The fieldwork of Napoleon Chagnon (1992) among the Yanomami Indians in the rain forest at the borders of Venezuela and Brazil spanned a quarter century. To develop a holistic view of an entire culture or subculture takes a great deal of time, especially when, as in the case of Chagnon, he was documenting changes in tribal life and threats to the continued existence of these once-isolated people. The effects of his long-term involvement on the people he studied became controversial (Geertz 2001; Tierney 2000a, 2000b), a matter we shall take up later. The point here is that fieldwork in basic and applied social science aims to unveil the interwoven complexities and funda-

mental patterns of social life—actual, perceived, constructed, and analyzed. Such studies take a long time.

Educational researcher Alan Peshkin offers a stellar example of a committed fieldworker who lived for periods of time in varied settings in order to study the intersections between schools and communities. He did fieldwork in a Native American community; in a high school in a stable, multiethnic midsized city in California; in rural, east-central Illinois; in a fundamentalist Christian school; and in a private, residential school for elites (Peshkin 1986, 1997, 2000b). To collect data, he and his wife Maryann lived for at least a year in and with the community that he was studying. They shopped locally, attended religious services, and developed close relationships with civic leaders as well as teachers and students.

In contrast, evaluation and action research typically involve much shorter durations in keeping with their more modest aims: generating useful information for action. To be useful, evaluation findings must be timely. Decision makers cannot wait for years while fieldworkers sift through mountains of field notes. Many evaluations are conducted under enormous pressures of time and limited resources. Thus, the duration of observations will depend to a considerable extent on the time and resources available in relation to the information needs and decision deadlines of primary evaluation users. Later in this chapter we'll include reflections from an evaluator about what it was like being a part-time, in-and-out observer of a program for eight months, but only present 6 hours a week out of the program's 40-hour week.

On the other hand, sustained and ongoing evaluation research may provide annual findings while, over years of study, accumulating an archive of data that serves as a source of more basic research into human

and organizational development. Such has been the case with the extraordinary work of Patricia Carini (1975, 1979) at the Prospect School in North Bennington, Vermont. Working with the staff of the school to collect detailed case records on students of the school, she established an archive with as much as 12 years of detailed documentation about the learning histories of individual students and the nature of the school programs they experienced. Her data included copies of the students' work (completed assignments, drawings, papers, projects), classroom observations, teacher and parent observations, and photographs. Any organization with an internal evaluation information system can look beyond quarterly and annual reporting to building a knowledge archive of data to document development and change over years instead of just months. Participant observations by those who manage such systems can and should be an integral part of this kind of knowledge-building organizational data system that spans years, even decades.

On the other end of the time continuum are short-term studies that involve observations of a single segment of a program, sometimes for only an hour or two. Evaluations that include brief site visits to a number of program locations may serve the purpose of simply establishing the existence of certain levels of program operations at different sites. Chapter 1 presented just such an observation of a single two-hour session of an early childhood parent education program in which mothers discussed their child-rearing practices and fears. The site visit observations of some 20 such program sessions throughout Minnesota were part of an implementation evaluation that reported to the state legislature how these innovative (at the time) programs were operating in practice. Each site visit lasted no more than a day, often only a half day.

Sometimes an entire segment of a program may be of sufficiently short duration that the evaluator can participate in the complete program. The leadership retreat we observed lasted 6 days, plus three 1-day follow-up sessions during the subsequent year.

The critical point is that the length of time during which observations take place depends on the purpose of the study and the questions being asked, not some ideal about what a typical participant observation must necessarily involve. Field studies may be massive efforts with a team of people participating in multiple settings in order to do comparisons over several years. At times, then, and for certain studies, long-term fieldwork is essential. At other times and for other purposes, as in the case of short-term formative evaluations, it can be helpful for program staff to have an evaluator provide feedback based on just one hour of onlooker observation at a staff meeting, as I have also done.

My response to students who ask me how long they have to observe a program to do a good evaluation follows the line of thought developed by Abraham Lincoln during one of the Douglas-Lincoln debates. In an obvious reference to the difference in stature between Douglas and Lincoln, a heckler asked, "Tell us, Mr. Lincoln, how long do you think a man's legs ought to be?"

Lincoln replied, "Long enough to reach the ground."

Fieldwork should last long enough to get the job done—to answer the research questions being asked and fulfill the purpose of the study.

## Variations in Observational Focus

The preceding sections have discussed how observations vary in the extent to which the observer participates in the setting being studied, the tension between insider versus outsider perspectives, the extent to which the purpose of the study is made explicit, and the duration of the observations. A major factor affecting each of these other dimensions is the scope or focus of the study or evaluation. The scope can be broad, encompassing virtually all aspects of the setting, or it can be narrow, involving a look at only some small part of what is happening.

Parameswaran (2001) wanted to interview young women in India who read Western romance novels. Thus, her fieldwork had a very narrow focus. But to contextualize what she learned from interviews, she sought "active involvement in my informants' lives beyond their romance reading." How did she do this?

> I ate snacks and lunch at cafes with groups of women, went to the movies, dined with them at their homes, and accompanied them on shopping trips. I joined women's routine conversations during break times and interviewed informants at a range of everyday sites, such as college grounds, homes, and restaurants. I visited used-book vendors, bookstores, and lending libraries with several readers and observed social interactions between library owners and young women. To gain insight into the multidimensional relationship between women's romance reading and their experiences with everyday social discourse about romance readers, I interviewed young women's parents, siblings, teachers, bookstore managers, and owners of the lending libraries they frequented. (p. 75)

The tradition of ethnographic fieldwork has emphasized the importance of understanding whole cultural systems. The various subsystems of a society are seen as interdependent parts so that the economic

system, the cultural system, the political system, the kinship system, and other specialized subsystems could only be understood in relation to each other. In reality, fieldwork and observations have tended to focus on a particular part of the society or culture because of specific investigator interests and the need to allocate the most time to those things that the researcher considered most important. Thus, a particular study might present an overview of a particular culture but then go on to report in greatest detail about the religious system of that culture.

In evaluating programs, a broad range of possible foci makes choosing a specific focus challenging. One way of thinking about focus options involves distinguishing various program processes sequentially: (1) processes by which participants enter a program (the outreach, recruitment, and intake components); (2) processes of orientation to and socialization into the program (the initiation period); (3) the basic activities that comprise program implementation over the course of the program (the service delivery system); and (4) the activities that go on around program termination, including follow-up activities and client impacts over time. It would be possible to observe only one of these program components, some combination of components, or all of the components together. Which parts of the program and how many are studied will clearly affect such issues as the extent to which the observer is a participant, who will know about the evaluation's purpose, and the duration of observations.

Chapter 5 discussed how decisions about the focus and scope of a study involve trade-offs between breadth and depth. The very first trade-off comes in framing the research questions to be studied. The problem is to determine the extent to which it is desirable and useful to study one or a few questions in great depth or to study more questions but each in less depth. Moreover, in emergent designs, the focus can change over time.

## Dimensions Along Which Fieldwork Varies: An Overview

We've examined five dimensions that can be used to describe some of the primary variations in fieldwork. Those dimensions, discussed in the previous sections, are graphically summarized in Exhibit 6.1. These dimensions can be used to help design observational studies and make decisions about the parameters of fieldwork. They can also be used to organize the methods section of a report or dissertation in order to document how research or evaluation fieldwork actually unfolded.

## ▣ What to Observe: A Sensitizing Framework

I keep six honest serving men.
They taught me all I knew:
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.[2]

—Rudyard Kipling

| EXHIBIT 6.1 | Dimensions Showing Fieldwork Variations |
| --- | --- |

*1. Role of the observer*

| Full participant in the setting | |————————————| | Onlooker observer (spectator) |
| | Part participant/part observer | |

*2. Insider versus outsider perspective*

| Insider (emic) perspective dominant | |————————————| | Outsider (etic) perspective dominant |
| | Balance | |

*3. Who conducts the inquiry*

| Solo researchers, teams of professionals | |————————————| | People in the setting being studied |
| | Variations in collaboration and participatory research | |

*4. Disclosure of the observer's role to others*

| Overt: Full disclosure | |————————————| | Covert: No disclosure |
| | Selective disclosure | |

*5. Duration of observations and fieldwork*

| Short, single observation (e.g., 1 site, 1 hour) | |————————————| | Long-term, multiple observations (e.g., months, years) |
| | Ongoing over time | |

*6. Focus of observations*

| Narrow focus: Single element | |————————————| | Broad focus: Holistic view |
| | Evolving, emergent | |

NASA space scientist David Morrison (1999) has noted that in astronomy, geology, and planetary science, observation precedes theory generation "and the journals in these fields never require the authors to state a 'hypothesis' in order to publish their results" (p. 8).

A recent example is the famous Hubble Space Telescope Deep Field in which the telescope obtained a single exposure of many days duration of one small field in an unremarkable part of the sky. The objective was to see fainter and farther than ever before, and thus to find out what the universe was like early in its history. No hypothesis was required—just the unique opportunity to look where no one had ever looked before and see what nature herself had to tell us.

In many other sciences the culture demands that funding proposals and published papers be written in terms of formulating and testing a hypothesis. But I wonder if this is really the way the scientific process works, or is this just an artificial structure imposed for the sake of tradition. (Morrison 1999:8)

Part of the value of open-ended naturalistic observations is the opportunity to see what there is to see without the blinders of hypotheses and other preconceptions. Pure observation. As Morrison put it so elegantly, just the unique opportunity to look where no one has ever looked before and see what the world has to show us.

That's the ideal. However, it's not possible to observe everything. The human observer is not a movie camera, and even a movie camera has to be pointed in the right direction to capture what is happening. For both the human observer and the camera there must be focus. In fieldwork, this focus is provided by the study design and the nature of the questions being asked. Once in the field, however, the observer must somehow organize the complex stimuli experienced so that observing that becomes and remains manageable.

Experienced observers often use "sensitizing concepts" to orient fieldwork. Qualitative sociologist and symbolic interactionist Herbert Blumer (1954) is credited with originating the idea of the sensitizing con-

cept as a guide to fieldwork with special attention to the words and meanings that are prevalent among the people being studied. More generally, however, "a sensitizing concept is a starting point in thinking about the class of data of which the social researcher has no definite idea and provides an initial guide to her research" (van den Hoonaard 1997:2). Sensitizing concepts in the social sciences include loosely operationalized notions such as victim, stress, stigma, and learning organization that can provide some initial direction to a study as a fieldworker inquires into how the concept is given meaning in a particular place or set of circumstances being studied (Schwandt 2001).

Rudyard Kipling's poem about his "six honest serving men," quoted above, constitutes a fundamental and insightful sensitizing framework identifying the central elements of good description. In social science, "group process" is a general sensitizing concept as is the focus on outcomes in evaluation. Kinship, leadership, socialization, power, and similar notions are sensitizing in that they alert us to ways of organizing observations and making decisions about what to record. Qualitative methodologist Norman Denzin (1978a) has captured the essence of how sensitizing concepts guide fieldwork:

The observer moves from sensitizing concepts to the immediate world of social experience and permits that world to shape and modify his conceptual framework. In this way he moves continually between the realm of more general social theory and the worlds of native people. Such an approach recognizes that social phenomena, while displaying regularities, vary by time, space, and circumstance. The observer, then, looks for repeatable regularities. He uses ritual patterns of dress and body-spacing as indicators of self-image. He takes special languages, codes, and dialects as

indicators of group boundaries. He studies his subject's prized social objects as indicators of prestige, dignity, and esteem hierarchies. He studies moments of interrogation and derogation as indicators of socialization strategies. He attempts to enter his subject's closed world of interaction so as to examine the character of private versus public acts and attitudes. (p. 9)

The notion of "sensitizing concepts" reminds us that observers do not enter the field with a completely blank slate. While the inductive nature of qualitative inquiry emphasizes the importance of being open to whatever one can learn, some way of organizing the complexity of experience is virtually a prerequisite for perception itself. Exhibit 6.2 presents examples of common sensitizing concepts for program evaluation and organizational studies. These common program concepts and organizational dimensions constitute ways of breaking the complexities of planned human interventions into distinguishable, manageable, and observable elements. The examples in Exhibit 6.2 are by no means exhaustive of evaluation and organizational sensitizing concepts, but they illustrate oft-used ways of organizing an agenda for inquiry. These concepts serve to guide initial observations as the evaluator or organizational analyst watches for incidents, interactions, and conversations that illuminate these sensitizing concepts in a particular program setting or organization. Highly experienced evaluators and organizational consultants have internalized some kind of sensitizing framework like this to the point where they would not need to list these concepts in a formal written design. Less experienced researchers and dissertation students will usually benefit from preparing a formal list of major sensitizing concepts in the formal design and then using those concepts to help organize and guide fieldwork, at least initially.

A note of caution about sensitizing concepts: When they become part of popular culture, they can lose much of their original meaning. Philip Tuwaletstiwa, a Hopi geographer, relates the story of a tourist cruising through Native American areas of the Southwest. He overheard the tourist, "all agog at half-heard tales about Hopi land," ask his wife, "Where are the *power places?*"

"Tell her that's where we plug-in TV," he said (quoted in Milius 1998:92).

**Overused sensitizing concepts can become desensitizing.**

## 🔲 Sources of Data

Poet David Wagoner (1999) tells those observing the modern world and afraid of being lost to follow the advice Native American elders gave the young when they were afraid of being lost in the forest:

### *Lost*

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes
    beside you
Are not lost. Where you are is called
    Here,
And you must trust it as a powerful
    stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and
    be known.
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you.
If you leave it, you may come back
    again, saying Here.
No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on
    you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The
    forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find
    you.[3]

| EXHIBIT 6.2 | Examples of Sensitizing Concepts |
| --- | --- |

| Program Evaluation | Organizational Dimensions |
| --- | --- |
| Context | Mission/vision language |
| Goals | Centralization/decentralization of participation and decision making |
| Inputs | External boundary relationships: Open/closed |
| Recruitment | Routinness/nonroutinness of work, products, decisions |
| Intake | Leadership |
| Implementation | Communication patterns |
| Processes | Organizational culture |
| Output | Hierarchy: Layered/flat |
| Outcomes | Authority patterns |
| Products | Formal/informal networks |
| Impacts | Rewards/punishments, incentives/disincentives |
| Program theory | Success and failure messages/stories |
| Logic model | Degree of integration |
| Perceived | Competition/cooperation |
|   Assets | |
|   Barriers | |
|   Strengths | |
|   Weaknesses | |
|   Incentives | |
|   Disincentives | |

The *what* and *how* of qualitative inquiry are closely linked. Sources of data are derived from inquiry questions. Knowing what we want to illuminate helps us determine sources of data for that illumination. The examples and illustrations that follow derive from and build on the sensitizing framework for program evaluation. Interspersed with this presentation of sources of evaluation data are examples of how to collect observational data. These strategies apply to other inquiry settings, but to provide coherent and in-depth illustrations, the examples that follow focus on program evaluation.

## The Setting

Describing a setting, like a program setting, begins with the physical environment within which the program takes place. The description of the program setting should be sufficiently detailed to permit the reader to

visualize that setting. In writing a program description, the observer, unlike the novelist, should avoid interpretive adjectives except as they appear in quotes from participants about their reactions to and perceptions of that environment. Such adjectives as *comfortable, beautiful, drab,* and *stimulating* interpret rather than describe —and interpret vaguely at that. More purely descriptive adjectives include

> colors ("a room painted blue with a blackboard at one end"),
>
> space ("a 40-foot-by-20-foot classroom with windows on one side"), and
>
> purpose ("a library, the walls lined with books and tables in the center").

Beginners can practice learning to write descriptively by sharing a description of a setting observed with a couple of people and asking them if they can visualize the setting described. Another helpful exercise involves two people observing the same environment and exchanging their descriptions, watching in particular for the use of interpretive adjectives instead of descriptive ones. Vivid description provides sufficient information that the reader does not have to speculate at what is meant. For example, simply reporting "a crowded room" requires interpretation. Contrast with this:

> The meeting room had a three-person couch across one side, six chairs along the adjoining walls next to the couch, and three chairs along the wall facing the couch, which included the door. With 20 people in the room, all standing, there was very little space between people. Several participants were overheard to say, "This room is really crowded."

Such descriptive writing requires attention to detail and discipline to avoid vague,

interpretive phrases. But such writing can also be dull. Metaphors and analogies can enliven and enrich descriptions, helping readers connect through shared understandings and giving them a better *feel* for the environment being described. I once evaluated a wilderness education program that included time at the Grand Canyon. Exhibit 6.3 presents my feeble attempt to capture in words our first view of the Grand Canyon. Notice the metaphors that run through the description. Of course, this is one of those instances where a picture would be worth a mountain of words, which is why qualitative fieldwork increasingly includes photography and videography. This excerpt aims at offering *a sense of the physical environment* more than it offers a literal description because unless one has been there or seen pictures, the landscape is outside ordinary experience.

The physical environment of a setting can be important to what happens in that environment. The way the walls look in rooms, the amount of space available, how the space is used, the nature of the lighting, how people are organized in the space, and the interpretive reactions of program participants to the physical setting can be important information about both program implementation and the effects of the program on participants.

