



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

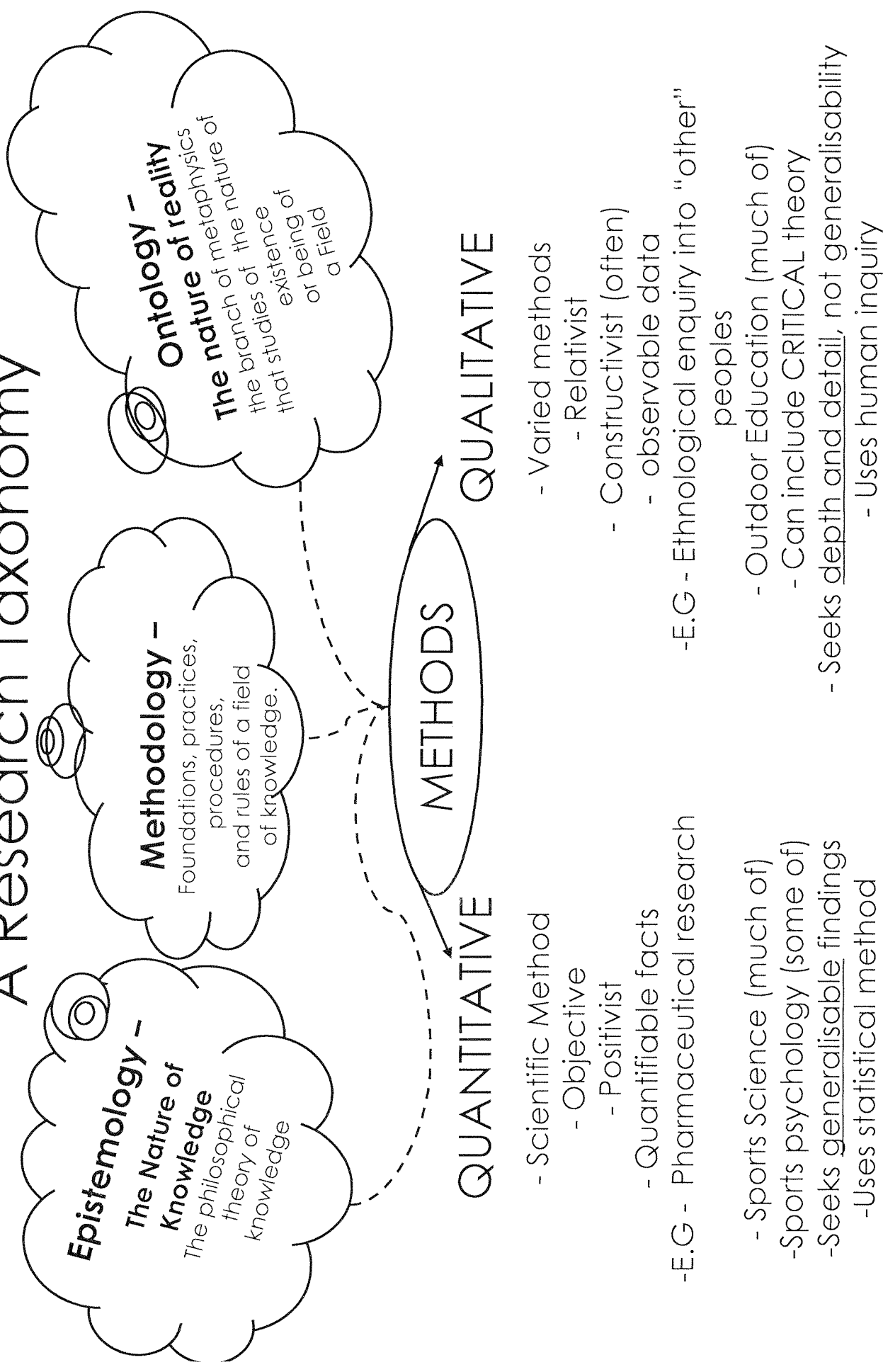
OE 7004

M.A . Outdoor Education

Research Methods Reader

Oologies and Isms (1)

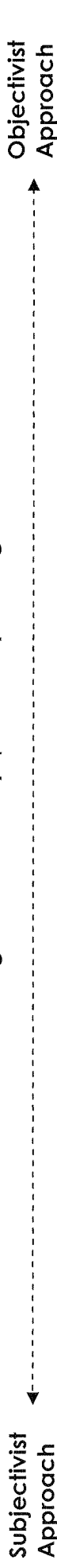
A Research Taxonomy



Four orientations to learning (after Merriam and Caffarella 1991: 138)

Aspect	Behaviourist	Cognitivist	Humanist	Social and situational
Learning theorists	Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, Guthrie, Hull, Tolman, Skinner	Koffka, Kohler, Lewin, Piaget, Ausubel, Bruner, Gagne	Maslow, Rogers	Bandura, Lave and Wenger, Salomon
View of the learning process	Change in behaviour	Internal mental process (including insight, information processing, memory, perception	A personal act to fulfill potential.	Interaction /observation in social contexts. Movement from the periphery to the centre of a community of practice
Locus of learning	Stimuli in external environment	Internal cognitive structuring	Affective and cognitive needs	Learning is in relationship between people and environment.
Purpose in education	Produce behavioural change in desired direction	Develop capacity and skills to learn better	Become self-actualized, autonomous	Full participation in communities of practice and utilization of resources
Educator's role	Arranges environment to elicit desired response	Structures content of learning activity	Facilitates development of the whole person	Works to establish communities of practice in which conversation and participation can occur

The Subjective-Objective Spectrum in Social Research
Willem Krouwel . August 2010. Trinity | University College, Carmarthen.



Core Ontological Assumptions	Reality? – it's a projection of the human imagination...	Reality is socially constructed	Reality is a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality is a contextual field of information	Reality is a concrete process	Reality is a concrete structure
Assumptions about human nature	Humans are pure spirit, consciousness, being...	Humans are social constructors, symbol creators	Humans are actors – the symbol users	Humans are information processors	Humans are adaptors	Humans are responders
Basic Epistemological Stance	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation	To understand how social reality is created	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To map contexts	To study systems, process, change	To construct a positivist science
Some favoured metaphors	Transcendental	Language game, accomplishment,	Theatre, culture	Cybernetic	Organism	Machine
Research Methods	Exploration of pure subjectivity	Hermeneutics	Symbol analysis	Contextual analysis of gestalt	Historical analysis	Lab experiments surveys
Example	Social research which reflects on how we shape the world within our own experience	Research which attempts to look at how we construct reality	Humans as "Social Actors" – Research which looks at the way in which we "enact" reality, interpreting, modifying, creating our life-scripts	Humans as Information Processors - Research which looks at the way people interact with their context. It is relatively constant – but we can move within it	Humans as adaptive agents – Individuals exist to interpret and exploit the environment to satisfy needs and to survive	Stimuli in our environment condition humans to respond to events in predictable, rule-governed ways.
Philosophical paradigm	Phenomenology	Ethnomethodology	Social Action Theory	Cybernetics	Open Systems Theory	Behaviourism

	Positivism	Post - Positivism	Critical Theory	Constructivism
Example from outdoor learning	Priest (has published "proof" of the effectiveness of a teambuilding programme (see www.expedia.com))	Some development training – asserts but does not guarantee predictable outcomes. See Ibbotson and Newell (1995).	Brookes (Neo-Hahnian stuff), Loynes (Adventure in a bun), 2004 introduction to "Scouting for Boys".	Emergent learning approaches – see Mossman, Loynes, Hovelynck – learning is constructed by group members
Aim of Inquiry	Explanation, prediction, control.	Explanation, prediction, control.	Critique, transformation, restitution, emancipation	Understanding the subjective meaning of the individuals in its various constructions and reconstructions
Ontology (the nature of each paradigm's reality)	Naïve realism - There is a reality that we are able to apprehend. Aims to determine what is there...	Critical realism (e.g., Roy Bhaskar) – there is a reality but it is less-than- perfectly apprehendable and therefore predictability can only be probable – not total.	Historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political cultural, economic, ethnic, gender, values; crystallised over time.	Reality is multiple and constructed differently by people depending on the meaning they make of their world.
Epistemology (The nature of each paradigm's knowledge)	Dualist/objectivist. Findings are "true". Verified hypotheses are established as "facts" or "laws".	Modified dualist/objectivist: Findings are probably true. Non-falsified hypotheses are probable facts or laws.	Subjective value-mediated findings which account for cultural and historical insights	Transactional / Subjectivist; created findings. Findings are read as significant when individuals' accounts of their reality converge.
Methodology	Experimental/manipulative: verification of hypotheses, chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental / manipulative; falsification of hypotheses, may include qualitative methods	Methods seen as involving dialogue with participants as sources of information	Hermeneutic: Information fed back to participants for confirmation of correct interpretations
Examples	Pre-test, post-test. Intervention and control group. Find: Outdoor programmes enhance self-concept.	Pre-test, post-test. Intervention and control group. Find: Outdoor programmes can contribute to enhanced self-concept.	Ethnographic interviews and biographies. Find: Outdoor programmes can enhance self-concept in a way that contributes to social emancipation of historically disadvantaged groups.	Group interviews and focus groups. Find: Participants agreed that since participation in the outdoor programme, their self-concept had improved, affecting most situations at home.

Paradigms go Outdoors.