A common mistake among observers is to take the physical environment for granted. Thus, an evaluator may report that the program took place in "a school." The evaluator may have a mental image of "school" that matches what was observed, but schools vary considerably in size, appearance, and neighborhood setting. Even more so, the interiors of schools vary considerably. The same can be said for criminal justice settings, health settings, community mental health programs, and any other human service activity.

| EXHIBIT 6.3 | Example of Combining Description and Metaphor to Provide a Sense of Place |
|---|---|

Context for a Wilderness Program: First View From Bright Angel Point at the Grand Canyon

We followed an asphalt path from the lodge a quarter mile to Bright Angel Point, perhaps the most popular tourist site at the Grand Canyon because of its relatively easy accessibility. With cameras aimed in all directions at the spectacular panorama, in a sea of domestic accents and foreign tongues, we waited our turn at the edge to behold the magnificent rock temples of Ottoman Amphitheater: Deva, Brahma, Zoroaster and, in the distance, Thor. Each rises a half mile above the undulating grayness of the stark Tonto Platform defining the eight-mile descent of Bright Angel Canyon, a narrow slit hiding the inner gorge that looks like it had been drawn in black ink to outline the base of the temples. Each begins as sheer Redwall that forms a massive foundation supporting a series of sloping sedimentary rock terraces, the Supai. These sweeping terraces, spotted green with sparse desert vegetation, point upward like arrow feathers to a white sandstone pedestal, the Coconino. A dark red pinnacle of Hermit shale uniquely crowns each temple. Eons of erosion have sculpted dramatic variations in every aspect save one: their common geologic history. I studied each separately, wanting to fix in my mind the differences between them, but the shared symmetry of strata melded them into a single, massive formation, a half mile high and many miles around. Behind me I heard a participant say softly to no one in particular, almost under her breath, "It's too awesome. I feel overwhelmed."

SOURCE: Adapted from Patton (1999a).

During site visits to early childhood education programs, we found a close association between the attractiveness of the facility (child-made decorations and colorful posters on the walls, well-organized learning materials, orderly teacher area) and other program attributes (parent involvement, staff morale, clarity of the program's goals and theory of action). An attractive, well-ordered environment corresponded to an engaging, well-ordered program. In observing as well as conducting workshops, I have noted how the arrangement of chairs affects participation. It is typically much easier to generate discussion when chairs are in a circle rather than in lecture style. The dim lighting of many hotel conference rooms seems to literally drain energy from people sitting in those rooms for long periods of time. Physical environments clearly affect people and programs.

Variations in the settings for a wilderness training program for which I served as participant observer provide an interesting example of how physical environments affect a program. The explicit purpose of holding the "field conferences" in the wilderness was to remove people from their everyday settings in largely urban environments surrounded by human-made buildings and the paraphernalia of modern industrial society. Yet, wilderness environments are no more uniform than the environments of human service programs. During the yearlong program, participants were exposed to four different wilderness environments: the autumn forest in the Gila wilderness of New Mexico; the rough terrain of Arizona's Kofa

Mountains in winter; the muddy, flooding San Juan River in the canyon lands of Utah during the spring; and among the magnificent rock formations of the Grand Canyon in summer, a desert environment. One focus of the evaluation, then, was to observe how participants responded to the opportunities and constraints presented by these different environments: forest, mountains, canyon-lined river, and Grand Canyon desert.

In addition, weather and seasonal differences accentuated variations among these environments. Program activities were clearly affected by the extent to which there was rain, cold, wind, and shelter. In the program's theory, weather uncertainties were expected to be a natural part of the program, offering natural challenges for the group to deal with. But the program theory also called for participants to engage deeply with each other during evening group discussions. During one 10-day winter field conference that was unusually cold and wet, participants were miserable, and it became increasingly difficult to carry on group discussions, thus reducing considerably the amount of group process time available and rushing the interactions that did occur because of participants' discomfort. Program staff learned that they needed to anticipate more clearly the possible variations in physical environments, plan for those variations, and include the participants in that planning so as to increase their commitment to continuing the process under difficult physical conditions.

## The Human, Social Environment

Just as physical environments vary, so too do social environments. The ways in which human beings interact create social-ecological constellations that affect how partici-

pants behave toward each other in those environments. Rudolf Moos (1975) described the social-ecological view of programs as follows:

> The social climate perspective assumes that environments have unique "personalities," just like people. Personality tests assess personality traits or needs and provide information about the characteristic ways in which people behave. Social environments can be similarly portrayed with a great deal of accuracy and detail. Some people are more supportive than others. Likewise, some social environments are more supportive than others. Some people feel a strong need to control others. Similarly, some social environments are extremely rigid, autocratic, and controlling. Order, clarity, and structure are important to many people. Correspondingly, many social environments strongly emphasize order, clarity, and control. (p. 4)

In describing the social environment, the observer looks for the ways in which people organize themselves into groups and subgroups. Patterns and frequency of interactions, the direction of communication patterns (from staff to participants and participants to staff), and changes in these patterns tell us things about the social environment. How people group together can be illuminative and important. All-male versus all-female groupings, male-female interactions, and interactions among people with different background characteristics, racial identities, and/or ages alert the observer to patterns in the social ecology of the program.

Decision-making patterns can be a particularly important part of a program's social environment. Who makes decisions about the activities that take place? To what extent are decisions made openly, so that participants are aware of the decision-making pro-

cess? How are decisions by staff communicated to participants? Answers to these questions are an important part of the description of a program's decision environment.

An observer's descriptions of a social environment will not necessarily be the same as the perceptions of that environment expressed by participants. Nor is it likely that all participants will perceive the setting's human climate in the same way. At all times it is critical that the observer record participants' comments in quotation marks, indicating the source—who said what?—so as to keep perceptions of participants separate from the observer's or evaluator's own descriptions and interpretations.

## Historical Perspectives

Historical information can shed important light on the social environment. The history of a program, community, or organization is an important part of the context for research. Distinguished qualitative sociologist William Foote Whyte, sometimes called the father of sociological field research, has reflected on how he came to value historical research as a critical part of his fieldwork.

When we began our Peruvian research program, I viewed history as having little value for understanding the current scene. I thought I was only being sympathetic to the interests of our Peruvian researchers in suggesting that they gather historical data on each village for the last 50 years.

Fortunately, the Peruvians refused to accept the 50-year limit and in some cases probed up to 500 years in the history of villages or areas. Much of these data on rural communities would be of interest only to historians. However, understanding the paradox of the Mantaro Valley required us to go back to the conquest of Peru, and, in the Chancay Val-

### OBSERVING NATURE

Observing animals and nature poses special challenges in overcoming the tendency to attribute human characteristics to flora and fauna. Harvard sociobiologist E. O. Wilson pulled no punches in assessing the consequences: "No intellectual vice is more crippling then defiantly self-indulgent anthropocentrism" (quoted by Leo Marx 1999:60).

ley, we traced the beginnings of the differentiation of Huayopampa from Pacaros back more than a century. (Whyte 1984:153)

Documenting and understanding the context of a program will require delving into its history. How was the program created and initially funded? Who were the original people targeted for program services, and how have target populations changed over time? To what extent and in what ways have goals and intended outcomes changed over time? What have staffing patterns been over time? How has the program's governance (board) been involved at various stages in the program's history? What crises has the program endured? If the program is embedded within a larger organizational context, what is the history of that organization in relation to the program? How has the larger political and economic environment changed over time, and how have those changes affected program development? What are the stories people tell about the program's history? These kinds of questions frame inquiry into the program's history to illuminate context.

In the 1990s, I evaluated a "free high school" that had been created during the struggles and turmoil of the 1960s. Little about the program's current programming

could be understood outside the context of its historical emergence. The school's image of itself, its curriculum, and its policies had been handed down and adapted from that intense period of early development. Doing fieldwork in the 1990s could only be done by traversing the memories and legends of the school's historical emergence in the 1960s.

### Planned Program Implementation Activities and Formal Interactions

Most evaluations focus at least some observations on planned program activities. What goes on in the program? What do participants and staff do? What is it like to be a participant? These are the kinds of questions evaluators bring to the program setting to document program implementation.

Build observations around activities that have a kind of unity about them: a beginning, some middle point, and a closure point—such things as a class session, a counseling session, meal time in the residential facility, a meeting of some kind, a home visit in an outreach program, a consultation, or a registration procedure. Attending to sequence illustrates how the inquiry progresses over the course of an observation. Initially, the observer will focus on how the activity is introduced or begun. Who is present at the beginning? What exactly was said? How did participants respond or react to what was said?

These kinds of basic descriptive questions guide the evaluator throughout the full sequence of observation. *Who* is involved? *What* is being done and said by staff and participants? *How* do they go about what they do? *Where* do activities occur? *When* do things happen? What are the variations in how participants engage in planned activities? How does it feel to be engaged in this activity? (The observer records his or her own feelings as part of the observation.) How do behaviors and feelings change over the course of the activity?

Finally, the observer looks for closure points. What are the signals that a particular activity is being ended? Who is present at that time? What is said? How do participants react to the ending of the activity? How is the completion of this unit of activity related to other program activities and future plans?

Each unit of activity is observed and treated as a self-contained event for the purpose of managing field notes. The observation of a single session of the early childhood parent education program presented in Chapter 1 is an example. Each observed event or activity can be thought of as a mini-case write-up of a discrete incident, activity, interaction, or event. During analysis, one looks across these discrete units-of-activity cases for patterns and themes, but during the initial stages of fieldwork the observer will be kept busy just trying to capture self-contained units of activity without worrying yet about looking for patterns across activities.

Observing and documenting formal program activities will constitute a central element in evaluating planned program implementation, but to fully understand a program and its effects on participants, observations should not be restricted to formal, planned activities. The next section discusses observation of the things that go on between and around formal, planned program activities.

### Informal Interactions and Unplanned Activities

If observers put away their seeing and observing selves as soon as a planned, formal activity ends, they will miss a great deal of

data. Some programs build in "free" or un-structured time between activities, with the clear recognition that such periods provide opportunities for participants to assimilate what has occurred during formal program-matic activities as well as to provide partici-pants with necessary breathing space. Rarely, if ever, can a program or institution plan every moment of participants' time.

During periods of informal interaction and unplanned activity, it can be particu-larly difficult to organize observations be-cause people are likely to be milling around, coming and going, moving in and out of small groups, with some sitting alone, some writing, some seeking refreshments, and otherwise engaging in a full range of what may appear to be random behaviors. How, then, can the evaluator observer collect data during such a time?

This scenario illustrates beautifully the importance of staying open to the data and doing opportunity sampling. One can't an-ticipate all the things that might emerge dur-ing unplanned program time, so the ob-server watches, listens, and looks for opportunities to deepen observations, re-cording what people do, the nature of infor-mal interactions (e.g., what subgroups are in evidence), and, in particular, what people are saying to each other. This last point is particularly important. During periods of unplanned activity, participants have the greatest opportunity to exchange views and to talk with each other about what they are experiencing in the program. In some cases, the evaluator will simply listen in on conver-sations or there may be opportunities to con-duct informal interviews, either with a sin-gle participant in natural conversation or with some small group of people, asking normal, conversational questions:

So what did you think of what went on this morning?

Was it clear to you what they were trying to get at?

What did you think of the session today?

How do you think what went on today fits into this whole thing that we're involved in?

Such questioning should be done in an easy, conversational manner so as not to be intru-sive or so predictable that every time some-one sees you coming they know what ques-tions you're going to ask. "Get ready, here comes the evaluator with another endless set of questions." Also, when doing infor-mal, conversational interviewing, be sure that you are acting in accordance with ethi-cal guidelines regarding informed consent and confidentiality. (See the earlier discus-sion in this chapter about overt versus co-vert fieldwork.)

How something is said should be re-corded along with what is said. At a morn-ing break in the second day of a two-day workshop, I joined the other men in the restroom. As the men lined up to use the fa-cilities, the first man to urinate said loudly, "Here's what I think of this program." As each man finished he turned to the man be-hind him and said, "Your turn to piss on the program." This spontaneous group reaction spoke volumes more than answers to formal interview questions and provided much greater depth of expression than checking "very dissatisfied" on an evaluation ques-tionnaire.

Everything that goes on in or around the program is data. The fact that none of the participants talk about a session when it is over is data. The fact that people immedi-ately split in different directions when a ses-sion is over is data. The fact that people talk about personal interests and share gossip that has nothing to do with the program is data. In many programs, the most sig-nificant participant learnings occur during

unstructured time as a result of interactions with other participants. To capture a holistic view of the program, the evaluator observer must stay alert to what happens during these informal periods. While others are on break, the observer is still working. No breaks for the dedicated field-worker! Well, not really. You've got to pace yourself and take care of yourself or your observations will deteriorate into mush. But you get the idea. You may be better off taking a break during part of a formal session time so you can work (collect data) while others are on break.

As happens in many programs, the participants in the wilderness education program I was observing/evaluating began asking for more free, unstructured time. When we weren't hiking or doing camp chores, a lot of time was spent in formal discussions and group activities. Participants wanted more free time to journal. Some simply wanted more time to reflect. Most of all, they wanted more time for informal interactions with other participants. I respected the privacy of one-to-one interactions when I observed them and would never attempt to eavesdrop. I would, however, watch for such interactions and, judging body language and facial expressions, I would speculate when serious interpersonal exchanges were taking place. I would then look for natural opportunities to engage each of those participants in conversational interviews, telling them I had noticed the intensity of their interaction and inquiring whether they were willing to share what had happened and what significance they attached to the interaction. Most appreciated my role in documenting the program's unfolding and its effects on participants and were open to sharing. It was on the basis of those informal interviews and observations that I provided formative feedback to staff about the importance of free time and helped alleviate the

feeling among some staff members that they had a responsibility to plan and account for every moment during the program.

Participant observation necessarily combines observing and informal interviewing. Observers need to be disciplined about not assuming they know the meaning to participants of what they observe without checking with those participants. During one period of unstructured time in the wilderness program, following a fairly intensive group activity in which a great deal of interpersonal sharing had taken place, I decided to pay particular attention to one of the older men in the group who had resisted involvement. Throughout the week he had taken every available opportunity to make it known that he was unimpressed with the program and its potential for impact on him. When the session ended, he immediately walked over to his backpack, pulled out his writing materials, and went off to a quiet spot where he could write. He continued writing, completely absorbed, until dinnertime an hour later. No one interrupted him. With his legs folded, his notebook in his lap, and his head and shoulders bent over the notebook, he gave off clear signals that he was involved, concentrating and working on something to which he was giving a great deal of effort.

I suspected as I watched that he was venting his rage and dissatisfaction with the program. I tried to figure out how I might read what he had written. I was so intrigued that I momentarily even considered covert means of getting my hands on his notebook, but quickly dismissed such unethical invasion of his privacy. Instead, I looked for a natural opportunity to initiate a conversation about his writing. During the evening meal around the campfire, I moved over next to him, made some small talk about the weather, and then began the following conversation:

"You know, in documenting experiences people are having, I'm trying to track some of the different things folks are doing. The staff have encouraged people to keep journals and do writing, and I noticed that you were writing fairly intensely before dinner. If you're willing to share, it would be helpful for me to know how you see the writing fitting into your whole experience with the program."

He hesitated, moved his food about in his bowl a little bit, and then said, "I'm not sure about the program or how it fits in or any of that, but I will tell you what I was writing. I was writing . . . ," and he hesitated because his voice cracked, "a letter to my teenage son trying to tell him how I feel about him and make contact with him about some things. I don't know if I'll give the letter to him. The letter may have been more for me than for him. But the most important thing that's been happening for me during this week is the time to think about my family and how important it is to me and I haven't been having a very good relationship with my son. In fact, it's been pretty shitty and so I wrote him a letter. That's all."

This short conversation revealed a very different side of this man and an important impact of the program on his personal and family life. We had several more conversations along these lines, and he agreed to be a case example of the family impacts of the program. Until that time, impacts on family had not even been among the expected or intended outcomes of the program. It turned out to be a major area of impact for a number of participants.

## The Native Language of the Program

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
That is, the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown,
The poet's pen turns them to shapes
And gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

—William Shakespeare,
*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, scene 1

As noted in Chapter 2, the Whorf hypothesis (Schultz 1991) alerts us to the power of language to shape our perceptions and experiences. As an insurance investigator, Benjamin Whorf was assigned to look into explosions in warehouses. He discovered that truck drivers were entering "empty" warehouses smoking cigarettes and cigars. The warehouses often contained invisible, but highly flammable gases. He interviewed truckers and found that they associated the word *empty* with *harmless* and acted accord-

ingly. Whorf's job, in Shakespeare's terms, was to turn the truckers' perception of "airy nothing" into the shape of possible danger.

An anthropological axiom insists that one cannot understand another culture without understanding the language of the people in that culture. Language organizes our world for us by shaping what we see, perceive, and pay attention to. The things for which people have special words tell others what is important to that culture. Thus, as students learn in introductory anthropology, Eskimos have many words for snow and Arabs have many words for camel. Likewise, the artist has many words for red and different kinds of brushes.

Roderick Nash (1986), in his classic study *Wilderness and the American Mind*, traces how changing European American perceptions of "wilderness" has affected at the deepest levels our cultural, economic, and political perspectives on deserts, forests, canyons, and rivers. He traced the very idea of wilderness to the eighth-century heroic epic character Beowulf, whose bravery was defined by his courage in entering the *wildeor*—a place of wild and dangerous beasts, dark and foreboding forests, and untamed, primordial spirits. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, wilderness came to connote a place of uncontrolled evil that needed to be tamed and civilized, while Eastern cultures and religions fostered love of wilderness rather than fear. Nash credits the Enlightenment with offering new ways of thinking about wilderness—and new language to shape that changed thinking.