Adapted with small modifications from Allison, P. (2000) *Research from the ground up.*, Ambleside: Braithay. Note that Allison acknowledges a debt to Guba and Lincoln (1994)



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

OE 7004

M.A . Outdoor Education

Research Methods Reader

Research Techniques (2)

Handbook of **INTERVIEW RESEARCH**

Context & Method

2001

Editors

Jaber F. Gubrium | **James A. Holstein**
University of Florida | Marquette University

A SAGE Reference Title
 **Sage Publications**
International Educational and Professional Publisher
Thousand Oaks ■ London ■ New Delhi

4

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING

◆ Carol A. B. Warren

Qualitative interviewing is based in conversation (Kvale 1996), with the emphasis on researchers asking questions and listening, and respondents answering (Rubin and Rubin 1995). It is similar to standardized survey interviewing in this respect, but unlike the survey interview, the epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructionist than positivist. Interview participants are more likely to be viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). The purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk. Some researchers frame the qualitative interview as a "speech event" (see Mishler 1986), which is useful, for instance, in narrative or conversation analysis (see in this volume Baker, Chapter 37; Riessman, Chapter 33). Other researchers, such as myself, frame it

more substantively and interactionally, aiming to understand the meaning of respondents' experiences and life worlds.¹

The emphasis of this chapter is on the substantive and social contours of the qualitative interview. Following a brief note on the importance of participants' perspectives for an understanding of the process and the relevancies of qualitative interviewing, the chapter proceeds through three major sections. The first of these takes up some initial considerations the researcher might engage in preparing to do qualitative interviewing; the focus is on concerns that are preliminary to the actual interviewing process. The second section deals with the interview process itself, especially as it relates to meaning making. The third and final section takes up the matter of interpretation in relation to self and others. Throughout the chapter, I draw on various qualitative interview-based studies for illustration, especially my own.

♦ *A Note on Perspective*

Donna Luff (1999:701) refers to perspectives as "fractured subjectivities." Applied to interviewing, Luff's characterization suggests that participants—both researchers and respondents—speak to each other not from stable and coherent standpoints, but from varied *perspectives*. These include the structured and historically grounded roles and hierarchies of their society, particularly those of gender, race, and class (Campbell 1998). Extending this to more local considerations, it also suggests that the perspectives relevant to the qualitative interview encompass the social positions that emerge in the interview itself, apparent in talk and interaction between interviewer and respondent. For example, during an interview, the perspective of the respondent may shift from one standpoint in her experience to another, as she speaks, say, as a former child, then as a mother, as a caregiver, then as an employee, or even as one who watches the local news (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; see also Gubrium and Holstein, Chapter 1, this volume). Although situational, these perspectives shape the flow of the interview and, in its qualitative version, are taken into account by the interviewer in understanding the meaning-making process.

In most texts on qualitative interviewing, the perspective of the interviewer is taken to be that of the discipline: she or he is interviewing in order to write, publish, and contribute to a body of knowledge and literature. The ways in which this disciplinary task are conceived is historically grounded, with the planning, conduct, and interpretation of interviews shaped by changing rules and expectations. What was viewed as improper procedure at an earlier time might now be *de rigueur*, as changing concepts of the interview task become accepted (see in this volume Platt, Chapter 2, as well as all contributions to Part VI). Indeed, even the significance of perspectives is historically grounded, with the current

recognition that perspectives other than those drawn from the discipline come into play for the interviewer as well as the respondent, especially in qualitative interviewing.²

Much has been written on the respondent's perspectives in the qualitative interview, especially in relation to gender (Arendell 1997; Warren and Hackney 2000). The chapters in Part II of this volume are, in some sense, an outline of an accumulated discourse on types of respondents, including the respondent as ethnic, gendered, aged, classed, and identified with one or another sexual community. An important point to emphasize here is that these are not only distinctive respondents but various perspectives that can be taken up by a single respondent within a single interview. Perspective is especially significant in qualitative interviewing, where meaning making is center stage in the interpretive process.

My own disciplinary and research experience, for example, forms a perspective, one that gives shape to how I present the qualitative interview.³ I write this chapter from the perspective of a seasoned sociologist who has done qualitative interviewing and extensive writing about interviews. During the 1980s, I interviewed respondents for two projects, one on older women married to younger men (Warren 1996) and the other on patients, relatives, psychiatrists, and hospital administrators involved with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), formerly known as electroshock therapy or EST (Warren and Levy 1991; Kneeland and Warren forthcoming). My ethnographic study of a gay community in the late 1960s also included interviewing (Warren 1972). In another study, I analyzed 30,000 pages of interviews with 17 women diagnosed as schizophrenic in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and their husbands. This was known as the Bay Area study (Sampson, Messinger, and Towne 1964), material from which I used to write a monograph titled *Madwives* on the intersection of psychiatry, gender, and marital

roles during that era (Warren 1987). I drew on the interpretive, feminist perspectives of the 1980s for my reinterpretation of this material. I have also written or coauthored a number of methodological articles on interviewing based on *Madwives* and other research (Warren 1985; Harkess and Warren 1993; Karner and Warren 1995) and, like many of my colleagues, have supervised several generations of student research using qualitative interviewing and ethnography.⁴ All of this shapes this presentation, which, together with other perspectives, both within and outside the qualitative interview, will bring up noteworthy points throughout the chapter.

♦ Preliminary Considerations

Qualitative interviewing is a kind of guided conversation (Kvale 1996; Rubin and Rubin 1995) in which the researcher carefully listens “so as to *hear the meaning*” of what is being conveyed (Rubin and Rubin 1995:7). James Spradley (1979:8) extends the concept of listening to include distinctly disciplinary concerns. According to Spradley, the purpose of interviewing is to make “cultural inferences,” thick descriptions of a given social world analyzed for cultural patterns and themes. These are of typical anthropological interest, which is Spradley’s own disciplinary context. Spradley explains that qualitative researchers make cultural inferences from three sources: what people say, the ways they act, and the artifacts they use. Taken together, these sources implicate qualitative interviewing’s sister research genre, ethnography (see Atkinson and Coffey, Chapter 38, this volume.)

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Qualitative interviewing has long been linked to ethnographic fieldwork, a tradi-

tional staple of anthropological research. Today, it is linked to many other disciplinary contexts. Qualitative interviewing and fieldwork are often classified together, along with documentary analysis, as qualitative or interpretive methods (Kvale 1996:9; Rubin and Rubin 1995:34-35). Yet the “cultural inferences” that the qualitative methods of ethnography and interviewing provide give us subtly different lenses on the world. Ethnography’s lens is that of lived experience, set in an eternal present. The lens of the intensive interview is verbal—what people say and mean—but its temporal range is biographical, extending into the past and the future. In this regard, contrast Erving Goffman’s (1961) ethnography of a late-1950s mental hospital with my own interview-based study of mental patients (Warren 1987). From Goffman, we see staff-patient and patient-patient interaction in the context of that decade’s eternal present. From my work, we see the meaning of mental-patienthood in the context of 1950s housewifery.

Researchers often choose qualitative interviews over ethnographic methods when their topics of interest do not center on particular settings but their concern is with establishing common patterns or themes between particular types of respondents. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) note, interview topics come from many sources: “employers; life experiences . . . the researcher’s personality; from ethnic, racial, or sexual identity. Some subjects attract researchers’ curiosity; others appeal to researchers’ political or social values” (p. 49).

Where both settings and individuals are available, and are mutually pertinent, researchers often combine ethnographic data with interview data, illuminating both the culture and the biographical particulars of members’ worlds. Social researchers use ethnographic interviews and other field-based methods to “fill in” the biographical meanings of observed interactions (Spradley and Mann 1975; Esterberg 1997).⁵ These methods hearken back, in sociology, to the Chicago school and its methods,

which combined surveys, case studies, documentary analysis, and qualitative interviewing. These methods were brought together in the service of understanding the varieties of experience that made up the Chicago urban experience in the 1930s and 1940s. Although Chicago school scholars were short on methodological treatises and ruminations (in general they just did their job, but see Palmer 1928), certain aspects of contemporary qualitative interviewing, and its penchant for ethnographic linkages, can be seen as linear inheritors of the Chicago school.

DESIGNING QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Steiner Kvale (1996) writes that the original Greek meaning of the word *method* is "a route that leads to the goal" (p. 4). Extending this concept by way of a traveler's metaphor to the qualitative interview researcher, Kvale adds, "The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of the lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as 'wandering together with'" (p. 4). The design of qualitative interview research, for Kvale, is open-ended in the sense that it is more concerned with being attuned to who is being traveled with, so to speak, than with setting out a precise route for all to follow, as in survey research.

As with ethnography in earlier decades, the wanderings of qualitative interviewing became systematized into texts and monographs during the 1990s (Arksey and Knight 1999; Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Kvale 1996; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Weiss 1994). Kvale (1996:88) proposes that, like Shakespeare's "man," interviewing has seven stages: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. By *thematizing*, he means thinking about the topic of interest to *the researcher* and its fit with the interview

method; qualitative interviewing is designed with the aim of thematizing *the respondent's* experience as well.

Of course, designing the research may involve reviewing the existing qualitative (and perhaps quantitative) literature on the topic to determine whether a new qualitative interview study would add anything to it. The researcher also considers the time available to complete the study, access to respondents, and the financial and emotional costs of conducting the study (Rubin and Rubin 1995:54). Emotional costs are particularly relevant in qualitative interviewing because of its open-ended, exploratory character; probing for details and depths of experiences (see Johnson, Chapter 5, this volume) can be stressful for all participants.

At the same time, beyond the standard issues such as reviews of the existing literature and the practical matters of time and access, qualitative researchers' concern with meaning making causes them to be rather skeptical of standard design strictures. For example, the constructionist epistemological leanings undergirding much of qualitative research beg the researcher to move ahead and interview open-endedly. The goal is to unveil the distinctive meaning-making actions of interview participants. As such, the design of qualitative interview research necessarily places limits on standardization and the working relevance of existing literature.

This is not to say that the research literature is unimportant. It is, but its relevance for the design of interviewing is confined to the first steps, if it is taken into account at all. From the "research questions" generated by a possible review of the literature, the interviewer develops 10 to 12 specific questions, together with a face sheet covering such descriptors as respondent age, race, and gender. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 145-46) note that the qualitative interview uses three kinds of questions: main questions that begin and guide the conversation, probes to clarify answers or request further examples, and follow-up questions that

pursue the implications of answers to main questions. But, equally important, the qualitative interviewer remains flexible and attentive to the variety of meanings that may emerge as the interview progresses. This open stance includes being alert to developing meanings that may render previously designed questions *irrelevant* in light of the changing contexts of meaning.⁶

FINDING RESPONDENTS

Whom does one interview? In the logic of survey research, interviews are conducted with a representative sample of a larger population, drawn systematically in order that the findings will be generalizable to that population. In qualitative interview studies, respondents may be chosen based on a priori research design, theoretical sampling, or "snowball" or convenience design, or particular respondents may be sought out to act as key informants (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Spradley 1979). In the Bay Area study, respondents were selected by a priori research design. Interviewers were to approach Caucasian, married women with children who were first admissions to Napa State Hospital within one week of their admission (Sampson et al. 1964; Warren 1987). Such a priori strictures, of course, do not always work out. One respondent was found to have had prior psychiatric admissions, but she was kept in the sample because, by the time this discovery was made, a great deal of time and effort had been expended in interviewing her.

Using a theoretical sampling strategy, the interviewer seeks out respondents who seem likely to epitomize the analytic criteria in which he or she is interested (see Glaser and Strauss 1967; see also Charmaz, Chapter 32, this volume). Because the object of qualitative interviewing is to discern meaningful patterns within thick description, researchers may try to minimize or maximize differences among respondents—say, according to race or class—in order

to highlight or contrast patterns. In general, with one-time interviews, the more comparisons to be made between sets of patterns, the more respondents are likely to be interviewed. For example, a researcher studying male caregivers of elderly Alzheimer's patients may decide on 20 or 25 interviews, whereas a researcher comparing male and female caregivers may seek 35 or 40.⁷

Theoretical sampling may be carried out through a "snowball" process: One respondent is located who fulfills the theoretical criteria, then that person helps to locate others through her or his social networks (Arksey and Knight 1999:4; Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Weiss 1994:25). But there are many other ingenious ways in which qualitative researchers find respondents to interview. For example, one sociology graduate student at the University of Southern California who was interested in the topic of interracial marriage approached her respondents during her working hours as a supermarket checker. Any time she checked the groceries of an apparently interracial couple, she asked them if they would be willing to be interviewed. Most of them agreed, to my supervisor's surprise.

One of the problems in seeking respondents for an interview study may be, in Hillary Arksey and Peter Knight's (1999:70) terms, not being able to find anyone to talk to. This can be a problem, especially when the topic of the interview is stigmatizing or when the occurrence of needed respondents is rare in a population. Both were true for our study of elderly ECT patients (Warren and Levy 1991). For other topics, such as that of Laurel Richardson's *The New Other Woman* (1985), finding respondents is less difficult, even if personally stigmatizing. As Richardson says:

Finding "other women" to interview was not difficult. . . . I announced my research interest to nearly everyone I met—conferees, salesclerks, travel acquaintances, and so on. Women I met in these different circumstances volun-

teered to be interviewed, or put me in contact with women who were involved with married men. (P. x)

In ethnographic interviews, informants may be chosen for their communicative competence or access to information rather than their personal epitomization of some topic-related characteristic of interest to the researcher (Briggs 1986). As Spradley (1979) notes: "I use the term *informant* in a very specific way, not to be confused with concepts like subject, respondent, friend, or actor. . . . Informants are first and foremost *native speakers*" (p. 8), one connotation of which is that they have inside knowledge of some social world. Where interviewer and interviewee share the same life world, however, the selection of an informant may be based more on the particular standpoint from which the individual can interpret cultural meanings. As James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium (1995) state, "The term *informant* no longer conveys a distinct difference in narrative competence; instead it signals more a difference in point of view" (p. 24). Indeed, because of their interest in the construction, not just the substance, of meaning making, Holstein and Gubrium propose that, where there is a choice, qualitative interviewers should select "respondents because they are assumed to be capable of narrative production" (p. 24), thus dignifying them as people and orienting to the interview project as narrative collaboration.

Both positivist and constructionist discussions of respondent selection tend to assume that the interviewer and respondent will be strangers; indeed, the title of a recent text on qualitative interviewing is *Learning from Strangers* (Weiss 1994). However, this may not be the case. Richardson (1985), for example, included fellow conferees and acquaintances among her 55 respondents. In ethnographic studies, where the researcher is a member of the community she or he is studying, respondents may even be a part of the interviewer's own social circle. Kristin Esterberg

(1997) describes her theoretical sampling of members of a community with which she was quite familiar:

The initial interviewees were selected, in part, for their location in the community; I actively sought out those who were seen by others at the "center" and at the "margins" of community. I also sought out women, with varying degrees of success, in "under-represented" categories: old women, bisexual women, working-class women, and women of color. (Pp. 177-78)

In some cases, sampling begins with acquaintances and moves on to strangers. This is typical of snowball sampling. In the ECT study (Warren and Levy 1991), we initially posted flyers in nursing homes seeking respondents, with absolutely no luck. In discussing the study with colleagues and friends, however, we found that many had elderly relatives who had had ECT. Similarly, in our study of older women married to younger men, respondents included university colleagues, friends, and even a cleaning woman who worked for one of the researchers.

INFORMED CONSENT

As with other kinds of research involving human subjects, qualitative interviewing requires researchers to deal with professional ethical codes, in particular federal and university human subjects regulations. These have become more formalized over the past several decades, to the point where some say that they unduly constrain the conduct of social research or protect the researcher more than the subjects of the research (see Adler and Adler, Chapter 25, this volume). Institutional review boards (IRBs) translate federal policy into local standards for the protection of human subjects from physical and emotional harm by requiring researchers to obtain informed consent from research subjects.

From an IRB perspective, human subjects regulation of interview research seeks to protect respondents from such things as invasion of privacy, breaches of confidentiality or anonymity, and distress caused by topics raised in the interview process itself. But from the standpoint of understanding qualitative interviewing, what is interesting about these strictures is not so much the ways they are implemented by the researcher, but the ways they are interpreted by the respondent.

Among dangers or harms in intensive interviewing research from the perspective of the respondent is the act of listening itself. Listening to another speak, for example, is an act that reflects the self back to the respondent, and this may unfold in ways unforeseen by IRBs or researchers themselves. In reflecting on repeat interviews with ex-patients in the Bay Area conducted in the 1950s and Vietnam veterans in the 1990s, I found that

the interviewer becomes dangerous by the simple act of listening; when the speaker has put on the mantle of a new self seeking to bury the old in an unmarked grave, yet must confront the presence of an interviewer who has knowledge of the past self. The listener is also dangerous as a participant in the retelling of the past by a respondent who feels unable to escape from that past and the self constituted by it. (Karner and Warren 1995:81)

Some subjects may not see written consent forms as at all protective. In a study conducted by a University of Southern California graduate student, respondents expressed repeated exasperation with consent forms. This particular study focused on lesbian identities. The researcher's requests for interviews—which included clear promises of confidentiality yet required signed consent forms—were uniformly met with exasperated refusals by prospective respondents. The contradiction between requiring signed consent

forms, which prospective respondents perceived as going to the government funding agency, and promising confidentiality was too great. The researcher resolved the problem by shifting to oral, tape-recorded consent.

In the team qualitative interview study in which I participated in the late 1980s (Warren and Levy 1991), in which we sought interviews with elderly ECT recipients, their relatives, hospital psychiatrists, and hospital administrators, none of the patients or relatives took issue with the consent forms. But most of the hospital psychiatrists and administrators waved them away as “too official.” They were willing to talk with us, but they were not willing to put their names to any documents that might involve them in future litigation. Curiously enough, such responses are often not discovered until *after* the interview process has begun, the start of which the consent form is meant to regulate.

The logic of informed consent presumes that the respondent will understand the intent of the research, as it is explained by the researcher or a consent letter. However, there are many indications in the literature on qualitative interviewing that the researcher's understanding may not match the interviewer's from the start, may shift over time, or may be “confused.” The following extract from an interview with a Bay Area ex-patient—whom the researcher had interviewed at least 50 times over a 36-month period—illustrates the dynamics involved:

She began by asking what kind of a psychologist I was. . . . “You said that you were working on a project. I was wondering what your field was. . . . at times, as I said, I was confused about what your interest was in the family, whether you were prying or whether you were just surveying to see how the family was getting along, with your connection with the hospital in your field, whether it has helped out or whether it was part

of it—it wasn't really that, it was just simple explanation of the confusement of it all." (Warren and Karner 1990: 123)

SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW

Once the researcher identifies respondents, she or he must ask them if they will agree to be interviewed, a process that usually accompanies obtaining informed consent. In particular, the time and place of the interview needs to be decided. The received wisdom on how to accomplish this is highly varied, with some commentators advising particular venues and specific kinds of scheduling (see Seidman 1998) and others leaving this largely an open question (for example, see Kvale 1996).