Moving from the wilderness to the interior territory of organizations, agencies, and programs, language still shapes experience and is therefore an important focus during fieldwork. Programs develop their own language to describe the problems they deal with in their work. Educators who work with learning disabled students have a com-

plex system of language to distinguish different degrees and types of retardation, a language that changes as cultural and political sensitivities change. People in criminal justice generate language for distinguishing types of offenders or "perps" (perpetrators). Fieldwork involves learning the "native language" of the setting or program being studied and attending to variations in connotations and situational use. The field notes and reports of the observer should include the exact language used by participants to communicate the flavor and meaning of "native" program language.

Language was especially important in the wilderness education program I evaluated. These were highly verbal people, well educated, reflective and articulate, who spent a lot of program time in group discussions. Program staff understood how words can shape experiences. They wanted participants to view the time in the wilderness as a professional development learning experience not a vacation, so staff called each week in the wilderness a "field conference." They hoped participants would see the program as a "conference" held in the "field." Despite the determined efforts of staff, however, the participants never adopted this language. Almost universally they referred to the weeks in the wilderness as "trips." During the second "field conference" the staff capitulated. Interestingly enough, that capitulation coincided with negative reactions by participants to some logistical inadequacies, unsuccessful program activities, and bad weather, all of which undercut the "conference" emphasis. Staff language reflected that change.

Other language emerged that illuminated participants' experiences. One of the participants expressed the hope of "detoxifying" in the wilderness. He viewed his return to his everyday world as "poisonous retoxification." The group immediately adopted this

language of detoxification and retoxification to refer to "wilderness time" versus ordinary "urban civilization time," ultimately shortening the words to *detox* and *retox*. This language came to permeate the program's culture.

The discussions in the wilderness often reflected the physical environment in which program activities took place. Participants became skilled at creating analogies and metaphors to contrast their urban work lives with their wilderness experiences. After backpacking all day, participants could be heard talking about learning how to "pace myself in my work," or "shifting the burdens of responsibilities that I carry so that the load is more evenly balanced" (a reference to the experience of adjusting the weight of the backpack). In the mountains, after rock climbing, participants referred to "the danger in taking risks at work without support" (a reference to the *balay* system of climbing where someone supports the climber with a safety rope below). One discussion focused on how to "find toeholds and handholds" to bring about change back home, "to get on top of the steep wall of resistance in my institution." They even assigned numbers to degrees of back-home institutional resistance corresponding to the numbers used to describe the degree of difficulty of various rock climbs. On the river, participant language was filled with phrases like "going with the flow," "learning to monitor professional development like you read and monitor the current," and "trying to find my way out of the eddies of life."

Because of the power of language to shape our perceptions and experiences, most participants wanted to know the names of the rock formations, winding canyons, and river rapids we encountered, while others, following *Desert Solitaire* author Edward Abbey (1968), set for themselves the goal of suppressing the human tendency to personify natural forms. Thus began a sustained personal interest in how names in the wilderness shaped our experiences there (Patton and Patton 2001).

When I took my son into the Grand Canyon for a "coming of age" initiation experience (Patton 1999a), he reacted to the problem of finding words for that awesome environment by making up words. For example, upon seeing the Canyon for the very first time he whispered, *"Bue düden,"* which became our way of describing things too beautiful and awesome for ordinary words.

Capturing the precise language of participants honors the emic tradition in anthropology: recording participants' own understandings of their experiences. Observers must learn the language of participants in the setting or program they are observing in order to faithfully represent participants in their own terms and be true to their worldview.

## Nonverbal Communication

Social and behavioral scientists have reported at length the importance of both verbal and nonverbal communication in human groups. While recording the language of participants, the observer should also attend to nonverbal forms of communication. For example, in educational settings nonverbal communication would include how students get the attention of or otherwise approach instructors, such as waving their hands in the air. In group settings a great deal of fidgeting and moving about may reveal things about attention and involvement. How participants dress, express affection, and sit together or apart are examples of nonverbal cues about social norms and patterns.

Again, the wilderness program provides informative examples. Hugging emerged as a nonverbal way of providing support at

times of emotional distress or celebration, for example, a way to recognize when someone had overcome some particularly difficult challenge, like making it up across a ledge along a cliff face. But subgroups differed in amount of and comfort with hugging, and different field conferences manifested different amounts of hugging. When the group felt disparate, separated, with people on their own "trips," isolated from each other, little hugging occurred either in pairs or around the group campfire. When the depth of connection was deeper, shoulder-to-shoulder contact around the campfire was common and group singing was more likely. Over time, it became possible to read the tenor of the group by observing the amount and nature of physical contact participants were having with each other—and participants in groups with a lot of hugging and connectedness reported noticeably greater personal change.

In evaluating an international development project, I observed that the three host country nationals ("locals") had developed a subtle set of hand signals and gestures that the American staff never noticed. In meetings, the host country nationals regularly communicated with each other and operated as a team using these nonverbal signals. Later, having gained their confidence, I asked the local staff members about the gestures. They told me that the Americans had insisted that each person participate as an individual on an equal footing in staff meetings and, to support an atmosphere of openness, the Americans asked them not to use their own language during staff meetings. But the locals wanted to operate as a unit to counter the power of the Americans, so they developed subtle gestures to communicate with each other since they were denied use of their own language.

Parameswaran (2001) has described how she relied on reading nonverbal cues to tell how potential interviewees reacted to her subject matter, the study of young middle-class women in India who read Western romance novels. She had to depend on reading body language to pick up hostility, disapproval, support, or openness because the verbal formalities of some interactions offered fewer cues than nonverbal reactions. Among the young women, giggles, winks, animated interactions, lowered eyes, and direct gaze became cues about how the fieldwork was progressing.

A caution is in order here. Nonverbal behaviors are easily misinterpreted, especially cross-culturally. Therefore, whenever possible and appropriate, having observed what appear to be significant nonverbal behaviors, some effort should be made to follow up with those involved to find out directly from them what the nonverbal behaviors really meant. I confirmed with other participants in the wilderness program the importance of hugging as a mechanism that they themselves used to sense the tenor of the group.

## Unobtrusive Observations

Being observed can make people self-conscious and generate anxiety, especially when the observations are part of an evaluation. Regardless of how sensitively observations are made, the possibility always exists that people will behave differently under conditions where an observation or evaluation is taking place than they would if the observer were not present.

Even when well-intentioned and cooperative, the research subject's knowledge that he is participating in a scholarly search may confound the investigator's data. . . . It is important to note early that the awareness of testing need not, by itself, contaminate responses. It is a question of probabilities, but the probability

of bias is high in any study in which a respondent is aware of his subject status. (Webb et al. 1966:13)

Concern about reactions to being observed has led some social scientists to recommend covert observations as discussed earlier in this chapter. An alternative strategy involves searching for opportunities to collect "unobtrusive measures" (Webb et al. 1966). Unobtrusive measures are those made without the knowledge of the people being observed and without affecting what is observed.

Robert L. Wolf and Barbara L. Tymitz (1978) included unobtrusive measures in their naturalistic inquiry evaluation of the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution. They looked for "wear spots" as indicators of use of particular exhibit areas. They decided that worn rugs would indicate the popularity of particular areas in the museum. The creative evaluator can learn a number of things about a program by looking for physical clues. Dusty equipment or files may indicate things that are not used. Areas that are used a great deal by children in a school will look different—that is, more worn—than areas that are little used.

In a week-long staff training program for 300 people, I asked the kitchen to systematically record how much coffee was consumed in the morning, afternoon, and evening each day. Those sessions that I judged to be particularly boring had a correspondingly higher level of coffee consumption. Active and involving sessions showed less coffee consumption, regardless of time of day. (Participants could get up and get coffee whenever they wanted.)

In the wilderness program, the thickness of notebooks called "learning logs" became an unobtrusive indicator of how engaged participants were in self-reflective journal-

ing. All participants were provided with learning logs at the beginning of the first field conference and were encouraged to use them for private reflections and journaling. These three-ring binders contained almost no paper when first given to participants. Participants brought the learning logs back each time they returned to the wilderness. (The program involved four different trips over the course of a year.) The extent to which paper had been added to the notebooks was one indicator of the extent to which the logs were being used.

The personnel of the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have a kind of unobtrusive measure they use in "evaluating" the wilderness habits of groups that go through an area such as the San Juan River in Utah. The canyons along the San Juan River are a very fragile environment. The regulations for use of that land are essentially "take only photographs, leave only footprints." This means that all garbage, including human waste and feces, are to be carried out. It takes several days to go down the river. By observing the amount and types of garbage groups carry out, one can learn a great deal about the wilderness habits of various groups and their compliance with river regulations.

The creative observer, aware of the variety of things to be learned from studying physical and social settings, will look for opportunities to incorporate unobtrusive measures into fieldwork, thereby manifesting a "sympathy toward multi-method inquiry, triangulation, playfulness in data collection, outcroppings as measures, and alternatives to self report" (Webb and Weick 1983:210).

A particularly powerful example of unobtrusive fieldwork is Laura Palmer's (1988) study of letters and remembrances left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., a work she called *Shrapnel in the Heart*. For the unobtrusive part of her fieldwork,

Palmer sampled items left at the memorial, all of which are saved and warehoused by the U.S. government. She categorized and analyzed types of items and the content of messages. In some cases, because of identifying information contained in letters or included with objects (photographs, baby shoes, artwork), she was able, through intensive investigative work, to locate the people who left the materials and interview them. Their stories, the intrusive part of her study, combined with vivid descriptions of the objects that led her to them, offer dramatic and powerful insights into the effects of the Vietnam War on the lives of survivors. In one sense, her analysis of letters, journals, photos, and messages can be thought of as a nontraditional and creative form of document analysis, another important fieldwork strategy.

## Documents

Records, documents, artifacts, and archives—what has traditionally been called "material culture" in anthropology—constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programs. Thus, archival strategies and techniques constitute part of the repertoire of field research and evaluation (Hill 1993). In contemporary society, all kinds of entities leave a trail of paper and artifacts, a kind of spoor that can be mined as part of fieldwork. Families keep photographs, children's schoolwork, letters, old Bibles with detailed genealogies, bronzed baby shoes, and other sentimental objects that can inform and enrich family case studies. People who commit suicide leave behind suicide notes that can reveal patterns of despair in a society (Wilkinson 1999). Gangs and others inscribe public places with graffiti. Organizations of all kinds produce mountains of records, both public and private. Indeed, an oft-

intriguing form of analysis involves comparing official statements found in public documents (brochures, board minutes, annual reports) with private memos and what the evaluation observer actually hears or sees occurring the program. Client files are another rich source of case data to supplement field observations and interviews. For example, Vesneski and Kemp (2000) coded and analyzed intake sheets and copies of family plans produced during more than 100 "family conferences" involving the extended families of abused or neglected children in child welfare decision making in the state of Washington.

At the very beginning of an evaluation or organizational fieldwork, access to potentially important documents and records should be negotiated. The ideal situation would include access to all routine records on clients, all correspondence from and to program staff, financial and budget records, organizational rules, regulations, memoranda, charts, and any other official or unofficial documents generated by or for the program. These kinds of documents provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed. They may reveal things that have taken place before the evaluation began. They may include private interchanges to which the evaluator would not otherwise be privy. They can reveal goals or decisions that might be otherwise unknown to the evaluator.

In evaluating the mission fulfillment of a major philanthropic foundation, I examined 10 years of annual reports. Each report was professionally designed, elegantly printed, and widely disseminated—and each report stated a slightly different mission for the foundation. It turned out that the president of the foundation wrote an annual introduction and simply stated the mission from memory. The publication designer routinely lifted this "mission statement" from the

president's letter and highlighted it in bold font at the beginning of the report, often on the cover page. From year to year the focus changed until, over the course of 10 years, the stated mission had changed dramatically without official board action, approval, or even awareness. Further investigation through years of board minutes revealed that, in fact, the board had never adopted a mission statement at all, a matter of considerable surprise to all involved.

As this example shows, documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing. As with all information to which an evaluator has access during observations, the confidentiality of program records, particularly client records, must be respected. The extent to which actual references to and quotations from program records and documents are included in a final report depends on whether the documents are considered part of the public record and therefore able to be publicized without breach of confidentiality. In some cases, with permission and proper safeguards to protect confidentiality, some information from private documents can be quoted directly and cited.

Program records can provide a behind-the-scenes look at program processes and how they came into being. In the wilderness program evaluation, program staff made their files available to me. I discovered a great deal of information not available to other program participants: letters detailing both conceptual and financial debates between the technical staff (who led the wilderness trips) and the project directors (who had responsibility for the overall management of the program). Without knowledge of those arguments it would have been impossible to fully understand the nature of the interactions between field staff and exec-

utive staff in the project. Disagreements about program finances constituted but one arena of communication difficulties during the program, including time in the wilderness. Interviews with those involved revealed quite different perceptions of the nature of the conflicts, their intensity, and their potential for resolution. While participants became aware of some arguments among staff, for the most part they were unaware of the origins of those conflicts and the extent to which program implementation was hampered by them.

My review of files also revealed the enormous complexity of the logistics for the wilderness education program. Participants (college deans, program directors, administrators) were picked up at the airport in vans and driven to the wilderness location where the field conference would take place. Participants were supplied with all the gear necessary for surviving in the wilderness. Prior to each field trip, staff had many telephone and written exchanges with individual participants about particular needs and fears. Letters from participants, especially those new to the wilderness, showed how little they understood about what they were getting into. One seasoned administrator and hard-core smoker inquired, with reference to the first 10-day hike in the heart of the Gila wilderness, "Will there be a place to buy cigarettes along the way?" Talk about being clueless! But by the end of the year of field trips, he had given up smoking. His letter of inquiry alerted me to the importance of this pre-post observation.

Without having looked over this correspondence, I would have missed the extent to which preparation for the one-week experiences in the wilderness consumed the time and energy of program staff. The intensity of work involved before the field conferences helped explain the behavior of staff once the field trips got under way. So much had gone

into the preparations, virtually none of which was appreciated by or known to program participants, that program staff would sometimes experience a psychological letdown effect and have difficulty energizing themselves for the actual wilderness experience.

Learning to use, study, and understand documents and files is part of the repertoire of skills needed for qualitative inquiry. For an extended discussion of the interpretation of documents and material culture, see Hodder (2000).

## Observing What Does Not Happen

The preceding sections have described the things one can observe in a setting or program. Observing activities, interactions, what people say, what they do, and the nature of the physical setting is important in a comprehensive approach to fieldwork. But what about observing what does *not* happen?

The potential absurdity of speculating about what does not occur is illustrated by a Sufi story. During a plague of locusts, the wise-fool Mulla Nasrudin, always looking on the bright side, went from village to village encouraging people by observing how fortunate they were that elephants had no wings. "You people don't realize how lucky you are. Imagine what life would be like with elephants flying overhead. These locusts are nothing."

To observe that elephants have no wings is indeed data. Moreover, elephants have no fins, claws, feathers, or branches. Clearly, once one ventures into the area of observing what does not happen, there are a near-infinite number of things one could point out. The "absence of occurrence" list could become huge. It is therefore with some cau-

tion that I include among the tasks of the observer that of noting what does not occur.

If social science theory, program goals, implementation designs, and/or proposals suggest that certain things ought to happen or are expected to happen, then it is appropriate for the observer or evaluator to note that those things did not happen. If a community where water is scarce shows no evidence of conflict over water rights, an anthropologist could be expected to report and explain this absence of community conflict. If a school program is supposed to, according to its funding mandate and goals, provide children with opportunities to explore the community and no such explorations occur, it is altogether appropriate for the evaluator to note said implementation failure. If the evaluator reported only what occurred, a question might be left in the mind of the reader about whether the other activities had occurred but had simply not been observed. Likewise, if a criminal justice program is supposed to provide one-to-one counseling to juveniles and no such counseling takes place, it is entirely appropriate for the evaluator to note the absence of counseling.

In observing early childhood programs, the absence of children's art on the walls in one center stood out. Indeed, the absence of any colorful posters or art of any kind stood out because all other centers' walls were covered with colorful displays. When I pointed this out, embarrassed staff members explained that they had set in motion a planning process for decorating the walls that had become bogged down and they had just neglected to get back to the issue because, they realized, they got gotten used to the way things were.

Thus, it can be appropriate to note that something did not occur when the observer's basic knowledge of and experience with the phenomenon suggests that the ab-

sence of some particular activity or factor is noteworthy. This clearly calls for judgment, common sense, and experience. As eminent qualitative methodologist Bob Stake (1995) has asserted:

> One of the principal qualifications of qualitative researchers is experience. Added to the experience of ordinary looking and thinking, the experience of the qualitative researcher is one of knowing what leads to significant understanding, recognizing good sources of data, and consciously and unconsciously testing out the veracity of their eyes and robustness of their interpretations. It requires sensitivity and skepticism. Much of this methodological knowledge and personality come from hard work under the critical examination of colleagues and mentors. (pp. 49-50)

Making informed judgments about the significance of nonoccurrences can be among the most important contributions an evaluator can make because such feedback can provide program staff members or other evaluation users with information that they may not have thought to request. Moreover, they may lack the requisite experience or awareness to have noticed the absence of that which the evaluator observes. For example, the absence of staff conflict is typically noteworthy because staff conflict is common. Similarly, absence of conflict between administrative levels (local, state, and federal) would be noteworthy because such conflict is, in my experience, virtually universal.