In my experience, the continuum of responses to these preliminary matters can range from outright refusal to welcoming agreement, with every variation in between. In the original Bay Area study, one husband refused to be interviewed at all. More generally, a willingness, even an eagerness, to talk about oneself in interviews is quite commonly reported, at least in the American context. Indeed, as Rubin and Rubin (1995) note:

At a basic level, people like to talk about themselves: they enjoy the sociability of a long discussion and are pleased that somebody is interested in them. . . . you come along and say, yes, what you know is valuable, it should not be lost, teach me, and through me, teach others. (P. 103)

Setting up the interview and actually making it happen are two different things. Generations of qualitative interviewers have been admonished to schedule interviews at times and in places convenient to respondents, but they may find that even this is problematic. For example, an undergraduate sociology student at the University of Kansas had, with great difficulty,

scheduled a focus group session for six students to talk about the issue of going to school and working at the same time. When the scheduled time for the group to meet expired, he ran into my office and breathlessly announced that not one of the six had appeared. Although this incident may be extreme, it is not uncommon for respondents to forget, simply not show up, or in other ways delay or prevent the actual completion of the interview.

But let us continue with those interviews that do move ahead. Armed with a list of questions, a fact sheet for demographic information, the informed consent letter, and the requisite tape recorder and backup pencil and paper, the interviewer meets the respondent at the agreed-upon location. The location itself may have been negotiated. In the Bay Area study, the female respondents, once out of the hospital, did not know quite where to meet their male interviewers. The home seemed out of the question—what would the neighbors say? And the same might be said for the coffee shop across the road. On the other hand, a journey to the researchers' offices, although far from the gaze of prying eyes, was logistically difficult, given child-care and household responsibilities. These ex-patient interviews were replete with discussion and discomfort over the issue of where to meet; in the summer, interviewers sometimes resolved the problem by meeting with respondents in the outdoors, in a garden or on a park bench. Most interviews were eventually completed, but their locations were far from being the result of a well-defined method of procedure. In retrospect, it is evident that the negotiation of perspectives on this matter filtered many of these preliminary issues, just as many seasoned qualitative researchers have noted that such negotiations indeed reverberate throughout the interview process itself.

A respondent is, by definition, someone who responds—someone who is willing and able to talk to the interviewer. But the respondent is also raced, classed, and gendered as well as being situated in the

present moment, with anticipatory notions of what an interview might entail. All this, too, will reverberate in the forthcoming interview. Nancy Ammerman's (1987) ethnographic study of fundamentalist Christians, for example, illustrates the religious, class, and educational perspectives from which her respondents anticipated interviews:

My role as an interviewer often placed an initial distance between me and my subjects that was not present in my role as a participant observer. . . . a good many people approached the interview full of apprehension about what it would be like to be interviewed by someone who was getting a Ph.D. from Yale. After they had cleaned their houses, prepared special food, and even bought new clothes, some still worried about whether they would know the "right" answers and why I had chosen them instead of someone who was a stronger Christian or had been in the church longer or who had a more interesting testimony. (P. 13)

Clearly, the procedural staging of the qualitative interview develops both extemporaneously and methodically within the social relations of the participants.

♦ *The Qualitative Interviewing Process*

We now turn to the interview process itself, in particular to the meaning making involved as it relates to the social interaction of the participants. This has been a common topic in the interview methods literature for years (see DeSantis 1980; Suchman and Jordan 1990; Peneff 1988). Meaning making is especially pertinent to qualitative researchers because their constructionist leanings bring the interview process itself

within the purview of the designated research topic. The social contexts of the interview process are not viewed as something to be controlled, as they are in standardized survey interviews, but instead are seen as an important part of meaning making in its own right. Qualitative researchers, in other words, treat the unfolding social contexts of the interview as data, not as something that, under ideal conditions, can be eliminated from the interview process.

To illustrate these unfolding social contexts, I begin at the very start of the interview, when the tape recorder is set up, and end after it is over, with the "echoes" that can follow the respondent and researcher into their other lives. Between the beginning and the echoes, interviews can take many directions. Here, I depict two such directions: currents of the clinical and the sociable—of loyalty and disloyalty—that occurred in situations where one interviewer interviewed spouses (separately), and issues of gender and power in feminist interviewing.

THE TAPE RECORDER AND ITS MEANINGS

The interview often begins as the interviewer's tape recorder is set up amid friendly greetings, creating a particular social context for the interview conversation. For several decades, the conventional wisdom has been that qualitative interviews should be audiotaped, and perhaps even videotaped (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995:78). But does the respondent remain basically unaffected by this? Not only might turning on a tape recorder alter the ensuing conversation, creating a particular context for what is said, but the meanings of audio- or videotaping may be different to different respondents, whose perspectives on the matter are likely to vary by social class and age, for example.

Tape recording has historical resonances. The tape recorder itself, ubiquitous in recent decades, was a novelty at the time

of the Bay Area study; indeed, the first half of the study was conducted with the eight interviewers taking handwritten notes. When tape recorders were introduced, they were a source of exclamation and discussion on the part of the respondents, who would bring their children into the room to examine and discuss the then-bulky instruments. But times and expectations change. In my study of older women married to younger men, the one working-class Hispanic couple I interviewed met me at their front door with exclamations of disappointment over my small and insignificant tape recorder. Their concept of the "interview"—shaped by the TV program *Eye on L.A.*—had led them to expect me to arrive with a video camera, perhaps even a TV camera crew. What Paul Atkinson and David Silverman (1997) call "the interview society" seems to have constructed a new, postmodern, social context for interview data, perhaps making the interview itself the characteristic format for personal narratives (see Gubrium and Holstein, Chapter 1, this volume).

In the process of conducting qualitative interviews, many of us have encountered the "on and off the record" associations that respondents have with recording devices. In perhaps the majority of interviews that I have conducted, supervised, or analyzed, from the 1960s through the 1990s, respondents have continued to speak after the tape recorders have been turned off. This seems to occur for two reasons: (a) The respondent wants to talk about his or her own, rather than the interviewer's, concerns; and (b) the respondent does not want to talk "on the record" about issues that might be dangerous or personally damaging. For example, my notes from the Bay Area study show that an interview with one husband was extended past its conclusion, with the husband offering some telling remarks about ECT that had not been forthcoming in the interview proper:

As I packed up the tape recorder, Mr. W. asked me what ECT does for people. I

muttered something about, "I wish I knew." He responded with, "Well, what's it *supposed* to do?"

In another instance, as I turned off the tape recorder in a 1980s interview with a hospital psychiatrist concerning ECT, the psychiatrist said, "Now that we can talk off the record, I will tell you about billing." It is a hallmark of qualitative interviewing that "unrecorded" data of this kind are as important as those derived from tape recordings.

SHIFTING CONTEXTS

Whatever the training and intentions of the interviewer, the social interaction of the qualitative interview may unfold in unexpected ways. This unfolding is even more complex when interviews are repeated over time. Once again, the interview process itself can be treated as an important source of data. In the Bay Area interviews, for example, "clinical" perspectives emerged in interviews with the women patients and ex-patients, whereas "distancing" perspectives emerged with both the ex-patients and their husbands after the wives' release from hospitalization. Although interviewers were trained to be nonpartisan with these husbands and wives, they nevertheless were at times treated as partisan.

In their training, the Bay Area study interviewers were instructed not to act as clinicians during the study. One psychiatrist warned that "any sort of regular relationship was bound to be therapeutic (or antitherapeutic) notwithstanding our 'intentions'" (Warren 1985:74). And from the point of view expressed in interviewers' accounts, it was apparent that this psychiatrist's warnings were appropriate. The women patients and ex-patients asked the researchers for help, advice, and opinions, as did their husbands. "Transference" also seemed to affect the interactions between respondents and interviewers (Laslett and Rapoport 1975; Warren 1985). After one

interview with patient Joyce Noon on April 3, 1959, the interviewer commented:

I had originally anticipated that I would stop the interview after about one tape, but since Joyce seemed to be getting some benefit from talking to me and expressing her feelings, I went on for another tape to give her further opportunity to do so. (Warren 1985:80)

In the ex-patient phase of the Bay Area study, the issue of the interviewer as dangerous listener was especially salient. Some of the women and their husbands sought to distance themselves from the women's "old selves," a distancing that extended to the researcher. This, in turn, affected the social interactions within these interviews. For example, ex-patient June Mark said that

she cannot fully participate in the research simply because the research in itself signifies the stigma of deviance which she is struggling to avoid. . . . "You keep asking a lot of questions . . . things I want to forget about. . . . It's not normal, my talking to you. . . . It's just that I am reminded I'm a patient. If you're a patient, you're always a patient." (Field notes)

Despite her strong reservations, June continued to participate, as did all but one of the respondents. However, they did try to redirect the interviews into more sociable, everyday—in June Mark's word, "normal"—channels. For example, in response to one interviewer's "How are you?" the respondent answered "How are *you*?" in a pointed attempt at role reversal (Warren 1987:261). This rather explicit attempt at reconstructing the interaction not only altered the social context of the interview, changing it from an interview with an ex-patient to one with another person, it presented itself as data in the sense that it documented, on that occasion, the normalizing work of everyday life for this population. This is one of those many points in

qualitative interviews when the interview becomes ethnographic.

Building a context for sociability, rather than data gathering, was especially apparent in posthospital interviews with Ann Rand. One of the interviewer's notes in this case reads:

Repeated that she would only see [me] again if she would have her over to her house. While the interviewer was evasive, Ann said, "Then I suppose you still see me as a patient. To me you are either a friend or some kind of authority, now which is it? The way I see it, you either see me as a friend or a patient." (Warren 1987:261)

Another note, this one concerning Jack Oren's interview, reads, "Mr. Oren asked me if I wanted to join them for dinner, and was rather insistent about this despite my repeated declining" (Warren 1987:261).

Other respondents turned the psychiatric tables on the interviewers, interpreting *them* clinically, as the following note indicates:

[Referring to the interviewer], Jack Oren said, "I think that you're a kid that missed happiness somewhere along the line." He then started speculating about my past life and thought that something had happened to me . . . to make me feel like that. Mr. Oren first was critical about my interviewing technique, then started to question me about my life, and so on. (Warren 1987:62)

But not all of the ex-patients sought to release themselves from the researcher's grasp on their past selves, or saw this as dangerous. Some continued to therapize the researcher and the interviews, as the following notes about two respondents suggest:

I had the feeling that Irene James was desperately trying to gain some control over her feelings and thoughts by talk-

ing about them to me. . . . Irene says that when I arrive for my interview that seems reassuring. (Warren 1987:262)

I asked Shirley Arlen if she would see a psychiatrist and she said no, she couldn't afford it, then all she would do is talk, and she feels she would do better just talking to me. (Warren 1987:262)

In the Bay Area study, each of the eight female and male interviewers spoke with both the mental patients and their husbands. Each wife and husband knew that the other was being interviewed by the same person, forming a triadic relationship. One consequence of this arrangement was that the interviewer was incorporated into the respondents' attempts to find out and pass on information and opinions concerning, mainly, the wife's mental condition at the time. In such a situation, the interviewer is supposed to be, in Georg Simmel's (1950) words, a nonpartisan who either

stands above the contrasting interests and opinions [of the dyad] and is actually not concerned with them, or . . . is equally concerned with them. . . . the non-partisan may make the interaction between the parties, and between himself and them, a means for his own purposes. (Pp. 149-50)

Regarding the latter point, it is characteristic of qualitative interviewing that it is structured to take these options seriously, generating new data in the process. It was clear in the Bay Area transcripts that respondents took varied perspectives in the interview, some of which were far from being neutral sources of information.

Interviewed husbands often asked the interviewer about their wives, and when they did not hear what they wanted, some became testy:

Mr. Sand told me that he didn't see any point going on [with the interviews]. . . .

He asked me if I had talked to his wife that day and when I did not answer at once he repeated the question and I finally told him that I did. . . . He told me that this wasn't going to help him anyway, and besides which, I knew things about what was going on at the hospital with his wife, and I didn't tell him a thing about it. (Warren 1987:266)

The respondents' varied perspectives in these triadic relationships—perhaps centered on secrecy in relation to oneself or loyalty in relation to another—are as significant for what they reveal or conceal, in terms of data, as they are indicators of interview rapport. Here, again, the ethnographic character of the qualitative interview is evident. For example, Bay Area ex-patient Joan Baker agreed to continue with her interviews but kept them secret from her husband. She felt he would interpret her being interviewed as evidence that she was still mentally ill (Warren 1987:267). Similarly, in a different research context, a woman sociologist, commenting on a draft of an article on interviewing, conveyed her thoughts about an interview she had just completed and her husband's forthcoming one:

I was conscious all through the interview of trying to be honest with [the interviewer] but not to say anything that would seem disloyal to [husband]. She was going to interview him next, and I kept wondering if she would say anything to him that might make him feel I had been disloyal to him. (Harkess and Warren 1993:334)

GENDER AS A SOCIAL CONTEXT

Although race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and age have received increasing attention in the interviewing literature, it is gender to which qualitative researchers have been most attentive in sociology (Benney, Hughes, and Starr 1956;

Luff 1999). In the early years of the Chicago school, the authoritative, question-asking status of the interviewer was unproblematic, the gender of the interviewer either unacknowledged or presumptively male. In time, however,

the interviewer with "no gender," like the ethnographer as "any person," ceded place during the century to the male interviewer interviewing both women and men (Kinsey's model. . .). . . . During the modern era, accounts of what made an interview go smoothly and produce valid data was contested terrain: any polite and dignified interviewer (Palmer 1928), a male interviewer (Cressey 1920/1986) or a female interviewer with a female respondent (Oakley 1981). . . . Not to mention the female "sociability specialist" of the 1980s wresting secret information from reluctant male and female nude beach habitués. (Warren and Hackney 2000:37-38, 42)

In a historical shift in disciplinary perspectives, feminist interviewers have sought, over the past several decades, to change the social interactions of the interview from being authoritative, sociable, or therapeutic to being expressly egalitarian. By the 1970s, women interviewers were being encouraged to interview other women from the empathic standpoint of gender. By the 1980s, it was commonplace to speak of a special genre of "feminist interviewing" (DeVault 1986; Oakley 1981). In the late 1990s, however, exceptions to, and critiques of, the idea of feminist interviewing appeared and the consideration of respondent subjectivity became more complex (see in this volume Reinharz and Chase, Chapter 11; DeVault and McCóy, Chapter 36). The standpoints of race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation were proposed as de-essentializing femaleness. Thus "women interviewing women" was complicated by whether or not one participant was Third World and one First, one lesbian

and one heterosexual, or one religious and radical right and the other left-leaning and feminist (Blee 1991; Luff 1999).

Even where both interviewer and respondent are women, interviews may not be with "those whose standpoints the researcher shares" in terms of "religious/secular, feminist/antifeminist, or liberal/heterosexist" (Luff 1999). For example, Luff (1999) discusses how her preconceptions affected her interviews with British "moral right" (what American sociologists might call "moral majority") women. She points out that the disciplinary perspectives of sociologists are often secular, feminist, antihomophobic, and politically left-leaning. Her respondents reversed all of these perspectives; they were religious, antifeminist, homophobic, and politically right-wing. Furthermore, as middle-class, semipublic figures, they were "relatively powerful" as well as potentially hostile (p. 687). Retelling "moments of rapport" in her research with these women, Luff concludes that "the researcher, as much as the participant, draws on her own conflicting, often contradictory aspects of identity as resources in the interaction," adding that

the emphasis on power-sharing and the vulnerability of the researched that has characterized much feminist methodology . . . may come from tendencies within feminist research to study the "powerless" and therefore may not be transferable, indeed may be counter-productive, to the development of feminist theory and practice in research with the "powerful." (P. 692)

By the 1990s, some feminist researchers had come to recognize that women interviewing women might not work (Hertz 1996) or might be ethically problematic (Luff 1999). In her interviews with military men and their wives concerning gender integration in the military, Rosanna Hertz (1996) found that the men were uncomfortable "trying to explain . . . their position to the two female interviewers who were

outside of male camaraderie" (p. 256). But Hertz also found that the women respondents had even less to say than the men; she surmised that this was because the status she shared with them as women was overshadowed by educational, social class, and marital differences (p. 256). Indeed, Luff (1999:698) points out that rapport—and trust-enhancing interview strategies such as not arguing, saying "I see" and "um," smiling, and maintaining a polite tone of voice—can make even (liberal) women interviewing (right-wing) women seem deceitful, "falling somewhere between the covert and overt" in social research.

There is general agreement in the qualitative interviewing literature that women interviewing men presents special problems, given the obduracy of the interpersonal dominance involved (Arendell 1997; Warren and Hackney 2000). This gender problem was exacerbated for Terry Arendell (1997) in a study where the topic of the interview was divorce. The topic created an interaction in which male respondents spoke forcefully of their betrayal by women to another woman who was the interviewer. Arendell found that from the initial point of contact, the interview became a proving ground for masculinity and a site for the exercise of male definitions and dominance displays against ex-wives (and sometimes against all women). These men immediately "took charge" of the interview process and topic and attempted to "place" Arendell as married or unmarried, available or not, male basher or nice girl. Their "assertion of superiority" involved both the denigration of women in general and the assumption that their knowledge and insights were superior to Arendell's. Their handling of the interview (for it was they who handled) ranged from chivalry to sexual harassment (Warren and Hackney 2000:37).

POSTINTERVIEW ECHOES

Like most things, qualitative interviews come to an end, with respondents and in-

terviewers returning to their respective life worlds. For the respondent, there may be no more thoughts of the interview (DeSantis 1980); for the interviewer, the main thoughts may be of the way in which the interview fits into the overall analysis. But sometimes—perhaps especially where interviews are combined with ethnographic research—there may be echoes of the interview within the life worlds of the interviewer, the respondent, or both. This possibility was recognized in the 1970s and 1980s literature on feminist interviewing; Luff (1999) refers to this early "assumption that feminists can, or indeed should have a powerful affect [*sic*] on participants' lives" as "patronizing" (p. 692). Nevertheless, such echoes can occur.

Two lesbian sociology graduate students at the University of Kansas who did ethnographic and interview research on their own communities concluded that the interviewing experience created an emotional distance between themselves and their respondents. In one case, this extended to emotional distance between the researcher herself and her lesbian identity (Warren 2000). In the research on ECT recipients and their families (Warren and Levy 1991), several of our collaborators interviewed university colleagues—friends or acquaintances—concerning their elderly, hospitalized parents. In more than one instance during the interviews, divining our possible critique of the use of ECT on elderly mental patients, our colleagues became upset with us, accusing us of not understanding their situation and, in one case, of no longer being a friend. We suspected, too, that one or two respondents simply did not tell us the truth about their family members, avoiding the sort of confrontation we had had with others. In one case, a prior friendship between an interviewer and respondent was severely strained for many months following the interview.