In many such cases, the observation about what did not occur is simply a restatement, in the opposite, of what did occur. That restatement, however, will attract attention in a way that the initial observation might not. For example, if one were observing a program being conducted in a multiracial community, it is possible that program goals would include statements about the necessity of staff being sensitive to the particular needs, interests, and cultural patterns of minorities, but there may not be specific mention of the desired racial composition of program staff. If, then, the evaluator observes that the staff of the program consists entirely of Caucasians, it is appropriate to report that the staff is all White, that is, no people of color are among the program staff, the importance of which derives from the location and nature of the program.

Observations of staff interaction and decision-making processes also provide opportunities for evaluators to note things that do not happen. If, over time, the observer notes that program planning processes never include participants' input in any systematic or direct way, it may well be appropriate for the evaluator to point out the absence of such input based on experiences indicating the significance of participant input in the planning processes of other programs.

My evaluation of the wilderness education program included observations about a number of things that did not occur. No serious injuries occurred at any of the six field conferences in the wilderness—important information for someone thinking about the possible risks involved in such a program. No participant refused to shoulder his or her share of the work that had to be done in order for the group to live and work together in the wilderness. This observation emerged from discussions with technical field staff who often worked with juveniles in wilderness settings where uneven sharing of cooking, cleaning, and related responsibilities often led to major group conflicts. The fact that the groups I observed never had to deal with one or two people not helping out was worth noting.

Perhaps the most important observation about what did not happen came from observing staff meetings. Over time, I noticed a pattern in which staff held meetings to make decisions about important issues, but no such decisions were made. Staff sometimes thought that a decision had been made, but closure was not brought to the decision-making process and no responsibility for follow-up was assigned. Many subsequent implementation failures and staff conflicts could be traced to ambiguities and differences of opinion that were left unresolved at staff meetings. By hearing me describe both what was and was not occurring, staff became more explicit and effective in making decisions. Reporting what did happen in staff meetings was important, but it was also extremely important to observe what did not happen.

## Nested and Layered Case Studies During Fieldwork

> A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. The single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities—but rarely will we care enough to submit it to case study. We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its context. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. (Stake 1995:xi)

Months of fieldwork may result in a single case study that describes a village, community, neighborhood, organization, or program. However, that single case study is likely to be made up of many smaller cases—the stories of specific individuals, families, organizational units, and other groups. Critical incidents and case studies of specific bounded activities, like a celebra-tion, may also be presented within the larger case. The qualitative analysis process typically centers on presentation of specific cases and thematic analysis across cases. Knowing this, fieldwork can be organized around nested and layered case studies, which means that some form of nested case sampling must occur.

Let me briefly review the centrality of case studies as a qualitative inquiry strategy. Chapter 1 opened by citing a number of well-known and influential books based on case studies, for example, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons From America's Best-Run Companies* by Peters and Waterman (1982), Angela Browne's important book *When Battered Women Kill* (1987), and Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's six detailed case studies in *Respect* (2000:13). Chapter 2 presented the construction of *unique case studies* as a major strategic theme of qualitative inquiry. Chapter 3 reviewed theoretical perspectives that are inductively case based. Chapter 4 reviewed at some length the importance in qualitative evaluation of *capturing and reporting individualized outcomes* based on case studies of how participants in programs change during a program and whether they maintain those changes afterward. To illustrate this point, in the wilderness education program our evaluation team constructed case studies of participants using multiple sources of data from fieldwork: (1) background data gathered through interviews about participants' situations and perspectives upon entering the year of field conferences; (2) observations of their experiences during field conferences; (3) informal and conversational interviews with them during the wilderness trips; (4) quotations from formal group interviews (focus groups) held at various times during the trips; (5) excerpts from their journals and other personal writings when they were willing to

share those with us, as they often were; and (6) follow-up telephone interviews with participants after each field trip and after the entire program was completed to track the impact of the program on individuals over time.

Let me pause at this point and note some confusion in the qualitative literature about terminology. For example, sociologists Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) ask:

> But is the case study a method? Or is it an approach?... Case studies employ various methods. These can include interviews, participant observation, and field studies. Their goals are to reconstruct and analyze a case from a sociological perspective. It would thus be more appropriate to define the case study as an approach, although the term *case method* suggests that it is indeed a method. (p. 1)

Whatever term or phrase is used, case studies depend on clearly defining the object of study, that is, the case. But this too is complex.

When more than one object of study or unit of analysis is included in fieldwork, case studies may be layered and nested within the overall, primary case approach. William Foote Whyte's (1943) classic study *Street Corner Society* has long been recognized as an exemplar of the single-community ($N = 1$) case study (e.g., Yin 1989) even though his study of "Cornerville" includes the stories (case studies) of several individual lower-income youth, some of whom were striving to escape the neighborhood.

The wilderness program illustrates how case studies often are layered and nested. The three-year wilderness program constituted the overall, one might say *macro*, case study. The final evaluation report presented conclusions about the processes and outcomes of the overall program, a case example of a three-year wilderness education initiative. As Exhibit 6.4 (p. 300) shows, however, within that overall evaluation case study were nested individual case studies documenting individual experiences and outcomes; case studies of each yearlong group cohort; and case studies of each separate field conference, for example, the 10 days in the Gila wilderness or the 10 days in the Kofa Mountains. Slicing through the fieldwork and analysis in other ways were case studies of particular incidents, for example, the emotional catharsis experienced by one participant when she finally managed to overcome her terror and rappel down a cliff face, the whole group watching and urging her on, a process that took some 45 tense minutes. Other mini-cases consisted of different units of analysis. A full day's hike could be a case, as could running a specific dangerous rapid on the San Juan River. Each evening discussion constituted a case such that that over the three years, we had notes on over 80 discussions of various kinds. Staff meetings made for a different unit of analysis and therefore a different series of case studies. Thus, extended fieldwork can and typically does involve many mini- or micro-case studies of various units of analysis (individuals, groups, specific activities, specific periods of time, critical incidents), all of which together make up the overall case study, in this example, the final evaluation of the wilderness education program. Chapter 5 discusses at length various units of analysis and sampling strategies for case studies (see especially Exhibit 5.5 [p. 231] on units of analysis and Exhibit 5.6 [pp. 243-244] on purposeful sampling strategies).

Fieldwork, then, can be thought of as engaging in a series of multilayered and nested case studies, often with intersecting and overlapping units of analysis. One final case study deserves consideration—the observer's experiences and reactions. We turn to that now.

## Observing Oneself

Physician, heal thyself.
Observer, observe thyself.

—Halcolm

In the second chapter, I identified voice and perspective, or reflexivity, as one of the central strategic themes of contemporary, postmodern qualitative inquiry. The term *reflexivity* has entered the qualitative lexicon as a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective. Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to observe herself or himself so as to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of her or his own perspective and voice as well as—and often in contrast to—the perspectives and voices of those she or he observes and talks to during fieldwork. Reflexivity calls for self-reflection, indeed, critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and a willingness to consider how who one is affects what one is able to observe, hear, and understand in the field and as an observer and analyst. The observer, therefore, during fieldwork, must observe self as well as others, and interactions of self with others.

Once again, for continuity, I cite Parameswaran (2001), who has written a wonderfully self-reflective account of her experience returning to her native India to do fieldwork as a feminist scholar after being educated in United States.

Because my parents were fairly liberal compared to many of my friends' parents, I grew up with a little more awareness than many middle- and upper-class Indians of the differences between my life and that of the vast majority of Indians. Although I questioned some restrictions that were specific to women of my class, I did not have the language to engage in a systematic feminist critique of patriarchy or nationalism. Feminism for me had been unfortunately constructed as an illness that struck highly Westernized intellectual Indian women who were out of touch with reality. . . . [I]t was my dislocation from India to the relatively radicalized context of the United States that prompted my political development as a feminist and a woman of color. (p. 76)

Given this background and the controversial focus of her fieldwork (reading of Western romance novels by young Indian women), she identified reflective questions to guide her reflexive inquiry during and after fieldwork:

How do kinship roles assigned to native scholars shape social interactions in the field? How can commitments to sisterhood make it difficult for feminist ethnographers to achieve critical distance and discuss female informants' prejudiced views? (p. 76)

Her personal inquiry into these questions, reflecting on her own fieldwork experiences (Parameswaran 2001), is a model of reflexivity.

Many year ago, Indian philosopher J. Krishnamurti (1964) commented on the challenges of self-knowledge. Although his reflections were directed to the importance of lifelong learning rather than to being reflexive in fieldwork, his ruminations offer a larger context for thinking about how to observe oneself, a context beyond concern

| | Nested, Layered, and Overlapping Mini-Case Studies During Fieldwork: Example From the Wilderness Education Program Evaluation |
|---|---|
| **EXHIBIT 6.4** | |

The wilderness education program evaluation illustrates how case studies often are layered and nested. Evaluation of the three-year wilderness program constituted the overall macro case study. Nested and layered within that overall evaluation were various mini-cases of overlapping and intersecting units of analysis that helped organize and frame fieldwork.

**Macro Case Study: Final Evaluation Study of the Three-Year Program**
*Possible nested, layered, and overlapping mini-case studies*

36 individual case studies documenting individual experiences and outcomes.

Case studies of each separate field conference, e.g., the 10 days in the Gila wilderness or the 10 days in the Kofa Mountains (N = 6).

Case studies of each yearlong group cohort (N = 2) and subgroups that formed.

Case notes of staff meetings and planning sessions.

Case studies of particular incidents, e.g., the emotional catharsis experienced by one participant when she finally managed to overcome her terror and rappel down a cliff face, the whole group watching and urging her on, a process that took some 45 tense minutes.

Mini-cases of bounded activities, like a full day's hike or running a specific dangerous rapid on the San Juan River.

Case study of year 3 follow-up and dissemination effort.

Case study of the evaluation observers' experiences and reactions: A case study of reflexivity.

Each evening discussion constituted a case (N = 80 discussions of various kinds over three years).

about methodological authenticity, though his advice applies to that as well.

> Self-knowledge comes when you observe yourself in your relationship with your fellow-students and your teachers, with all the people around you; it comes when you observe the manner of another, his gestures, the way he wears his clothes, the way he talks, his contempt or flattery *and your response;* it comes when you watch everything in you and about you and see yourself as you see your face in the mirror. . . . Now, if you can look into the mirror of relationship exactly as you look into the ordinary mirror, then there is no end to self-knowledge. It is like entering a fathomless ocean which has no shore. . . . ; if you can just observe what you are and move with it, then you will find that it is possible to go infinitely far. Then there is no end to the journey, and that is the mystery, the beauty of it. (Krishnamurti 1964:50-51, emphasis added)

I realize that Krishnamurti's phrase "There is no end to the journey" may strike terror in the hearts of graduate students reading this in preparation for dissertation fieldwork or evaluators facing a report deadline. But, remember, he's taking about lifelong learning, of which the dissertation or a specific evaluation report is but one phase. Just as most dissertations and evaluations are reasonably expected to contribute incremental knowledge rather than make major breakthroughs, so too the self-knowledge of reflexive fieldwork is but one phase in a lifelong journey toward self-knowledge—but it's an important phase and a commitment of growing significance as reflexivity has emerged as a central theme in qualitative inquiry.

The point here, which we shall take up in greater depth in the chapters on analysis and credibility, is that the observer must ulti-mately deal with issues of authenticity, reactivity, and how the observational process may have affected what was observed as well as **how the background and predispositions of the observer may have constrained what was observed and understood.** Each of these areas of methodological inquiry depends on some degree of critical reflexivity.

## Sources of Data Reviewed

This lengthy review of options in what to observe and sources of data for evaluation fieldwork began with the suggestion that a *sensitizing framework* can be useful as a tool to guide fieldwork. The list of data sources we've reviewed can be used to stimulate thinking about evaluation fieldwork possibilities. Other phenomena and other observational arenas would have different sensitizing frameworks or concepts. The following summarizes the observation and inquiry topics we've reviewed for evaluation:

- Description of the program setting/ physical environment

- Description of the social environment

- Capturing historical perspectives

- Describing planned program implementation activities and structured interactions

- Observing informal interactions and unplanned activities

- Recording participants' special program language

- Observing nonverbal communication

- Watching for unobtrusive indicators

- Analyzing documents, files, records, and artifacts

- Commenting on notable nonoccurrences (what does not happen)

- Constructing nested and layered case studies during fieldwork for intersecting and overlapping units of analysis

- Observing oneself: Reflexivity

- Documenting individualized and common outcomes (Chapter 4)

## Creativity in Fieldwork

No checklist can be relied on to guide all aspects of fieldwork. A participant observer must constantly make judgments about what is worth noting. Because it is impossible to observe everything, some process of selection is necessary. Plans made during design should be revised as appropriate when important new opportunities and sources of data become available. That's where flexibility and creativity help. Creativity can be learned and practiced (Patton 1987a). Creative fieldwork means using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening. Creative insights come from being directly involved in the setting being studied.

I shall return to the issue of creativity in considering the interpretation of field notes later in this chapter and again in the analysis chapter. For the moment, it is sufficient to acknowledge the centrality of creativity in naturalistic inquiry and to concur with Virginia Woolf:

> Odd how the creative power at once brings the whole universe to order. . . . I mark Henry James' sentence: observe perpetually. Observe the oncome of age. Observe greed. Observe my own despondency. By that means it becomes serviceable. (quoted in Partnow 1978: 185)

## ▣ Doing Fieldwork: The Data-Gathering Process

The purpose of the research has been clarified. The primary research questions have been focused. Qualitative methods using observations have been selected as one of the appropriate methods of data gathering. It is time to enter the field. Now begins the arduous task of taking field notes.

## Field Notes

Many options exist for taking field notes. Variations include the writing materials used, the time and place for recording field notes, the symbols developed by observers as their own method of shorthand, and how field notes are stored. No universal prescriptions about the mechanics of and procedures for taking field notes are possible because different settings lend themselves to different ways of proceeding and the precise organization of fieldwork is very much a matter of personal style and individual work habits. **What is not optional is the taking of field notes.**

Aside from getting along in the setting, the fundamental work of the observer is the taking of field notes. Field notes are 'the most important determinant of later bringing off a qualitative analysis. Field notes provide the observer's *raison d'être*. If not doing them, [the observer] might as well not be in the setting" (Lofland 1971:102).

Field notes contain the description of what has been observed. They should contain everything that the observer believes to be worth noting. Don't trust anything to future recall. At the moment one is writing it is very tempting, because the situation is still fresh, to believe that the details or particular elements of the situation can be recalled later. If it's important as part of your con-

## BOXED IN

*Those who aspire to be creative are admonished to "think outside the box." This presumes that one has exhausted the possibilities of learning within the box. Before moving outside the box, make sure you know the box. Observe it. Look deep within. Find out the history of the box, how it came to be the box. What has it held? What has been taken from it? Examine the corners. Look underneath, on top, on all sides. Know the box. Understand the box. Learn what the box has to teach. Think inside the box. Only then will you truly be ready to "think outside the box."*

—From Halcolm's *Boxing Guide*

sciousness as an observer, if it's information that has helped you understand the context, the setting, and what went on, then as soon as possible that information should be captured in the field notes.

First and foremost, field notes are descriptive. They should be dated and should record such basic information as where the observation took place, who was present, what the physical setting was like, what social interactions occurred, and what activities took place. Field notes contain the descriptive information that will permit you to return to an observation later during analysis and, eventually, permit the reader of the study's findings to experience the activity observed through your report.

The passages in Exhibit 6.5 on the next page illustrate different kinds of descriptive field notes. On the left side are vague and overgeneralized field notes. On the right side are more detailed and concrete field notes from the same observation.

These examples illustrate the problem of using general terms to describe specific ac-

tions and conditions. Words such as *poor, anger,* and *uneasy* are insufficiently descriptive. Such interpretive words conceal what actually went on rather than reveal the details of the situation. Such terms have little meaning for a person present for the observation. Moreover, the use of such terms in field notes, without the accompanying detailed description, means that the fieldworker has fallen into the bad habit of primarily recording interpretations rather than description. Particularly revealing are terms that can make sense only in comparison to something else. The phrase "poorly dressed" requires some frame of reference about what constitutes "good dress." No skill is more critical in fieldwork than learning to be descriptive, concrete, and detailed.

Field notes also contain what people say. Direct quotations, or as near as possible recall of direct quotations, should be captured during fieldwork, recording what was said during observed activities as well as responses garnered during interviews, both formal and conversational. Quotations provide the "emic perspective" discussed earlier—the insider's perspective—which "is at the heart of most ethnographic research" (Fetterman 1989:30).

Field notes also contain the observer's own feelings, reactions to the experience, and reflections about the personal meaning and significance of what has been observed. Don't deceive yourself into thinking that such feelings can be conjured up again simply by reading the descriptions of what took place. Feelings and reactions should be recorded at the time they are experienced, while you are in the field. Both the nature and intensity of feelings should be recorded. In qualitative inquiry, the observer's own experiences are part of the data. Part of the purpose of being in a setting and getting close to the people in the setting is to permit you to experience what it is like to be in that

| EXHIBIT 6.5 | Fieldnotes Comparisons |
| --- | --- |

| Vague and Overgeneralized Notes | Detailed and Concrete Notes |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The new client was uneasy waiting for her intake interview. | 1. At first the new client sat very stiffly on the chair next to the receptionist's desk. She picked up a magazine and let the pages flutter through her fingers very quickly without really looking at any of the pages. She set the magazine down, looked at her watch, pulled her skirt down, picked up the magazine again, set it back down, took out a cigarette and lit it. She watched the receptionist out of the corner of her eye and glanced at the two or three other people waiting in the room. Her eyes moved from people to the magazine to the cigarette to the people to the magazine in rapid succession, but avoided eye contact. When her name was finally called, she jumped like she was startled. |
| 2. The client was quite hostile toward the staff person. | 2. When Judy, the senior staff member, told the client that she could not just do whatever she wanted to do, the client began to yell, screaming that Judy couldn't couldn't control her life, accused Judy of being on a "power trip," and said that she'd "like to beat the shit out of her," then told her to "go to hell." The client shook her fist in Judy's face and stomped out of the room, leaving Judy standing there with her mouth open, looking amazed. |
| 3. The next student who came in to take the test was very poorly dressed. | 3. The next student who came into the room wore clothes quite different from the three previous students. The other students had hair carefully combed, clothes clean, pressed, and in good condition with colors coordinated. This new student wore soiled pants with a tear in one knee and a threadbare seat. His flannel shirt was wrinkled with one tail tucked into the pants and the other tail hanging out. His hair was disheveled and his hands looked liked he'd been playing in the engine of a car. |

setting. If what it is like for you, the observer or participant observer, is not recorded in your field notes, then much of the purpose for being there is lost.