Qualitative interviewing is distinctive in this regard. Interviewers do not necessarily end their relationships with respondents at

the conclusion of their interviews, as is typically done in survey interviewing. Rather, the perspectives of, and information conveyed in, interviews echo in the ongoing relations of research participants.

♦ *Interpretation, Self, and Others*

The interviewer, like the respondent, participates in the interview from historically grounded biographical as well as disciplinary perspectives. Biographical perspectives may frame entire analyses or affect the selection of illustrative quotes. In her book *Worlds of Pain* (1976), for example, Lillian Rubin tells the reader that her interpretation of working-class life was shaped by her experiences as a working-class child, left-wing political activist, and clinical practitioner. She saw pain, and only pain, in working-class lives: "Often people implored, even commanded me, to believe they had happy home lives as children. I tried . . . [but the] dominant memories of childhood for me, as for the people I met, are of pain and deprivation" (p. 46).

When, in the late 1980s, I was analyzing transcripts of ECT experiences, I saw myself in respondents' comments, something that was highly emotional for me. In sifting through the many thousands of pages of interviews, I chose the following extract from ex-patient Shirley Arlen's case material to illustrate and exemplify the negative aspects of the biographical memory loss attendant upon EST:

[Shirley Arlen], although she had been reminded by others of her son's existence, appeared to have lost her affective memory of him as her child: "I guess I feel sort of strange with him. . . . I just don't even feel like he's mine, for some reason. . . . I think he's nine months now . . . I really don't know. I can't even remember when he was born." (Warren 1988:295)

This comment was particularly poignant for me because while I was writing *Madwives* (Warren 1987) I was a new mother myself, and could imagine nothing more horrible than the emotional separation from a baby.

Extending the metaphor of the qualitative interviewer as a traveler to strange lands (Kvale 1996), we see that the interview, like the ethnography, is about self as well as other (Warren 2000). As Rubin (1976) says of her interview research about working-class pain: "No matter how far we travel, we can never leave our roots behind. I found they claimed me at unexpected times, in unexpected places" (p. 13).

As I noted at the start of this chapter, the purpose of qualitative interviewing (and associated fieldwork) is to understand others' meaning making. As many qualitative researchers report, I came early on to the point at which I viewed those meanings as intersecting with my own story. Yet, even with our knowledge of the different perspectives from which respondents and researchers talk and write, the empathic appreciation of others' meanings is not an easy task, especially across various cultural divides. In *Learning How to Ask* (1986), Charles Briggs cautions researchers against importing one set of linguistic and cultural assumptions into another when interviewing between cultures. But it is evident that even within the same culture, meanings that seem clear to the interviewer can be unshared (see in this volume Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Parker, Chapter 14; Briggs, Chapter 44). In a study of "affirmative action" in the South in the 1970s, an employer, when asked his definition of the term, replied:

Uh . . . try to get a job done in as orderly a manner and please our customers . . . so it's firm as possible . . . to get a day's work for a day's pay. . . . And it would be affirmative action. And it's almost impossible. (Harkess and Warren 1994:273)

Indeed, even the most seemingly commonplace terms may vary surprisingly in meaning in the context of particular life worlds. In the Bay Area study, sociologist and interviewer Sheldon Messinger talked approximately 25 times between November 1957 and July 1958 with ex-patient Kate White (Messinger and Warren 1984). Among the "delusions" that precipitated Kate White's diagnosis and hospitalization was the idea that she and her husband were "homosexual." In the commonsense meanings of the 1950s, homosexuality referenced, as it does now, same-gender erotic preferences, attraction, or behavior (although there would be differences now in the social sensibilities associated with the category). But as Messinger delved into the meaning Kate assigned to the term, it became clear that what she was talking about was not desire or eroticism at all, but a social role. She wanted to work outside the home and men did that, so she talked of herself as homosexual. During her hospitalization, her husband had enjoyed keeping house and taking care of the children—ostensibly a woman's role—so perhaps he was also homosexual. For Kate White, homosexuality referenced gender roles, not sexual desire; in fact, she was having an extramarital heterosexual affair at the time she was interviewed.

Messinger and Warren (1984) also point out that stories such as that of Kate White's "homosexuality" are grounded in important relationships and adaptations that exist outside the purview of the interview. This observation, of course, highlights the necessity of using ethnographic linkages to flesh out the social contexts of meaning making. The social situation of the interview may not be the most important one for researchers who are trying to understand the meanings ("frameworks or labels") used by respondents. "These frameworks or labels must be examined in their interaction contexts. It is there that they do their work" (Messinger and Warren 1984:205), not in the interview or with the interviewer.

So we return full circle to the close relationship between qualitative interviewing and ethnography. I have always found experiences and stories such as Kate White's to point me in the direction of multiple rather than one-shot interviews, or of ethnography combined with interviews rather than interviews alone. But, as Holstein and Gubrium (1995) point out, even in the one-shot interview, the respondent may shift viewpoints and tell different tales.

In a 1970s ethnographic study of Weight Watchers (Laslett and Warren 1975), I had noticed that a large portion of each meeting was taken up with the discussion of food—what was permitted, how to cook, and so on. This came as no surprise to me. Flush with the then-current ardor for "triangulation," I embarked on interviews to "validate" my observations.⁸ When I asked my first respondent, "Do you think that the meetings focus on food?" she responded, to my astonishment, with a definite "Oh no!" About one and a half hours later, however—much of which was spent discussing food—she said, "About that earlier question of yours—well, it does seem like we spend an awful lot of time discussing food doesn't it!" Among the ethnographic qualities of the qualitative interview itself is that the interview unfolds reflexively as each participant looks at the world through the other's eyes, incorporating both self and other into the process of interpretation.

Although asking, listening, talking, and hearing are important, so are seeing and feeling as means of apprehending the social world. Although the frame of talking and listening may be apt for conceiving telephone interviews, the frame of social interaction accords better with the face-to-face qualitative interview. In the social interaction of the qualitative interview, the perspectives of the interviewer and the respondent dance together for the moment but also extend outward in social space and backward and forward in time. Both are gendered, aged, and otherwise embodied, one person (perhaps) thinking about her

topic, questions, rapport, consent forms, and the tape recorder, not to mention feeling nervous. The other is (perhaps) preoccupied with her relationships outside the interview, pressing tasks left undone, seeking information, getting help, or being loyal. These are the working selves and others at the center of qualitative interviewing. And that is just the beginning.

■ Notes

1. Although interviews may be conducted with more than one interviewer and more than one respondent, I confine this discussion to the dyadic interview situation. See Chapter 7 of this volume for a discussion of group interviewing.

2. Some approaches to interviewing, notably those taking a postmodern perspective, focus more on the interviewer's viewpoint than on the respondent's. Sometimes they fuse these perspectives. Norman Denzin's (1987) study of self-help groups of which the interviewer or ethnographer is a member is a case in point.

3. Consider the differences in presentation apparent in the following diversely authored depictions: Spradley (1979), Seidman (1998), Weiss (1994), Holstein and Gubrium (1995), Kvale (1996), and Rubin and Rubin (1995).

4. This research includes both one-shot interviews, which I suspect is the form encoun-

tered in most interview research, and repeat interviews, which can be considered a kind of longitudinal design.

5. In a section of his book titled "When Not to Interview," Kvale (1996) notes, "In recent social research there has been an inflationary use of interviews; also in areas better covered by other methods." He adds, "If you want to study people's behavior and their interaction with the environment, the observations of field studies will usually give more valid knowledge than merely asking subjects about their behavior" (p. 104).

6. Indeed, the folk wisdom of qualitative research regarding design includes the caution that researchers should not consult the literature until after the research has gotten under way and they have apprehended a sense of the subject matter. This, of course, works against design as formally understood.

7. Although there are few reasons set forth for the numbers of respondents appropriate in qualitative studies, there seem to be norms. To have a nonethnographic qualitative interview study published, the minimum number of interviews seems to fall in the range of 20 to 30. Respondent groups also generally come in round numbers, such as 20 or 35.

8. The idea of triangulation was discredited in the 1980s, but it is apparently staging a comeback (see Arksey and Knight, 1999; relatedly, see also Atkinson and Coffey, Chapter 38, this volume).