Finally, field notes include your insights, interpretations, beginning analyses, and working hypotheses about what is happening in the setting and what it means. While you should approach fieldwork with a disciplined intention not to impose preconceptions and early judgments on the phenomenon being experienced and observed, nevertheless, as an observer you don't become a mechanical recording machine on entering the field. Insights, ideas, inspirations—and yes, judgments, too—will occur while making observations and recording field notes. It's not that you sit down early on and begin the analysis and, if you're an evaluator, make judgments. Rather, it's in the nature of our intellects that ideas about the meaning, causes, and significance of what we experience find their way into our minds. These insights and inspirations become part of the data of fieldwork and should be recorded in context in field notes.

I like to set off field interpretations with brackets. Others use parentheses, asterisks, or some other symbol to distinguish interpretations from description. The point is that interpretations should be understood to be just that, interpretations, and labeled as such. Field-based insights are sufficiently precious that you need not ignore them in the hopes that, if really important, they will return later.

Field notes, then, contain the ongoing data that are being collected. They consist of descriptions of what is being experienced and observed, quotations from the people observed, the observer's feelings and reactions to what is observed, and field-generated insights and interpretations. Field notes are the fundamental database for constructing case studies and carrying out thematic cross-case analysis in qualitative research.

## Procedurally Speaking

When field notes are written will depend on the kind of observations being done and the nature of your participation in the setting being studied. In an evaluation of a parent education program, I was introduced to the parents by the staff facilitator and explained the purpose of the evaluation and assured the parents that no one would be identified. I then openly took extensive notes without participating in the discussions. Immediately following those sessions, I would go back over my notes to fill in details and be sure what I had recorded made sense. By way of contrast, in the wilderness education program I was a full participant engaged in full days of hiking, rock climbing, and rafting/kayaking. I was sufficiently exhausted by the end of each day that I seldom stayed awake making field notes by flashlight while others slept . Rather, each night I jotted down basic notes that I could expand during the time that others were writing in

their journals, but some of the expansion had to be completed after the weeklong field conference. In evaluating a leadership training program as a participant observer, the staff facilitator privately asked me not to take notes during group discussions because it made him nervous, even though most other participants were taking notes.

The extent to which notes are openly recorded during the activities being observed is a function of the observer's role and purpose, as well as the stage of participant observation. If the observer or evaluator is openly identified as a short-term, external, nonparticipant observer, participants may expect him or her to write down what is going on. If, on the other hand, one is engaged in longer-term participant observation, the early part of the process may be devoted to establishing the participant observer role with emphasis on participation so that open taking of notes is deferred until the fieldworker's role has been firmly established within the group. At that point, it is often possible to openly take field notes since, it is hoped, the observer is better known to the group and has established some degree of trust and rapport.

The wilderness program evaluation involved three 10-day trips ("field conferences") with participants at different times during the year. During the first field conference, I never took notes openly. The only time I wrote was when others were also writing. During the second field conference, I began to openly record observations when discussions were going on if taking notes did not interfere with my participation. By the third week, I felt I could take notes whenever I wanted to and I had no indication from anyone that they even paid attention to the fact that I was taking notes. By that time I had established myself as a participant, and my participant role was more primary than my evaluator role.

The point here is that evaluator observers must be strategic about taking field notes, timing their writing and recording in such a way that they are able to get their work done without unduly affecting either their participation or their observations. Given those constraints, **the basic rule of thumb is to write promptly,** to complete field notes as soon and as often as physically and programmatically possible.

Writing field notes is rigorous and demanding work. Lofland (1971) has described this rigor quite forcefully:

> Let me not deceive the reader. The writing of field notes takes personal discipline and time. It is all too easy to put off actually writing notes for a given day and to skip one or more days. For the actual writing of the notes may take as long or longer than did the observation! Indeed, a reasonable rule of thumb here is to expect and plan to spend as much time writing notes as one spent in observing. This is, of course, not invariant . . . but one point is inescapable. All the fun of actually being out and about monkeying around in some setting must also be met by cloistered rigor in committing to paper—and therefore to future usefulness—what has taken place. (p. 104)

## ⬔ Observations, Interviews, and Documentation: Bringing Together Multiple Perspectives

Fieldwork is more than a single method or technique. For example, evaluation fieldwork means that the evaluator is on-site (where the program is happening) observing, talking with people, and going through program records. Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective on the program. By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and crosscheck findings. Each type and source of data has strengths and weaknesses. Using a combination of data types—triangulation, a recurring theme in this book— increases validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 79-111).

Limitations of observations include the possibility that the observer may affect the situation being observed in unknown ways, program staff and participants may behave in some atypical fashion when they know they are being observed, and the selective perception of the observer may distort the data. Observations are also limited in focusing only on external behaviors—the observer cannot see what is happening inside people. Moreover, observational data are often constrained by the limited sample of activities actually observed. Researchers and evaluators need other data sources to find out the extent to which observed activities are typical or atypical.

Interview data limitations include possibly distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview. Interview data are also subject to recall error, reactivity of the interviewee to the interviewer, and self-serving responses.

Observations provide a check on what is reported in interviews; interviews, on the other hand, permit the observer to go beyond external behavior to explore feelings and thoughts.

Documents and records also have limitations. They may be incomplete or inaccurate. Client files maintained by programs are no-

toriously variable in quality and completeness, with great detail in some cases and virtually nothing in others. Document analysis, however, provides a behind-the-scenes look at the program that may not be directly observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents.

By using a variety of sources and resources, the evaluator observer can build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach. This mixed methods, triangulated approach to fieldwork is based on pragmatism (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998) and is illustrated in my attempt to understand some of the problems involved in staff communication during the wilderness education evaluation. I mentioned this example earlier, but I'd like to expand it here.

As noted, two kinds of staff worked in the program: (1) those who had overall management and administrative responsibility and (2) the technical staff, who had responsibility for wilderness skills training, field logistics, and safety. The technical staff had extensive experience leading wilderness trips, but they also were skilled at facilitating group processes. During the trips, the lines of responsibility between technical staff and administrative staff were often blurred and, on occasion, these ambiguities gave rise to conflicts. I observed the emergence of conflict early on the first trip but lacked context for knowing what was behind these differences. Through interviews and casual conversations during fieldwork, I learned that all of the staff, both administrative and technical, had known each other prior to the program. Indeed, the program administrative directors had been the college professors of the technical staff while the latter were still undergraduate students. However, the technical staff had introduced the directors to the

wilderness as an environment for experiential education. Each of the staff members described in interviews his or her perceptions of how these former relationships affected the field operations of the program, including difficulties in communication that had emerged during planning sessions prior to the actual field conferences. Some of those conflicts were documented in letters and memos. Reading their files and correspondence gave me a deeper understanding of the different assumptions and values of various staff members. **But the documentation would not have made sense without the interviews, and the focus of the interviews came from the field observations. Taken together, these diverse sources of information and data gave me a complete picture of staff relationships.** Working back and forth among individual staff members and group staff meetings, I was able to use this information to assist staff members in their efforts to improve their communication during the final field conference. All three sources of information proved critical to my understanding of the situation, and that understanding enhanced my effectiveness in providing feedback as a formative evaluator.

## The Technology of Fieldwork and Observation

The classic image of the anthropological fieldworker is of someone huddled in an African hut writing voluminously by lantern. Contemporary researchers, however, have available to them a number of technological innovations that, when used judiciously, can make fieldwork more efficient and comprehensive. First and foremost is the battery-operated tape recorder or dictaphone. For some people, myself included, dictating field notes saves a great deal of time while

increasing the comprehensiveness of the report. Learning to dictate takes practice, effort, and critical review of early attempts. Tape recorders must be used judiciously so as not to become obtrusive and inhibit program processes or participant responses. A tape recorder is much more useful for recording field notes in private than it is as an instrument to be carried about at all times, available to put a quick end to any conversation into which the observer enters.

Portable computers have emerged as a fieldwork tool that can facilitate writing field notes. Cameras have become standard accessories in fieldwork. Photographs can help in recalling things that have happened as well as vividly capturing the setting for others. Digital photography and advances in printing and photocopying now make it possible to economically reproduce photographs in research and evaluation reports.

In the wilderness education evaluation, I officially became the group photographer, making photographs available to all of the participants. This helped legitimize taking photographs and reduced the extent to which other people felt it necessary to carry their own cameras at all times, particularly at times when it was possible that the equipment might be damaged. Looking at photographs during analysis helped me recall the details of certain activities that I had not fully recorded in my written notes. I relied heavily on photographs to add details to descriptions of places where critical events occurred in the Grand Canyon initiation story I wrote about coming of age in modern society (Patton 1999a).

Video photography is another technological innovation that has become readily accessible and common enough that it can sometimes be used unobtrusively. For example, in a formative evaluation of a staff training program I used videotapes to provide visual feedback to staff. Videotaping classrooms, training sessions, therapeutic interactions, and a host of other observational targets can sometimes be less intrusive than a note-taking evaluator. We had great success taking videos of mothers and children playing together in early childhood education centers. Of course, use of such equipment must be negotiated with program staff and participants, but the creative and judicious use of technology can greatly increase the quality of field observations and the utility of the observational record to others. Moreover, comfort with tape recorders and video cameras has made it increasingly possible to use such technology without undue intrusion when observing programs where professionals are the participants. In addition, sometimes videotapes originally done for research or evaluation can subsequently be used for future training, program development, and public relations, making the costs more manageable because of added uses and benefits. Evaluators learn to balance costs against benefits and look for multiple uses of more expensive techniques where there is a need to make judicious decisions about reducing expenses.

Visual technology can add an important dimension to fieldwork if the observer knows how to use such technology and uses it well—for there is much to learn beyond how to click the camera or turn on the video recorder, especially about integrating and analyzing visual data within a larger fieldwork context (Ball and Smith 1992). Moreover, a downside to visual technology has emerged, since it is now possible to not only capture images on film and video but also change and edit those images in ways that distort. In his extensive review of "visual methods" in qualitative inquiry, Douglas Harper (2000) concludes that "now that images can be created and/or changed digi-

tally, the connection between image and 'truth' has been forever severed" (p. 721). This means that issues of credibility apply to using and reporting visual data as they do to other kinds of data.

Perhaps the ultimate in observer technology for fieldwork is the Stenomask, a sound-shielded microphone attached to a portable tape recorder that is worn on a shoulder strap. The handle of the Stenomask contains the microphone switch. The Stenomask allows the observer to talk into the recorder while an activity is occurring without people in the area being able to hear the dictation. Its use is limited to external, onlooker observations, as the following passage makes clear.

Two procedures precede any data taking. The first is orientation of the subject and as many other persons in the environment as are likely to be present during observations. . . . During this phase, the observer goes into the habitat and behaves exactly as he or she will during the actual recording. They wear the Stenomask, follow the subject about and run the machine, taking mock records. The purpose of these activities is exactly what is implied in the title, to adapt the subject and others in the environment to the presence of the observer and to reduce the effects of that presence to as near zero as possible. The cardinal rule of the observer during this time is to be completely nonresponding. It has been demonstrated over and over again that if the observer continues to resist all social stimuli from the subject and others (and some will occur despite the most careful orientation) by simply keeping the mask in place, looking busily at work and remaining nonrespond- ing, both subjects and others soon cease emitting stimuli to the observer and come to truly accept him or her as a present and sometimes mobile but completely nonresponding part of the environment, per-

haps somewhat like a rolling chair. (Scott and Eklund 1979:9-11).

The imagery of a fieldworker following a subject around through a day wearing a Stenomask offers a stark contrast to that of the traditional anthropologist doing participant observation and trying covertly to write notes during informal field interviews. Taking field notes can be nearly as intrusive as wearing a Stenomask, as illustrated in the fieldwork of anthropologist Carlos Castaneda. In the passage below, Castaneda (1973) reports on his negotiations with Don Juan to become his Native Indian key informant on sorcery and indigenous drugs. The young anthropologist records that Don Juan "looked at me piercingly."

"What are you doing in your pocket?" he asked, frowning. "Are you playing with your whanger?"

He was referring to my taking notes on a minute pad inside the enormous pockets of my windbreaker.

When I told him what I was doing he laughed heartily.

I said that I did not want to disturb him by writing in front of him.

"If you want to write, write," he said. "You don't disturb me." (pp. 21-22)

Whether one uses modern technology to support fieldwork or simply writes down what is occurring, some method of keeping track of what is observed must be established. In addition, the nature of the recording system must be worked out in accordance with the participant observer's role, the purpose of the study, and consideration of how the data-gathering process will affect the activities and persons being observed. Many of these issues and procedures must be worked out during the initial phase (entry period) of fieldwork.

## ▪ Stages of Fieldwork

Thus far, fieldwork has been described as if it were a single, integrated experience. Certainly, when fieldwork goes well it flows with a certain continuity, but it is useful to look at the evolution of fieldwork through identifiable stages. Three stages are most often discussed in the participant observation literature: the entry stage, the routinization of data-gathering period, and the closing stage. The following sections explore each of these stages, again using evaluative research as the primary example.

### Entry Into the Field

The writings of anthropologists sometimes present a picture of the early period of fieldwork that reminds me of the character in Franz Kafka's haunting novel *The Castle*. Kafka's character is a wandering stranger, K., with no more identity than that initial. He doesn't belong anywhere, but when he arrives at the castle he wants to become part of that world. His efforts to make contact with the faceless authorities who run the castle lead to frustration and anxiety. He can't quite figure out what is going on, can't break through their vagueness and impersonal nature. He doubts himself; then he gets angry at the way he is treated; then he feels guilty, blaming himself for his inability to break through the ambiguous procedures for entry. Yet, he remains determined to make sense out of the incomprehensible regulations of the castle. He is convinced that, after all, where there are rules—and he does find that there are rules—they must fit together somehow, have some meaning, and manifest some underlying logic. There must be some way to make contact, to satisfy the needs of the authorities, to find some pattern of behavior that will permit him to be ac-

cepted. If only he could figure out what to do, if only he could understand the rules, then he would happily do what he was supposed to do. Such are the trials of entry into the field.

Entry into the field for evaluation research involves two separate parts: (1) negotiation with gatekeepers, whoever they may be, about the nature of the fieldwork to be done and (2) actual physical entry into the field setting to begin collecting data. These two parts are closely related, for the negotiations with gatekeepers will establish the rules and conditions for how one goes about playing the role of observer and how that role is defined for the people being observed. In traditional scholarly fieldwork for the purpose of basic or applied research, the investigator unilaterally decides how best to conduct the fieldwork. In evaluation studies, the evaluator will need to take into account the perspectives and interests of the primary intended users of the evaluation. In either case, interactions with those who control entry into the field are primarily strategic, figuring out how to gain entry while preserving the integrity of the study and the investigator's interests. The degree of difficulty involved varies depending on the purpose of the fieldwork and the expected or real degree of resistance to the study. Where the field researcher expects cooperation, gaining entry may be largely a matter of establishing trust and rapport. At the other end of the continuum are those research settings where considerable resistance, even hostility, is expected, in which case gaining entry becomes a matter of "infiltrating the setting" (Douglas 1976:167). And sometimes entry is simply denied. A doctoral student had negotiations for entry end abruptly in a school district where she had developed good relationships with school personnel and negotiations appeared to be going well. She later learned that she was denied entry

far into the negotiation process because of community opposition. The local community had had a very bad experience with a university researcher more than 20 years earlier and still viewed all research with great suspicion.

A major difference between the entry process in anthropological or sociological research and the entry process for evaluation research is the extent to which fieldworkers are free to make up whatever story they want to about the purpose of the study. In scholarly research, the investigators represent only themselves and so they are relatively free to say whatever they want to say about why they are doing the research guided by the ethics of their discipline with regard to informed consent. The usual cross-cultural explanation is some variation of "I'm here because I would like to understand you better and learn about your way of life because the people from my culture would like to know more about you." While anthropologists admit that such an explanation almost never makes sense to indigenous peoples in other cultures, it remains a mainstay initial explanation until mutual reciprocities can be established with enough local people for the observation process to become established and accepted in its own right.

Evaluators and action researchers, however, are not just doing fieldwork out of personal or professional interest. They are doing the fieldwork for some decision makers and information users who may be either known or unknown to the people being studied. It becomes critical, then, that evaluators, their funders, and evaluation users give careful thought to how the fieldwork is going to be presented.