■ References

- Ammerman, N. T. 1987. *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Arendell, T. 1997. "Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men." *Qualitative Sociology* 20:341-68.
- Arksey, H. and P. Knight. 1999. *Interviewing for Social Scientists: An Introductory Resource with Examples*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Atkinson, P. and D. Silverman. 1997. "Kundera's *Immortality*: The Interview Society and the Invention of Self." *Qualitative Inquiry* 3:304-25.
- Benney, M., E. C. Hughes, and S. Star. 1956. "Age and Sex in the Interview." *American Journal of Sociology* 62:143-52.
- Biernacki, P. and D. Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling." *Sociological Methods & Research* 10:141-63.
- Blee, K. M. 1991. *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Briggs, C. L. 1986. *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, M. L. 1998. "Institutional Ethnography and Experience as Data." *Qualitative Sociology* 21:55-73.
- Cressey, P. G. [1920] 1986. "Comparison of the roles of the 'sociological stranger' and the 'anonymous stranger' in field research." *Urban Life* 12:112-20.
- Denzin, N. K. 1987. *The Recovering Alcoholic*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- DeSantis, G. 1980. "Interviewing as Social Interaction." *Qualitative Sociology* 2:72-98.
- DeVault, M. L. 1986. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoints: Feminist Strategies for Analyzing Interview Data." Presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, August, New York.
- Esterberg, K. G. 1997. *Lesbian and Bisexual Identities: Constructing Communities, Constructing Selves*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Glaser, B. G. and A. L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Harkess, S. and C. A. B. Warren. 1993. "The Social Relations of Intensive Interviewing: Constellations of Strangeness and Science." *Sociological Methods & Research* 21:317-39.
- . 1994. "The Good Worker: Race and Gender in a 1970s Southern City." *Sociological Perspectives* 37:269-92.
- Hertz, R. 1996. "Guarding against Women? Responses of Military Men and Their Wives to Gender Integration." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 25:251-84.
- Holstein, J. A. and J. F. Gubrium. 1995. *The Active Interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Karner, T. X. and C. A. B. Warren. 1995. "The Dangerous Listener: Unforeseen Perils in Intensive Interviewing." *Clinical Sociology Review* 13:80-105.
- Kneeland, T. and C. A. B. Warren. Forthcoming. *Pushbutton Psychiatry: A History of Electroshock in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Kvale, S. 1996. *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Laslett, B. and R. Rapoport. 1975. "Collaborative Interviewing and Interactive Research." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37:968-77.
- Laslett, B. and C. A. B. Warren. 1975. "Losing Weight: The Organizational Production of Behavior Change." *Social Problems* 23:69-80.
- Luff, D. 1999. "Doing Social Research: Issues and Dilemmas." *Sociology* 33:687-703.
- Messinger, S. L. and C. A. B. Warren. 1984. "The Homosexual Self and the Organization of Experience. Pp. 196-206 in *The Existential Self in Society*, edited by J. A. Kotarba and A. Fontana. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mishler, E. G. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Oakley, A. 1981. "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms?" Pp. 30-61 in *Doing Feminist Research*, edited by H. Roberts. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Palmer, V. M. 1928. *Field Studies in Sociology: A Student's Manual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peneff, J. 1988. "The Observers Observed: French Survey Researchers at Work." *Social Problems* 35:520-35.
- Richardson, L. 1985. *The New Other Woman: Contemporary Single Women in Affairs with Married Men*. London: Collier Macmillan.
- Rubin, H. J. and I. S. Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, L. B. 1976. *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sampson, H., S. L. Messinger, and R. D. Towne. 1964. *Schizophrenic Women: Studies in Marital Crisis*. New York: Atherton.

Seid
S
Sim
F
Spr
Spr
Y
Sucl
n
War
—
s
—
c
—
C
—
War
S
War
2
War
/
Wei
I

- Seidman, I. 1998. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. 2d ed. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Simmel, G. 1950. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited and translated by K. H. Wolff. New York: Free Press.
- Spradley, J. P. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Spradley, J. P. and B. J. Mann. 1975. *The Cocktail Waitress: Women's Work in a Man's World*. New York: John Wiley.
- Suchman, L. and B. Jordan. 1990. "Interactional Troubles in Face-to-Face Survey Interviews." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85:232-41.
- Warren, C. A. B. 1972. *Identity and Community in the Gay World*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.
- . 1985. "Clinical and Research Interviewing in Sociology." *Clinical Sociology Review* 3:72-84.
- . 1987. *Madwives: Schizophrenic Women in the 1950s*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- . 1988. "Electroconvulsive Therapy, the Self, and Family Relations." *Research in the Sociology of Health Care* 7:283-300.
- . 1996. "Older Women, Younger Men: Self and Stigma in Age-Discrepant Relationships." *Clinical Sociology Review* 14:62-86.
- . 2000. "Writing the Other, Inscribing the Self." *Qualitative Sociology* 23:183-199.
- Warren, C. A. B. and J. K. Hackney. 2000. *Gender Issues in Ethnography*. 2d ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Warren, C. A. B. and T. X. Karner. 1990. "Permissions and the Social Context." *American Sociologist* 21:116-35.
- Warren, C. A. B. and K. A. K. Levy. 1991. "Electroconvulsive Therapy and the Elderly." *Journal of Aging Studies* 5:309-27.
- Weiss, R. S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

Researching Leisure, Sport and Tourism

The Essential Guide

Jonathan Long

2007

CH. 8

 **SAGE**

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

Observation Techniques – Using your Eyes and Ears

A central paradox of the participant observation method is to seek information by not asking questions. (Frankenburg, 1982: 50)

All good social researchers of course benefit from being good observers, so they see what happens around them, not just what they are told happens. The spectacle and public behaviour associated with leisure, sport and tourism make ready material for different styles of observation. This chapter will try to convey the challenge involved in something that initially sounds so ridiculously easy. Addressed carefully, observing behaviour rather than relying on reported behaviour can provide not just a realistic alternative, but one capable of unexpected insights. The chapter covers:

- When different styles of observation are used
- Moving in, creating a role and establishing rapport
- What to look for and how to record
- Difficulties of inference and proof
- The arguments for and against such approaches.

Observation

The main concern of this chapter is with participant observation and the orientation to research that this implies. However, observation is used as part of very different styles of research. For example, formal observation may be used to record the number of people using the trim trail in a public park or a long distance footpath. The electronic records that leisure centres might hold of numbers engaged in certain activities are not available in these circumstances and an alternative is

needed even to gain simple measures of usage. Elsewhere, it might be possible to record quite accurately how much erosion occurs on various paths across a hillside, but to make sense of that we would need to know how many walkers, mountain-bikers, horse riders and motor cyclists use each path. Observation may also be used as a way of calibrating research instruments. Having conducted a questionnaire survey of people using a stretch of coast, the survey responses should be calibrated (weighted) to reflect the number of people recorded as gaining access to the beach by each of the car parks at which the survey was conducted. Or it might be important to establish response rates (and associated levels of use) by knowing what proportion of visitors/trail walkers/shoppers picked up a questionnaire and returned it to the collection box.

Thus, observation can be used as a technique to gather quantitative data, and quantitative data may be incorporated into a participant observation study. But participant observation is most commonly associated with qualitative research derived from an ethnographic tradition of studying different people's way of life. In practice those doing participant observation may use a suite of techniques, for example:

- using and observing at local facilities
- attending meetings, gatherings, etc.
- informal visiting to friends and neighbours
- formal and informal interviewing
- special informants
- day-by-day observation (Gans, 1962).

Becker suggests that:

The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organisation he [sic] studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed. (1958: 652)

The emphasis then is on trying to find out *their* understandings on the basis of *their* behaviour in response to circumstances you observe. The normality of the everyday is crucial to this. Just to give you an insight into the circumstances in which participant observation is used in the field of leisure, sport and tourism, some studies that may repay reading are indicated in the following box – the date refers to the date of publication (so you can check the reference at the end) rather than the fieldwork. This is certainly not intended as an exhaustive list.

William Foote Whyte (1943)

A study of an immigrant Italian community in an American city, focusing on the young men hanging out on the street corners of a slum (Cornerville). This covers leisure forms like gambling, bowling and the community club.

August Hollingshead (1949)

Elmtown – a North American study of the link between class and behaviour among adolescents and how that behaviour is determined by how they are regarded within their culture.

Mass Observation (1987)

A study of people's behaviour in the pubs of Worktown in the north of England during the war years (for a discussion of this study see below pp. 93–4).

Loic Wacquant (1992, 1995, 2003)

An ethnographic study of boxers in Chicago, making use of Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks.

Maureen Glancy (1986)

A study of the group surrounding a softball team (players, friends and hangers-on).

Chris Ryan and Amber Martin (2001)

A study of the rituals in a strip club, which the authors present as a forgotten aspect of sex tourism. They draw parallels with other forms of tourism in which the normal is made strange and vice versa.

Belinda Wheaton (2000)

An examination of the gendered nature of the sub-culture associated with wind surfing (see also Wheaton, 2003).

Nick Holt and Andy Sparkes (2001)

A study of 'cohesiveness' within a college soccer team through the course of a season.

Tony Blackshaw (2003)

The leisure lives of working class 'lads' of 30-something. This examines the pubs, clubs, fashion, fights and sex that dominate the lives of those often overlooked by the preoccupation with leisure consumption.

The largest single exercise in the use of observation techniques in the UK was the work of Mass Observation, which was developed as 'an anthropology of ourselves'. In addition to full-time observers, there were literally thousands of volunteer observers through the course of the project. The full-time observers tended to focus on working-class life, but the bulk of the volunteer observers were middle-class people reporting on what they saw and heard around them. Work started in the 1930s and, amazingly, continued through the war into the 1950s. Being interested in social formations and 'the ordinary', much of the material relates to people's leisure lives. This was gathered through various forms of observation, formal and informal interviews, overheard remarks, life histories and documentation.