Because the word *evaluation* has such negative connotations for many people, having had negative experiences being evaluated, for example, at school or work, it may be ap-propriate to consider some other term to describe the fieldwork. In our onlooker, nonparticipatory observations for an implementation study of early childhood programs in Minnesota, we described our role to local program participants and staff as follows:

> We're here to be the eyes and ears for state legislators. They can't get around and visit all the programs throughout the state, so they've asked us to come out and describe for them what you're doing. That way they can better understand the programs they have funded. We're not here to make any judgments about whether your particular programs is good or bad. We are just here to be the eyes and ears for the legislature so that they can see how the legislation they've passed has turned into real programs. This is your chance to inform them and give them your point of view.

Other settings lend themselves to other terms that are less threatening than *evaluator.* Sometimes a fieldwork project can be described as *documentation.* Another term I've heard used by community-based evaluators is *process historian.* In the wilderness education program I was a full participant observer, and staff described my role to participants as "keeper of the community record," making it clear that I was not there to evaluate individual participants. The staff of the project explained that they had asked me to join the project because they wanted someone who did not have direct ego involvement in the success or outcomes of the program to observe and describe what went on, both because they were too busy running the program to keep detailed notes about what occurred and because they were too involved with what happened to be able to look at things dispassionately. We had agreed from the beginning that the commu-

nity record I produced would be accessible to participants as well as staff.

In none of these cases did changing the language automatically make the entry process smooth and easy. Earlier in this chapter, I described our attempt to be viewed as "educational researchers" in evaluating a community leadership program. Everyone figured out almost immediately that we were really evaluators— and that's what participants called us. Regardless of the story told or the terms used, the entry period of fieldwork is likely to remain "the first and most uncomfortable stage of field work" (Wax 1971:15). It is a time when the observer is getting used to the new setting, and the people in that setting are getting used to the observer. Johnson (1975) suggests that there are two reasons why the entry stage is both so important and so difficult:

> First, the achievement of successful entree is a precondition for doing the research. Put simply, no entree, no research. . . . [P]ublished reports of researchers' entree experiences describe seemingly unlimited contingencies which may be encountered, ranging from being gleefully accepted to being thrown out on one's ear. But there is a more subtle reason why the matter of one's entrance to a research setting is seen as so important. This concerns the relationship between the initial entree to the setting and the validity of the data that is subsequently collected. The conditions under which an initial entree is negotiated may have important consequences for how the research is socially defined by the members of the setting. These social definitions will have a bearing on the extent to which the members trust a social researcher, and the existence of relations of trust between an observer and the members of a setting is essential to the production of an objective report, one which retains the integrity of the actor's perspective and its social context. (pp 50-51)

While the observer must learn how to behave in the new setting, the people in that setting are deciding how to behave toward the observer. Mutual trust, respect, and cooperation are dependent on the emergence of an exchange relationship, or reciprocity (Jorgensen 1989:71; Gallucci and Perugini 2000), in which the observer obtains data and the people being observed find something that makes their cooperation worthwhile, whether that something is a feeling of importance from being observed, useful feedback, pleasure from interactions with the observer, or assistance in some task. This *reciprocity model* of gaining entry assumes that some reason can be found for participants to cooperate in the research and that some kind of mutual exchange can occur.

Infiltration lies at the opposite end of the continuum from a negotiated, reciprocity model of entry. Many field settings are not open to observation based on cooperation. Douglas (1976:167-71) has described a number of infiltration strategies, including "worming one's way in," "using the crowbar to pry them open for our observations," showing enough "saintly submissiveness" to make members guilty enough to provide help, or playing the role of a "spineless boob" who could never possibly hurt the people being observed. He has also suggested using various ploys of misdirection where the researcher diverts people's attention away from the real purpose of the study. There is also the "phased-entrée tactic" by which the researcher who is refused entrée to one group begins by studying another group until it becomes possible to get into the group that is the real focus of the researcher's attention, for example, begin by observing children in a school when what you really want to observe are teachers or administrators.

Often the best approach for gaining entrée is the "known sponsor approach."

When employing this tactic, observers use the legitimacy and credibility of another person to establish their own legitimacy and credibility, for example, the director of an organization for an organizational study, a local leader, elected official, or village chieftain for a community study. Of course, it's important to make sure that the known sponsor is indeed a source of legitimacy and credibility. Some prior assessment must be made of the extent to which that person can provide halo feelings that will be positive and helpful. For example, in an evaluation, using a program administrator or funders as a known sponsor may increase suspicion and distrust among program participants and staff.

The initial period of fieldwork can be frustrating and give rise to self-doubt. The fieldworker may lie awake at night worrying about some mistake, some faux pas, made during the day. There may be times of embarrassment, feeling foolish, of questioning the whole purpose of the project, and even feelings of paranoia. The fact that one is trained in social science does not mean that one is immune to all the normal pains of learning in new situations. On the other hand, the initial period of fieldwork can also be an exhilarating time, a period of rapid new learning, when the senses are heightened by exposure to new stimuli, and a time of testing one's social, intellectual, emotional, and physical capabilities. The entry stage of fieldwork magnifies both the joys and the pains of doing fieldwork.

Evaluators can reduce the "stick-out-like-a-sore-thumb syndrome" by beginning their observations and participation in a program at the same time that participants are beginning the program. In traditional fieldwork, anthropologists cannot become children again and experience the same socialization into the culture that children experience. Evaluators, however, can often ex-perience the same socialization process that regular participants experience by becoming part of the initiation process and timing their observations to coincide with the beginning of a program. Such timing makes the evaluator one among a number of novices and substantially reduces the disparity between the evaluator's knowledge and the knowledge of other participants.

Beginning the program with other participants, however, does not assure the evaluator of equal status. Some participants may be suspicious that real difficulties experienced by the evaluator as a novice participant are phony—that the evaluator is play-acting, only pretending to have difficulty. On the first day of my participation in the wilderness education program, we had our first backpacking experience. The staff leader began by explaining that "your backpack is your friend." I managed to both pack and adjust my "friend" incorrectly. As a result, as soon as we hit the trail, I found that the belt around my waist holding the backpack on my hips was so tight that my friend was making my legs fall asleep. I had to stop several times to adjust the pack. Because of these delays and other difficulties I was having with the weight and carriage of the pack, I ended up as the last participant along the trail. The next morning when the group was deciding who should carry the map and walk at the front of the group to learn map reading, one of the participants immediately volunteered my name. "Let Patton do it. That way he can't hang back at the end of the group to observe the rest of us." No amount of protest from me seemed to convince the participants that I had ended up behind them all because I was having trouble hiking (working out my "friendship" with my backpack). They were convinced I had taken that position as a strategic place from which to evaluate what was happening. It is well to remember, then, that regardless of the na-

ture of the fieldwork, during the entry stage more than at any other time, the observer is also the observed.

## What You Say and What You Do

Fieldworkers' actions speak louder than their words. Researchers necessarily plan strategies to present themselves and their function, but participant reactions to statements about the researcher's role are quickly superseded by judgments based on how the person actually behaves.

The relative importance of words versus deeds in establishing credibility is partly a function of the length of time the observer expects to be in a setting. For some direct onlooker observations, the fieldworker may be present in a particular program for only a few hours or a day. The entry problem in such cases is quite different from the situation where the observer expects to be participating in the program over some longer period of time, as anthropologist Rosalie Wax has noted:

> All field workers are concerned about explaining their presence and their work to a host of people. "How shall I introduce myself?" they wonder, or, "what shall I say I am doing?" If the field worker plans to do a very rapid and efficient survey, questions like these are extremely important. The manner in which an interviewer introduces himself, the precise words he uses, may mean the difference between a first-rate job and a failure.... But if the field worker expects to engage in some variety of participant observation, to develop and maintain long-term relationships, to do a study that involves the enlargement of his own understanding, the best thing he can do is relax and remember that most sensible people do not believe what a stranger tells them. In the long run, his host will judge and trust him, not because of what he says about himself or

about his research, but by the style in which he lives and acts, by the way in which he treats them. In a somewhat shorter run, they will accept or tolerate him because some relative, friend, or person they respect has recommended him to them. (Wax 1971:365)

William Foote Whyte (1984:37-63) has extracted and summarized entry strategies used in a number of groundbreaking sociological studies, including the Lynds' study of Middletown, W. Lloyd Warner's study of Yankee City, Burleigh Gardner's fieldwork in the deep South, Elliot Liebow's hanging around Tally's Corner, Elijah Anderson's fieldwork in a Black neighborhood, Ruth Horowitz's study of a Chicano neighborhood, Robert Cole's work in Japan, and Whyte's own experiences in Cornerville. They each had to adapt their entry strategy to the local setting and they all ended up changing what they had planned to do as they learned from the initial responses to their efforts to gain acceptance. These examples from those who paved for way for modern fieldworkers demonstrate the importance of careful attention to entry and the variety of approaches that are possible. The next section presents a concrete example from an evaluation by Joyce Keller.

## AN ENTRY CASE EXAMPLE: THE PART-TIME OBSERVER

*Introduction. The previous section contrasted the entry challenges for the one-shot onlooker observer with those of the long-term participant observer, but a great deal of middle ground exists between these extremes. In this section, Joyce Keller, a senior staff member of the Minnesota Center for Social Research at the time, describes her entry into fieldwork as a part-time observer.[4] Because limitations of time and resources are common in evaluation, many situations call for a part-time observer. Joyce's reflections capture some of the special entry*

*problems associated with this "now you're here, now you're gone" role.*

One word can describe my role, at least initially, in a recent evaluation assignment: ambiguous. I was to be neither a participant observer nor an outsider coming in for a brief but intensive stint. I was to allocate approximately six hours a week for seven months to observing the team development of a group of 23 professionals in an educational setting. At first, the ambiguity was solely on my side: What, really, was I to do? The team, too busy in the beginning with defining their own roles, had little time to consider mine. Later on, as I became accustomed to my task, the team's curiosity about my function began to grow.

In their eyes, I served no useful purpose that they could see. I was in the way a great deal of the time inhibiting their private conversations On the other hand, they appeared to be concerned about what I was thinking. Some of them—most of them—began to be friendly, to greet me as I came in, to comment when missed a team meeting. They came to see me as I saw myself: neither really part of the group nor a separate, removed force.

Observing their interaction perhaps six hours a week out of their 40-hour work week obviously meant that I missed a great deal. I needed to develop a sense of when to be present, to choose among group meetings, subgroup meetings, and activities when all the members were to come together. At the same time, I was working on other contracts which limited the amount of adjustable time available. "Flexible" was the way I came to define my weekly schedule; others, not as charitable, would probably have defined it as "shifty."

A hazard that I encountered as I filled my ambiguous, flexible role was that I soon discovered I was not high on the priority list to be notified in the event of schedule changes. I would have firmly in mind that a subgroup was to meet on Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. in a certain place. I would arrive to find no one there. Later, I would discover that on Monday the meeting had been changed to Wednesday afternoon and no one had been delegated to tell me. At no time did I seriously feel that the changes were planned to exclude me; on the contrary, the members' contrition about their oversight seemed quite genuine. They had simply forgotten me.

Another area of sudden change that caused me difficulty was in policy and procedure. What had seemed to be firm commitments on ways to proceed or tasks to be tackled were being ignored. I came to realize that while a certain amount of this instability was inherent in the program itself, other shifts in direction were outgrowths of planning sessions I had not attended or had not heard the results from after they had occurred. Therefore, keeping current became for me a high-priority activity. Not to do so would have added to my feeling of ambiguity. Also, if I had not operated with a certain degree of self-confidence, I would have felt somehow at fault for coming to a meeting at the wrong time or place or assuming that a certain decision, which the team had previously made, was still valid.

I began my observation of this team in its formative stage. Had I begun after the team was well established, my difficulties would have been greater. Nevertheless, many of the team members were already well acquainted with each other; all had been employees of the same school district over a period of time. They were much better versed in what they had come together to accomplish than I, whose only orientation was reading the proposal which, upon acceptance, had brought them together. I found also that the proposal and the way they

planned to proceed were, in actuality, far from identical.

With my observer role to continue over many months, I realized that I must maintain the difficult position of being impartial. I could not be thought of by the team members as being closely aligned with their leaders, nor could I expect the leaders to talk candidly and openly with me if they believed that I would repeat their confidences to the group members. Reluctantly, for I discovered several team members with whom friendships could easily have developed, I declined invitations to social activities outside of working hours.

When I met with the group for the first time, I directed most of my energies to matching names and faces. I would be taking notes at most of the sessions and it was essential that I could record not only what was said but who said it. At the first session everyone, including me, wore a name tag. But within a few days, they were all well acquainted and had discarded their name tags; I was the only one still fumbling for names. While being able to greet each member by name was important, so was knowing something about each one's background. Coffee breaks allowed me to circulate among the group and carry on short conversations with as many as possible to try to fix in my mind who they were and where they came from, which provided insights into why they behaved in the group as they did.

Team members at first expressed a certain amount of enthusiasm for minutes to be taken of their meetings. This enthusiasm was short-lived, for willing volunteers to serve as secretary did not emerge. I was disappointed, for, had minutes been kept of the meetings and had I been able to rely on receiving copies, I would have concentrated solely on observing the interactions and would not have had to keep track of what

they were interacting about. I noted (and ignored) a few passing suggestions that since I was obviously taking notes maybe I could. . . .

I took copious notes before I began to develop a sense of what was or was not important to record. When I relaxed more and aimed for the tone of the meeting my understanding of the group increased. I had to realize that, as a part-time observer, it was impossible for me to understand all of what was said. My decision frequently was to let this portion of the meeting pass or to jot down a reminder to myself to ask clarifying questions later.

Side-stepping sensitive questions from both leaders and team members had to be developed into a fine art. As I became more finely tuned to the interactions, and most became aware that I was, I was frequently queried as to my perceptions of a particular individual or situation. On one occasion, I found a team member jumping into an elevator to ride two floors with me in a direction he didn't want to go so that he could ask me privately what I thought of another team member. My response was, "I think she's a very interesting person," or something equally innocuous, and received from him a highly raised eyebrow, since the woman in question had just behaved in a very peculiar manner at the meeting we had both just attended.

In-depth interviews with each team member began in the fourth month of my observation and was the mechanism which filled in many of the gaps in my understanding. The timing was perfect: I had gained enough familiarity with both personnel and project by that time so that I was knowledgeable, they had come to trust me, and they still cared deeply about the project. (This caring diminished for some as the project year drew to a close without any real hopes

of refunding for a second year.) My interview design was intentionally simple and open-ended. What I wanted most was for them to talk about their experiences in terms of strengths and weaknesses

The amount of new information diminished throughout the six weeks or so that was required to interview all team members My own performance unquestionably diminished too as the weeks went on. It was difficult to be animated and interesting as I asked the same questions over and over, devised strategies with which to probe, and recorded perceptions and incidents which I had heard many times before.

Nevertheless, the interviews appear in retrospect to have been a necessary tool of the part-time observer. Bit by bit team members filled in holes in my information and their repeated references to particular situations and conditions reinforced for me what were sometimes at best only vague perceptions. Team members who appeared to be passive and quiet when I saw them at group meetings were often referred to by their team members as hard-working and creative when they were out in the field. The interviews also helped me become aware of misconceptions on my part caused by seeing only part of the picture, due to time constraints.

The experience was a new one for me, that of part-time observer. Quite frankly, this mode of evaluation probably will never be a favorite one. On the other hand, it provided a picture that no "snap-shot" evaluation method could have accomplished as interactions changed over time and in a situation where the full participant observer role was clearly not appropriate.

## Routinization of Fieldwork: The Dynamics of the Second Stage

What did you learn in your readings today?" asked Master Halcolm.

"We learned that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step," replied the learners.

"Ah, yes, the importance of beginnings," smiled Halcolm.

"Yet, I am puzzled," said a learner. "Yesterday I read that there are a thousand beginnings for every ending."

"Ah, yes, the importance of seeing a thing through to the end," affirmed Halcolm.

"But which is more important, to begin or end?"

"Two great self-deceptions are asserted by the world's self-congratulators: that the hardest and most important step is the first and that the greatest and most resplendent step is the last.

"While every journey must have a first and last step, my experience is that what ultimately determines the nature and enduring value of the journey are the steps in between. Each step has its own value and importance. Be present for the whole journey, learners that you are. Be present for the whole journey."

—Halcolm

During the second stage, after the fieldworker has established a role and purpose, the focus moves to high-quality data gathering and opportunistic investigation following emergent possibilities and building on what is observed and learned each step along the way. The observer, no longer caught up in adjustments to the newness of the field setting, begins to really *see* what is going on instead of just looking around. As Florence Nightingale said, "Merely looking at the sick is not observing."

Describing the second stage as "routinization of fieldwork" probably overstates the case. In emergent designs and ever-deepening inquiry, the human tendency toward routines yields to the ups and downs of new discoveries, fresh insights, sudden doubts, and ever-present questioning of others—and often of self. Discipline is needed to maintain high-quality, up-to-date field notes. Openness and perseverance are needed to keep exploring, looking deeper, diverging broader, and focusing narrower, always going where the inquiry and data take you. Fieldwork is intellectually challenging at times, mind-numbingly dull at times, and for many, an emotional roller coaster. Appendix 9.1 at the end of Chapter 9, "A Documenter's Perspective," offers the reflections of a participant observer conducting a school evaluation and grappling with changes in fieldwork over time.

One of the things that can happen in the course of fieldwork is the emergence of a strong feeling of connection with the people being studied. As you come to understand the behaviors, ideals, anxieties, and feelings of other people, you may find yourself identifying with their lives, their hopes, and their pain. This sense of identification and connection can be a natural and logical consequence of having established relationships of rapport, trust, and mutuality. For me, that awakening identification involves some realization of how much I have in common with these people whose world I have been permitted to enter. At times during fieldwork I feel a great separation from the people I'm observing, then at other times I feel a strong sense of our common humanity. For a fieldworker to identify, however briefly, with the people in a setting or for an evaluator to identify with the clients in a program can be a startling experience because social science observers are often quite separated from those they study by education, experience, confidence, and income. Such differences sometimes make the world of programs as exotic to evaluators as nonliterate cultures are exotic to anthropologists.

There come times, then, when a fieldworker must deal with his or her own feelings about and perspectives on the people being observed. Part of the sorting-out process of fieldwork is establishing an understanding of the relationship between the observed and the observer. When that happens, and as it happens, the person involved in fieldwork may be no less startled than Joseph Conrad's infamous character Marlowe in *Heart of Darkness*. Marlowe had followed Kurtz, the European ivory trader, up the deep river into the Congo where Kurtz had established himself as a mangod to the tribal people there. He used his position to acquire ivory, but to maintain his position he had to perform the indigenous rituals of human sacrifice and cannibalism. Marlowe, deeply enmeshed in the racism of his culture and time, was initially horrified by the darkness of the jungle and its peoples, but as he watched the rituals of those seeming savages, he found an emergent identification with them and even entertained the suspicion that they were *not* inhuman. He became aware of a linkage between himself and them:

They howled and leaped and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was the thought of their humanity—like ours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of the first ages—comprehend. And why not? (Conrad 1960:70)

In this passage, Conrad chronicles the possibility of awakening to unexpected realizations and intense emotions in the course of encounters with the unknown and those who are different from us. In many ways, it is our common humanity, whether we are fully aware of it at any given moment or not, that makes fieldwork possible. As human beings, we have the amazing capability to become part of other people's experiences, and through watching and reflecting, we can come to understand something about those experiences.

As fieldwork progresses, the intricate web of human relationships can entangle the participant observer in ways that will create tension between the desire to become more enmeshed in the setting so as to learn **more** and the need to preserve some distance and perspective. Participant observers carry no immunity to the political dynamics of the settings being observed. Virtually any setting is likely to include subgroups of people who may be in conflict with other subgroups. These factions or cliques may either woo or reject the participant observer, but they are seldom neutral. During her fieldwork interviewing young women in India, Parameswaran (2001) reports efforts by parents and teachers to get her to inform on the women she interviewed or to influence them in a desired direction. She found her-

self in the middle of deep generational divisions between mothers and their daughters, teachers and students, bookstore owners and their clients. She could not risk deeply alienating or completely acquiescing to any of these important and competing groups, for they all affected her access and the ultimate success of her fieldwork.

In evaluations, the evaluator can be caught in the middle of tensions between competing groups and conflicting perspectives. For example, where divisions exist among the staff and/or the participants in a program, and such divisions are common, the evaluator will be invited, often subtly, to align with one subgroup or the other. Indeed, the evaluator may want to become part of a particular subgroup to gain further insight into and understanding of that subgroup. How such an alliance occurs, and how it is interpreted by others, can greatly affect the course of the evaluation.

My experience suggests that it is impractical to expect to have the same kind of relationship—close or distant—with every group or faction. Fieldworkers, human beings with their own personalities and interests, will be naturally attracted to some people more than others. Indeed, to resist those attractions may hinder the observer from acting naturally and becoming more thoroughly integrated into the setting or program. Recognizing this, the observer will be faced with ongoing decisions about personal relationships, group involvement, and how to manage differential associations without losing perspective on what the experience is like for those with whom the fieldworker is less directly involved.

Perhaps the most basic division that will always be experienced in program evaluation is the separation of staff and participants. While the rhetoric of many programs attempts to reduce the distinction between staff and participants, there is almost always

a distinction between those who are paid for their responsibilities in the program (staff) and those who are primarily recipients of what the program has to offer (participants). Sociologically, it makes sense that staff and participants would be differentiated, creating a distance that can evolve into conflict or distrust. Participants will often view the evaluator as no different from the staff or administration, or even the funding sources —virtually any group except the participants. If the evaluator observer is attempting to experience the program as a participant, special effort will be required make participation real and meaningful and to become accepted, even trusted, by other participants. On the other hand, staff and administrators may be suspicious of the evaluator's relationships with funders or board members.

The point is not to be naive about the tangled web of relationships the participant observer will experience and to be thoughtful about how fieldwork, data quality, and the overall inquiry are affected by these connections and interrelationships, all of which have to be negotiated.

Lofland (1971) has suggested that participant observers can reduce suspicion and fear about a study by becoming openly aligned with a single broad grouping within a setting while remaining aloof from that grouping's own internal disputes.

Thus, known observers of medical schools have aligned themselves only with the medical students, rather than attempting to participate extensively with both faculty and students. In mental hospitals, known observers have confined themselves largely to mental patients and restricted their participation with staff. To attempt to participate with both, extensively and simultaneously, would probably have generated suspicion about the ob-

servers among people on both sides of those fences. (pp. 96-97)

In contrast to Lofland's advice, in evaluating the wilderness education program I found myself moving back and forth between a full participant role, where I was identified primarily as a participant, and a full staff role, where I was identified primarily with those who carried responsibility for directing the program. During the first field conference, I took on the role of full participant and made as visible as possible my allegiance to fellow participants while maintaining distance from the staff. Over time, however, as my personal relationships with the staff increased, I became more and more aligned with the staff. This coincided with a change of emphasis in the evaluation itself, with the earlier part of the fieldwork being directed at describing the participant experience and the latter part of the fieldwork being aimed at describing the workings of the staff and providing formative feedback.

However, I was always aware of a tension, both within myself and within the group at large, about the extent to which I was a participant or a staff member. I found that as my observational skills became increasingly valued by the program staff I had to more consciously and actively resist their desire to have me take on a more active and explicit staff role. They also made occasional attempts to use me as an informer, trying to seduce me into conversations about particular participants. The ambiguities of my role were never fully resolved. I suspect that such ambiguities were inherent in the situation and are to be expected in many evaluation fieldwork experiences.

Managing field relationships involves a different set of dynamics when the inquiry is collaborative or participatory. Under such designs, where the researcher involves others in the setting in fieldwork, a great deal of

the work consists of facilitating the interactions with co-inquirers, supporting their data collection efforts, ongoing training in observation and interviewing, managing integration of field notes among different participant researchers, and monitoring data quality and consistency. These collaborative management responsibilities will reduce the primary researcher's own time for fieldwork and will affect how others in the settings, those who aren't participatory or collaborative researchers, view the inquiry and the fieldwork director, if that is the role taken on. In some cases, management of the collaborative inquiry effort is done by one of the participants and the trained fieldworker serves primarily as a skills and process trainer and consultant to the group. Clarity about these roles and divisions of labor can make or break collaborative, participatory forms of inquiry. Having shared values about collaboration does not guarantee actually pulling it off. Collaborative inquiry is challenging work, often frustrating, but when it works, the findings will carry the additional credibility of collaborative triangulation, and the results tend to be rewarding for all involved, with enduring insights and new inquiry skills for those involved.

## Key Informants

One of the mainstays of much fieldwork is the use of key informants as sources of information about what the observer has not or cannot experience, as well as sources of explanation for events the observer has actually witnessed. *Key informants* are people who are particularly knowledgeable about the inquiry setting and articulate about their knowledge—people whose insights can prove particularly useful in helping an observer understand what is happening and why. Selecting key informants must be done carefully to avoid arousing hostility or an-

tagonisms among those who may resent or distrust the special relationships between the fieldworker and the key informant. Indeed, how—and how much—to make visible this relationship involves strategic thinking about how others will react and how their reactions will affect the inquiry. There's no formal announcement that the "position" of key informant is open, or that it's been filled; the key informant is simply that person or those persons with whom the researcher or evaluator is likely to spend considerable time.

Key informants must be trained or developed in their role, not in a formal sense, but because they will be more valuable if they understand the purpose and focus of the inquiry, the issues and questions under investigation, and the kinds of information that are needed and most valuable. Anthropologists Pelto and Pelto (1978) made this point in reflecting on their own fieldwork:

> We noticed that humans differ in their willingness as well as their capabilities for verbally expressing cultural information. Consequently, the anthropologist usually finds that only a small number of individuals in any community are good key informants. Some of the capabilities of key informants are systematically developed by the field workers, as they train the informants to conceptualize cultural data in the frame of reference employed by anthropologists. . . . The key informant gradually learns the rules of behavior in a role vis-à-vis the interviewer-anthropologist. (p. 72)

The danger in cultivating and using key informants is that the researcher comes to rely on them too much and loses sight of the fact that their perspectives are necessarily limited, selective, and biased. Data from informants represent perceptions, not truths. Information obtained from key informants

should be clearly specified as such in the field notes so that the researcher's observations and those of the informants do not become confounded. This may seem like an obvious point, and it is, but over weeks and months of fieldwork it can become difficult to decipher what information came from what sources unless the fieldworker has a routine system for documenting sources and uses that system with great discipline, thoroughness, and care.

Key informants can be particularly helpful in learning about subgroups to which the observer does not or cannot have direct access. During the second year of the wilderness education program, one informal group, mostly women, dubbed themselves the "turtles" to set themselves apart from participants, mostly men, who had more experience in the wilderness and wanted to hike at a fast pace, climb the highest peaks, or otherwise demonstrate their prowess—a group they called somewhat disparagingly the "truckers" (trucks being unwelcome in the wilderness). Having had a full year of wilderness experiences the first year of the program, I didn't qualify to become an intimate part of the turtles. I therefore established an informant relationship with one of

the turtles, who willingly kept me informed about the details of what went on in that group. Without that key informant relationship, I would have missed some very important information about the kinds of experiences the turtle participants were having and the significance of the project to them.

While being part of any setting necessarily involves personal choices about social relationships and political choices about group alliances, the emphasis on making strategic decisions in the field should not be interpreted as suggesting that the conduct of qualitative research in naturalistic settings is an ever-exciting game of chess in which players and pieces are manipulated to accomplish some ultimate goal. Fieldwork certainly involves times of both exhilaration and frustration, but the dominant motifs in fieldwork are hard work, long hours to both do observations and keep up-to-date with field notes, enormous discipline, attention to details, and concentration on the mundane and day-to-day. The routinization of fieldwork is a time of concentrated effort and immersion in gathering data. Alas, let the truth be told: **The gathering of field data involves very little glory and an abundance of nose-to-the-grindstone drudgery.**

## Bringing Fieldwork to a Close

W ell, I've gotten to the end of the subject—of the page—of your patience and my time.

—Alice B. Toklas in a letter to Elizabeth Hansen, 1949

In traditional scholarly fieldwork within anthropology and sociology, it can be difficult to predict how long fieldwork will last. The major determinant of the length of the fieldwork is the investigator's own resources, interests, and needs. Evaluation and action research typically have quite spe-

cific reporting deadlines, stated in a contract, that affect the length of and resources available for fieldwork, and the intended uses of evaluative findings.

In the previous section, we looked at the many complex relationships that get formed during fieldwork, relationships with key in-

formants, hosts, and sponsors in the setting who helped with entrée and may have supported ongoing fieldwork, helping solve problems and smooth over difficulties. In collaborative research, relationships with coresearchers will have deepened. In any extended involvement within a setting, friendships and alliances are formed. As fieldwork comes to an end, an exit or disengagement strategy is needed. While a great deal of attention has traditionally been paid to entering the field, much less attention has been given to the disengagement process, what Snow (1980) has called the "neglected problem in participant observation research."

One side of the coin is disengagement. The other side is reentry back to one's life at the extended fieldwork or an all-consuming project. When I went to do graduate research in Tanzania, our team received a lot of support and preparation for entry, much of it aimed at avoiding culture shock. But when we returned home, we were given no preparation for what it would be like to return to America's highly commercial, materialistic and fast-moving culture after months in the agrarian, community-oriented, slower-moving environment. The culture shock hit coming home, not going to Africa.

Interpersonal, cross-cultural, disengagement, and reentry issues all deserve attention as fieldwork comes to a close. Relationships with people change and evolve from entry, through the middle days, and into the end of fieldwork. So does the fieldworker's relationship with the data and engagement in the inquiry process. That changed engagement in the inquiry process is what I want to focus on here.

As you near completion of data gathering, having become fairly knowledgeable about the setting being observed, more and more attention can be shifted to fine-tuning and confirming observed patterns. Possible interpretations of and explanations for what was observed show up more in the field notes. Some of these explanations have been offered by others; some occur directly to the observer. In short, analysis and interpretation will have begun even before the observer has left the field.

Chapter 9 discusses analysis strategies at length. At this point, I simply want to recognize the fact that data gathering and analysis flow together in fieldwork, for there is usually no definite, fully anticipated point at which data collection stops and analysis begins. One process flows into the other. As the observer gains confidence in the quality and meaningfulness of the data, sophisticated about the setting under study, and aware that the end draws near, additional data collection becomes increasingly selective and strategic.

As fieldwork draws to a close, the researcher is increasingly concerned with *verification* of already-collected data and less concerned with generating new inquiry leads. While in naturalistic inquiry one avoids imposing preconceived analytical categories on the data, as fieldwork comes to an end, experience with the setting will usually have led to thinking about prominent themes and dimensions that organize what has been experienced and observed. These emergent ideas, themes, concepts, and dimensions—generated inductively through fieldwork—can also now be deepened, further examined, and verified during the closure period in the field.

Guba (1978) has described fieldwork as moving back and forth between the discovery mode and the verification mode like a wave. The ebb and flow of research involves moving in and out of periods when the investigator is open to new inputs, generative data, and opportunistic sampling to periods when the investigator is testing out hunches, fine-tuning conceptualization, sifting ideas, and verifying explanations.

❧

When fieldwork has gone well the observer grows increasingly confident that things make sense and begins to believe in the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967), commenting on grounded theory as an outcome of fieldwork, have described the feelings that the traditional field observer has as fieldwork moves to a close, data-based patterns have emerged, and the whole takes shape:

> The continual intermeshing of data collection and analysis has direct bearing on how the research is brought to a close. When the researcher is convinced that his conceptual framework forms a systematic theory, that it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matter studied, that it is couched in a form possible for others to use in studying a similar area, and that he can publish his results with confidence, then he has neared the end of his research. . . .
>
> Why does the researcher trust what he knows? . . . They are his perceptions, his personal experiences, and his own hard-won analyses. A field worker knows that he knows, not only because he has been in the field and because he has carefully discovered and generated hypotheses, but also because "in his bones" he feels the worth of his final analysis. He has been living with partial analyses for many months, testing them each step of the way, until he has built this theory. What is more, if he has participated in the social life of is subject, then he has been living by his anal - yses, testing them not only by observation and interview but also by daily living. (pp. 224-25)

This representation of bringing a grounded theory inquiry to a close represents the scholarly inquiry ideal. In the "contracted deliverables" world of program evaluation, with limited time and resources, and reporting schedules that may not permit as much fieldwork as is desirable, the evalu-

ator may have to bring the fieldwork to a close before that state of real confidence has fully emerged. Nevertheless, I find that there is a kind of Parkinson's law in fieldwork: As time runs out, the investigator feels more and more the pressure of making sense out of things, and some form of order does indeed begin to emerge from the observations. This is a time to celebrate emergent understandings even while retaining the critical eye of the skeptic, especially useful in questioning one's own confident conclusions.

## Evaluation Feedback

In doing fieldwork for program evaluation, in contrast to theory-oriented scholarly field research, the evaluator observer must be concerned about providing feedback, making judgments, and generating recommendations. Thus, as the fieldwork draws to a close, the evaluator observer must begin to consider what feedback is to be given to whom and how.

Giving feedback can be part of the verification process in fieldwork. My own preference is to provide the participants and staff with descriptions and analysis, verbally and informally, and to include their reactions as part of the data. Part of the reciprocity of fieldwork can be an agreement to provide participants with descriptive information about what has been observed. I find that participants and staff are hungry for such information and fascinated by it. I also find that I learn a great deal from their reactions to my descriptions and analyses. Of course, it's neither possible nor wise to report everything one has observed. Moreover, the informal feedback that occurs at or near the end of fieldwork will be different from the findings that are reported formally based on the more systematic and rigorous analysis that must go on once the evaluator leaves the

field. But that formal, systematic analysis will take more time, so while one is still in the field it is possible to share at least some findings and to learn from the reactions of those who hear those findings

Timing feedback in formative evaluations can be challenging. When the purpose is to offer recommendations to improve the program, the program staff will usually be anxious to get that information "ASAP" (as soon as possible). The evaluator observer may even feel pressured to report findings prematurely, before having confidence in the patterns that seem to be emerging. I experienced this problem throughout the evaluation of the wilderness education program. During the first year, we met with the staff at the end of each field conference program (the three 10-day field conferences were spread out over a year) to discuss what we had observed and to share interpretations about those observations. At the very first feedback session, the staff reaction was, "I wish you'd told us that in the middle of the week, when we could have done something about it. Why'd you hold back? We could have used what you've learned to change the program right then and there."

I tried to explain that the implications of what I observed had only become clear to me an hour or two before our meeting when my coevaluator and I had sat down with our field notes, looked them over, and discussed their significance together. Despite this explanation, which struck me as altogether reasonable and persuasive and struck the staff as altogether disingenuous, from that moment forth a lingering distrust hung over the evaluation as staff periodically joked about when we'd get around to telling them what we'd learned next time. Throughout the three years of the project, the issue of timing feedback surfaced several times a year. As they came increasingly to value our feedback, they wanted it to come earlier and ear-

lier during each field conference. During the second field conference in the second year, when a number of factors had combined to make the program quite different from what the staff had hoped for, the end-of-the-conference evaluation feedback session generated an unusual amount of frustration from the staff because my analyses of what had happened had not been shared earlier. Again, I found some distrust of my insistence that those interpretations had emerged later rather than sooner as the patterns became clear to me.

Evaluators who provide formative feedback on an ongoing basis need to be conscientious in resisting pressures to share findings and interpretations before they have confidence about what they have observed and sorted out important patterns—not certainty, but at least some degree of confidence. The evaluator is caught in a dilemma: Reporting patterns before they are clearly established may lead program staff to intervene inappropriately; withholding feedback too long may mean that dysfunctional patterns become so entrenched that they are difficult, if not impossible, to change.

No ideal balance has ever emerged for me between continuing observations and providing feedback. Timing feedback is a matter of judgment and strategy, and it depends on the nature of the evaluator's relationship with program staff and the nature of the feedback, especially the balance between what staff will perceive as negative and positive feedback. When in doubt, and where the relationship between the evaluator and program staff has not stabilized into one of long-term trust, I counsel evaluator observers to err on the side of less feedback rather than more. As often happens in social relationships, negative feedback that was wrong is long remembered and often recounted. On the other hand, it may be a measure of the success of the feedback that program

staff so fully adopt it that they make it their own and cease to credit the insights of the evaluator.

Once feedback is given, the role of the evaluator changes. Those to whom the feedback was presented are likely to become much more conscious of how their behavior and language are being observed. Thus, added to the usual effect of the fieldworker on the setting being observed, this feedback dimension of fieldwork increases the impact of the evaluator observer on the setting in which he or she is involved.

Though this problem of reactivity is accentuated in evaluation, it exists in any observational inquiry. As the researcher prepares to leave the field, and people react to that imminent departure, the impact of the researcher's presence on the setting may become visible in new ways. Because those effects have been of such major concern to people who engage in naturalistic inquiry, the final section in this chapter considers this question of how the observer affects what is observed.

## 🗐  The Observer and What Is Observed: Unity and Separation

The question of how the observer affects what is observed has natural as well as social science dimensions. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle states that the instruments used to measure velocity and position of an electron alter the accuracy of measurement. When the scientist measures the position of an electron, its velocity is changed, and when velocity is measured, it becomes difficult to capture precisely the electron's position. The process of observing affects what is observed. These are real effects, not just errors of perception or measurement. The physical world can be altered by the intrusion of the observer. How much more, then, are social worlds changed by the intrusion of fieldworkers?

The effects of observation vary depending on the nature of the observation, the type of setting being studied, the personality and procedures of the observer, and a host of unanticipated conditions. Nor is it simply in fieldwork involving naturalistic inquiry that scientific observers affect what is observed. Experimentalists, survey researchers, cost-benefit analysts, and psychologists who administer standardized tests all affect the situations into which they introduce data collection procedures. The issue is not whether or not such effects occur; rather, the issue is how to monitor those effects and take them into consideration when interpreting data.

A strength of naturalistic inquiry is that the observer is sufficiently a part of the situation to be able to understand personally what is happening. Fieldworkers are called on to inquire into and be reflective about how their inquiry intrudes and how those intrusions affect findings. But that's not always easy. Consider the case of anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, who did fieldwork for a quarter century among the isolated and primitive Yanomami Indians who lived deep in the rain forest at the borders of Venezuela and Brazil. He studied mortality rates by dispensing steel goods, including axes, as a way of persuading people to give him the names of their dead relatives in violation of tribal taboos. Brian Ferguson, another anthropologist knowledgeable about the Yanomami, believes that Chagnon's fieldwork destabilized relationships among villages, promoted warfare, and introduced disease. Chagon denies these charges but acknowledges extracting tribal secrets by giving informants gifts like beads and fishhooks, capitalizing on animosities between individuals, and bribing children for

information when their elders were not around. He gave away machetes in exchange for blood samples for his genealogical studies. The long-term effects of his fieldwork have become a matter of spirited debate and controversy within anthropology (Geertz 2001; Tierney 2000a, 2000b).

At the other end of the intrusion continuum, we find those qualitative designs where "intrusions" are intentionally designed because the qualitative inquiry is framed as an intended form of desired intervention. This is the case, for example, with collaborative and participatory forms of inquiry in which those people in the setting who become coresearchers are expected to be affected by participation in the inquiry. The processes of participation and collaboration can be designed and facilitated to have an impact on participants and collaborators quite beyond whatever findings they may generate by working together. In the process of participating in an evaluation, participants are exposed to and have the opportunity to learn the logic of research and the discipline of data-based reasoning. Skills are acquired in problem identification, criteria specification, and data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Acquisition of research skills and ways of thinking can have a longer-term impact than the use of findings from a particular evaluation study. This "learning from the process" as an outcome of participatory and collaborative inquiry experiences is called *process use* in contrast to findings use (Patton 1997a: Chapter 5, 1998, 1999a).

While it is not possible to know precisely how collaboration will **affect coresearchers** or to fully anticipate how an observer will affect the setting observer, both cases illustrate the need to be thoughtful about the interconnections between observers and observed. It is possible, however, when designing the study and making decisions about the ob-

server's degree of participation in the setting, the visibility and openness of fieldwork, and the duration of fieldwork (see Exhibit 6.1 earlier in this chapter) to anticipate certain of the situations that may arise and to establish strategies for how those situations will be handled. For example, I have been involved as a participant observer- evaluator in a number of professional development programs where participants were expected to exercise increasing control over the curriculum as the program evolved. Had I fully participated in such participatory decision making, I could have influenced the direction of the program. Anticipating that problem and reviewing the implications with program staff, in each case I decided not to participate actively in participant-led decision making to the full extent I might have had I not been involved in the role of evaluator observer. The participatory and empowering philosophy of these programs called for each participant to articulate interests and help make happen those things that he or she wanted to have happen. In my role as evaluator observer, I had to reduce the extent to which I acted out that philosophy so as to limit my impact on the direction of the group. I aimed my involvement at a level where I would not appear withdrawn from the process, yet at the same time attempted to minimize my influence, especially where the group was divided on priorities.

Another example comes from evaluation of a community leadership program mentioned previously in this chapter. As a three-person team of participant observers, we participated fully in small-group leadership exercises. When the groups in which we participated were using concepts inappropriately or doing the exercise wrong, we went along with what participants said and did without making corrections. Had we really been *only* participants—and not participant evaluators—we would have offered

corrections and solutions. Thus, our roles made us more passive than we tended naturally to be in order not to dominate the small groups. We had anticipated this possibility in the design stage prior to fieldwork and had agreed on this strategy at that time.

The role and impact of the evaluator observer can change over the course of fieldwork. Early in the wilderness program, I kept a low profile during participant-led planning discussions. Later in the program, particularly during the final field conference of the second year, I became more engaged in discussions about the future direction of the project.

Reporting on the relationship between the observer and the observed, then, and the ways in which the observer may have affected the phenomenon observed becomes part of the methodological discussion in published fieldwork reports and evaluation studies. In that methodological discussion (or the methods chapter of a dissertation), the observer presents data about the effects of fieldwork on the setting and people therein and also the observer's perspective on what has occurred. As Patricia Carini (1975) has explained, such a discussion acknowledges that findings inevitably are influenced by the observer's point of view during naturalistic inquiry:

> The observer has a point of view that is central to the datum and it is in the articulation—in the revelation of his point of view—that the datum of inquiry is assumed to emerge. In effect the observer is here construed as one moment of the datum and as such the fabric of his thought is inextricably woven into the datum as he is assumed to be constituent of its meaning. From this assumption it is possible to consider the relationship of the observer to the phenomenon under inquiry. Relatedness can be stated in many ways: opposition, identity, proximity, interpenetration, isolation, to name

only a few. All imply that the way in which a person construes his relationship to the phenomenal world is a function of his *point of view* about it. That is, relationship is not a given nor an absolute, but depends upon a personal perspective. It is also true that perspective can shift, the only necessity of a person's humanity being that he takes some stance in relationship to the events about him. (pp. 8-9)

Carini is here articulating the interdependence between the observer and what is observed. Prior to data collection, the fieldworker plans and strategizes about the hoped-for and expected nature of that interdependence. But things don't always unfold as planned, so observers must make some effort to observe themselves observing—and record the effects of their observations on the people observed and, no less important, reflect on changes they've experienced from having been in the setting. This means being able to balance observation with reflection and manage the tension between engagement and detachment.

Bruyn (1966), in his classic work on participant observation, articulated a basic premise of participant observation: the "role of the participant observer requires both detachment and personal involvement" (p. 14). To be sure, there is both tension and ambiguity in this premise. How it plays out in any given situation will depend on both the observer and the phenomenon being observed.

> Thus, we may observe at the outset that while the traditional role of the scientist is that of a neutral observer who remains unmoved, unchanged, and untouched in his examination of phenomena, the role of the participant observer requires sharing the sentiments of people in social situations; as a consequence he himself is changed as well as changing to some degree the situation in which he is a partici-

He said it wasn't enough.

point. . . . The effects are reciprocal for observer and observed. The participant observer seeks, on the one hand, to take advantage of the changes due to his presence in the group by recording these changes as part of his study, and on the other hand, to reduce the changes to a minimum by the manner in which he enters into the life of the group. (Bruyn 1966:14)

Whether one is engaged in participant observation or onlooker observation, what happens in the setting being observed will, to some extent, be dependent on the role assumed by the observer. Likewise, the nature of the data collected will, to some extent, be dependent on the role and perspective of the observer. And just as the presence of the observer can affect people observed, so too the observer can be affected.

## The Personal
## Experience of Fieldwork

The intersection of social science procedures with individual capabilities and situational variation is what makes fieldwork a highly personal experience. At the end of her book *Doing Fieldwork*, Rosalie Wax (1971) reflected on how fieldwork changed her:

A colleague has suggested that I reflect on the extent to which I was changed as a person by doing field work. I reflected and the result astonished me. For what I realized was that I had not been greatly changed by the things I suffered, enjoyed or endured; nor was I greatly changed by the things I did (though they strengthened my confidence in myself). What changed me irrevocably and beyond repair were the things *learned*. More specifically, these irrevocable changes involved replacing mythical or ideological assumptions with the correct (though often painful) facts of the situation. (p. 363)

Fieldwork is not for everyone. Some, like Henry James, will find that "innocent and infinite are the pleasures of observation." Others will find observational research anything but pleasurable. Some students have described their experiences to me as tedious, frightening, boring, and "a waste of time," while others have experienced challenge, exhilaration, personal learning, and intellectual insight. More than once the same student has experienced both the tedium and the exhilaration, the fright and the growth, the boredom and the insight. Whatever the adjectives used to describe any particular individual's fieldwork, of this much we are assured: The experience of observing provides the observer with both experience and observations, the interconnection being cemented by reflection. No less an authority than William Shakespeare gives us this assurance.

*Armado:* "How hast thou purchased this experience?"

*Moth:* "By my penny of observation."

—*Love's Labour's Lost*

## A Part of and Apart
## From the World Observed

The personal, perspective-dependent nature of observations can be understood as both a strength and a weakness, a strength in that personal involvement permits firsthand experience and understanding, and a weakness in that personal involvement introduces selective perception. In the deep engagement of naturalistic inquiry lies both its risks and its benefits. Reflection on that engagement, from inside and outside the phenomenon of interest, crowns fieldwork with reflexivity and makes the observer the

CHANCE DISCOVERY OR THE RESULT OF CAREFUL, DISCIPLINED OBSERVATION?

In 1949, an obscure Australian psychiatrist, John F. J. Cade, noticed that the urine of his manic patients was highly toxic to guinea pigs, and he began looking for the toxic chemical, which he suspected was uric acid.

He began experimenting with lithium urate, not because of any psychiatric properties of lithium, but because lithium urate was the most soluble salt of uric acid. To Cade's surprise, far from being toxic, the salt protected guinea pigs against the urine of manics, and it also sedated the animals; effects Cade found were due to the lithium. He immediately tried other lithium salts on himself and, when they proved safe, on ten hospitalized manic patients, all of whom recovered, some almost miraculously.

Cade's discovery is often characterized as serendipitous. ... [However], the discovery of lithium as an antimanic agent resulted from one man's curiosity and powers of observation and deduction. (Kramer 1993:44)

observed—even if only by oneself. So we repeat Halcolm's refrain that opened this chapter:

Go out into the world. Live among the peoples of the world as they live. Learn their language. Participate in their rituals and routines. Taste of the world. Smell it. Watch and listen. Touch and be touched. Write down what you see and hear, how they think and how you feel.

Enter into the world. Observe and wonder. Experience and reflect. To understand a world you must become part of that world while at the same time remaining separate, a part of and apart from.

Go then, and return to tell what you see and hear, what you learn, and what you come to understand.

## ⑤ Summary Guidelines for Fieldwork

A reader who came to this chapter looking for specific fieldwork rules and clear procedures would surely be disappointed. Looking back over this chapter, the major theme seems to be, **What you do depends on the situation, the nature of the inquiry,** **the characteristics of the setting, and the skills, interests, needs, and point of view that you, as observer, bring to your engagement.** Yet, the conduct of observational research is not without direction. Exhibit 6.6 offers a modest list of 10 guidelines for fieldwork (not, please notice, commandments, just guidelines) by way of reviewing some of the major issues discussed in this chapter. Beyond these seemingly simple but deceptively complex prescriptions, the point remains that what you do depends on a great number of situational variables, your own capabilities, and careful judgment informed by the strategic themes for qualitative inquiry presented in the first chapter (Exhibit 2.1).

Having considered the guidelines and strategic themes for naturalistic field-based research, and after the situational constraints on and variations in the conduct of fieldwork have been properly recognized and taken into account in the design, there remains only the core commitment of qualitative inquiry to reaffirm. That core commitment was articulated by Nobel laureate Nicholas Tinbergen in his 1975 acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in physiology

---

**EXHIBIT 6.6**    Summary Guidelines for Fieldwork

1. Design the fieldwork to be clear about the role of the observer (degree of participation); the tension between insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspectives; degree and nature of collaboration with coresearchers; disclosure and explanation of the observer's role to others; duration of observations (short vs. long); and focus of observation (narrow vs. broad). (See Exhibit 6.1.)

2. Be descriptive in taking field notes. Strive for thick, deep, and rich description.

3. Stay open. Gather a variety of information from different perspectives. Be opportunistic in following leads and sampling purposefully to deepen understanding. Allow the design to emerge flexibly as new understandings open up new paths of inquiry.

4. Cross-validate and triangulate by gathering different kinds of data: observations, interviews, documents, artifacts, recordings, and photographs. Use multiple and mixed methods.

5. Use quotations; represent people in their own terms. Capture participants' views of their experiences in their own words.

6. Select key informants wisely and use them carefully. Draw on the wisdom of their informed perspectives, but keep in mind that their perspectives are selective.

7. Be aware of and strategic about the different stages of fieldwork.
   a. Build trust and rapport at the entry stage. Remember that the observer is also being observed and evaluated.
   b. Attend to relationships throughout fieldwork and the ways in which relationships change over the course of fieldwork, including relationships with hosts, sponsors within the setting, and coresearchers in collaborative and participatory research.
   c. Stay alert and disciplined during the more routine, middle phase of fieldwork.
   d. Focus on pulling together a useful synthesis as fieldwork draws to a close. Move from generating possibilities to verifying emergent patterns and confirming themes.
   e. Be disciplined and conscientious in taking detailed field notes at all stages of fieldwork.
   f. In evaluations and action research, provide formative feedback as part of the verification process of fieldwork. Time that feedback carefully. Observe its impact.

8. Be as involved as possible in experiencing the setting as fully as is appropriate and manageable while maintaining an analytical perspective grounded in the purpose of the fieldwork.

9. Separate description from interpretation and judgment.

10. Be reflective and reflexive. Include in your field notes and reports your own experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Consider and report how your observations may have affected the observed as well as how you may have been affected by what and how you've participated and observed. Ponder and report the origins and implications of your own perspective.

**Constructivist *Rashomon* heaven: Multiple and diverse perspectives**

and medicine: *"watching* and *wondering."* Tinbergen explained that it was by watching and wondering that he had, despite being neither a physiologist nor a medical doctor, discovered what turned out to be a major breakthrough in our understanding of autism. His observations revealed that the major clinical research on autism did not hold up outside clinical settings. His "watching and wondering" allowed him to see that normal individuals, those not clinically labeled as autistic, exhibited under a variety of circumstances all of the behaviors described as autistic in clinical research. He also noted that children diagnosed as autistic responded in nonautistic ways outside the clinical setting. By observing people in a variety of settings and watching a full range of behaviors, he was able to make a major medical and scientific contribution. His research methodology: "watching and wondering."

## ⑤ Notes

1. Excerpt from "Little Gidding" in the *Four Quartets* by T. S. Eliot. Copyright 1942 by T. S. Eliot; renewed 1970 by Esme Valerie Eliot. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Inc.

2. Excerpt from "The Elephant's Child," from *Just So Stories,* by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission of A. P. Watt Ltd. on behalf of The National Trust for Places of Historical Interest or Natural Beauty. Original publication 1902.

3. From *Traveling Light: Collected and New Poems.* Copyright © 1999 by David Wagoner. Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.

4. Used with permission of Joyce Keller.