One of their focuses in the study of Worktown was the pub (Mass Observation, 1987 (originally 1943)). There they gathered quantitative data which, for example, recorded the speed of drinking and the frequency of occurrence of various topics of conversation, but these were accompanied by more qualitative detail. So, in addition to knowing that people drink faster on a Saturday than a Sunday, they also observed that there is a certain pressure that results in what they called 'level drinking':

But all our observations show that the majority of pub-goers tend, when drinking in a group, to drink level; and very often there is not a quarter of an inch difference between the depth of beer in the glasses of a group of drinkers. (1987: 169)

This was even found to occur when the drinker was blind. They also recognised the ritual of standing rounds and its social as well as economic significance:

In gossip or anger one man may accuse another of not paying his turn, but it is an accusation that is seldom substantiated. The consequences of proving such a thing are too drastic, and would bring about an intolerable situation ... Standing rounds is a form of social compulsion of great advantage to the brewers. It makes people drink more, and even spend what they can't afford. (1987: 178–9)

Other observations related to 'swiggling' (swirling the drink round the glass), drunkenness, smoking, spitting and the use of spittoons:

One, the most drunk, who calls for drink for the others spits nea[t]ly into the spittoon under the table and pleasedly cried 'Reet in'. Another young man tries, amidst laughter. The first one says 'Take it quietly lad don't rush it'. He misses and the first chap does it again, this time hitting the table. He is called a 'filthy bugger' and belches in reply. The observer notes: spitting not previously seen among the young. And adds that when it takes place it is the subject of notice and laughter and backchat. (1987: 207)

This process led not just to 'rich description', but also reflection on the links to social processes (as can be seen in the observation about buying rounds).

Participant observation is much harder than it initially sounds, but it can be very rewarding. It typically involves spending a lot of time with the people the researcher is trying to understand; 'living it'. McCall and Simmons (1969: 3) describe this as 'repeated genuine social interaction on the scene with the subjects themselves as part of the data gathering process', which is intended to produce an analytic description of a complex social organisation. McCall and Simmons have a more formal approach than some advocates of participant observation. They insist that participant observation employs the concepts, propositions and empirical generalisations of a body of scientific theory as the basic guides in analysis and reporting, employs thorough and systematic collection, classification and reporting of facts, and generates new empirical generalisations based on these data. Others insist on the 'tabula rasa' approach – going into 'the field' with a completely open mind so that the researcher's preconceptions do not colour what they observe. The idea is to learn to see things through the eyes of other people. Henderson notes that: 'One has to overcome years of selective inattention and learn all over again how to watch, listen, concentrate, and above all, how to interpret data apart from gathering it' (1991: 60). Perhaps more than any other research approach participant observation elevates empathy (putting yourself in their shoes) to pre-eminence through immersion in the world being researched and a process some call 'indwelling'.

Like social anthropologists studying 'primitive' tribes, sociologists have used participant observation to try to understand 'the other', as with middle-class Americans in the slum (Whyte, 1943; Gans, 1962). Further, it has commonly been used to study 'deviant' groups – acts that are more easily observed than talked about – hence studies of criminals, hooligans, drug addicts, etc. (Patrick, 1973). It is also used when people might be motivated to distort what they do when questioned on subjects such as drinking behaviour. By examining behaviour *in situ* it allows the examination of structures not recognised by those taking part – the researchers are less dependent on others being able/prepared to tell them how things work.

Outsiders and Insiders

In traditional routes to participant observation the researcher embarks on a journey from being an outsider looking in to being (more like) an insider. However, some researchers use participant observation as a means of understanding better their normal milieu. In these circumstances the researcher starts as an insider ...

but not quite. Although Blackshaw (2003) wrote about the mates he had grown up with, the fact that he had become an academic set him apart. Even though his mates treated him fondly, and despite those years of identification, his education meant that his eyes were not their eyes; his mindset no longer fully theirs.

If conducting the research as an outsider, the initial challenge has to be to 'find a way in', establish a rapport, win trust and be accepted. An illuminating account of this process is provided in Whyte's classic (1943) study, *Street Corner Society*, in which he explains the crucial role played by Doc, initially giving Whyte an entrée to the life of the Italian immigrant slum-dweller in America (he subsequently became a key informant and another member of the local community became a collaborator). Ironically some researchers' success in becoming a part of this new world has been challenged by critics on the grounds that it is important for social researchers to remain objective and avoid 'going native' (a reference to the anthropological traditions) and over-identifying with the people involved in the study. The concern is that those involved then suspend the critical faculties of the researcher, who (they argue) should be capable of standing apart from the observed behaviour to produce a detached analysis. This either misses the point of participant observation or rejects its methodological rationale (more of this in Chapter 15). For Patton the challenge is 'to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the program [setting, participants] as an insider while describing the program for outsiders' (1990: 128).

Different levels of involvement can be recognised (Gold, 1969):

- (a) *complete observer* – detached. It has been argued that it is not possible to be a non-participant observer as any observation will have some impact on the observed. One of the classic examples of researchers seeking to be complete observers is with the use of one-way mirrors in research on child development – the researcher can see without being seen. In the study of crowd behaviour at sporting events this can now be achieved via the CCTV cameras installed in stadiums.
- (b) *observer as participant* – observing *in situ*, but as a formal task for a short time. This happens when the researcher attends matches, perhaps to record behaviour in different parts of the ground.
- (c) *participant as observer* – getting involved, but with the role as researcher recognised. In the crowd behaviour example this might involve 'hanging out' with those who like a fight or with the police/stewards responsible for crowd control so that the researcher can be close to the action, but slightly apart.
- (d) *complete participant* – living the life. This would involve joining/infiltrating the gang/team/firm and taking part in all their activities.

but not quite. Although Blackshaw (2003) wrote about the mates he had grown up with, the fact that he had become an academic set him apart. Even though his mates treated him fondly, and despite those years of identification, his education meant that his eyes were not their eyes; his mindset no longer fully theirs.

If conducting the research as an outsider, the initial challenge has to be to 'find a way in', establish a rapport, win trust and be accepted. An illuminating account of this process is provided in Whyte's classic (1943) study, *Street Corner Society*, in which he explains the crucial role played by Doc, initially giving Whyte an entrée to the life of the Italian immigrant slum-dweller in America (he subsequently became a key informant and another member of the local community became a collaborator). Ironically some researchers' success in becoming a part of this new world has been challenged by critics on the grounds that it is important for social researchers to remain objective and avoid 'going native' (a reference to the anthropological traditions) and over-identifying with the people involved in the study. The concern is that those involved then suspend the critical faculties of the researcher, who (they argue) should be capable of standing apart from the observed behaviour to produce a detached analysis. This either misses the point of participant observation or rejects its methodological rationale (more of this in Chapter 15). For Patton the challenge is 'to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the program [setting, participants] as an insider while describing the program for outsiders' (1990: 128).

Different levels of involvement can be recognised (Gold, 1969):

- (a) *complete observer* – detached. It has been argued that it is not possible to be a non-participant observer as any observation will have some impact on the observed. One of the classic examples of researchers seeking to be complete observers is with the use of one-way mirrors in research on child development – the researcher can see without being seen. In the study of crowd behaviour at sporting events this can now be achieved via the CCTV cameras installed in stadiums.
- (b) *observer as participant* – observing *in situ*, but as a formal task for a short time. This happens when the researcher attends matches, perhaps to record behaviour in different parts of the ground.
- (c) *participant as observer* – getting involved, but with the role as researcher recognised. In the crowd behaviour example this might involve 'hanging out' with those who like a fight or with the police/stewards responsible for crowd control so that the researcher can be close to the action, but slightly apart.
- (d) *complete participant* – living the life. This would involve joining/infiltrating the gang/team/firm and taking part in all their activities.

That there may be variations on this is not the important issue here. What is important to consider is the extent of involvement of the researchers and the implications that this has for the kind of knowledge they then have access to. Closely associated with this is whether the researcher operates on an overt or covert basis. If you explain to people what you are doing, you are more likely to influence their behaviour (a research version of performing for the cameras). On the other hand, being covert is arguably deceitful and unfair to those being observed. It is sometimes suggested that if the behaviour occurs in a public arena it is there for all to see anyway. But even then matters are not quite that simple. There is a difference between the casual glance of the passer-by and the sustained observation of the researcher, or at least there ought to be.

If you are going to conduct covert research you need to identify a role for yourself. It is not easy to hang out in the club, observing closely while looking as though you ought to be there as part of the fittings. This is not just a matter of convenience, the nature of the knowledge you acquire will be different depending upon whether you attend the aerobics class or run it. Whyte (1943) was lucky, such was the power of Doc's presence, all Whyte had to do was 'be with' Doc to be accepted and pass without comment. He rehearsed explanations about writing a book about the area, but it didn't matter, he was with Doc.

Exercise

Consider what you might do to look natural while you are observing, perhaps for hours at a time, in the amusement arcade, the swing park or gallery. Not many universities or employers want their researchers arrested as voyeurs or paedophiles. Most of the obvious suggestions make you look suspicious, don't allow enough time, or mean adopting a role completely different from that of your 'participants'. If you use friends as camouflage in these social settings, it is hard not to be rude by ignoring them while concentrating on what is happening around you.

Assuming you want people to behave naturally around you, a lot of time has to be given to gaining acceptance, winning trust and establishing rapport (unless the position adopted is that of the complete observer). To this end some writers counsel against asking questions and challenging what is happening. On the other hand complete compliance on the part of a new arrival might equally be viewed as suspicious. Certainly it seems sensible to adopt a low profile and there seems to be agreement on the importance of not passing moral judgements while in the field. Researchers similarly have to consider the extent to which they can intervene in the action when the intention is to study participants' customary behaviour rather than the consequences of the researcher's actions.

Observing, Noting and Recording

Much as with qualitative interviewing (Chapter 7), there are different levels of structure used by participant observers in recording what they have observed. Equally, the same researcher may adopt a different approach at different stages of the research. Observation at a children's playground might be based on a methodical recording of when children arrive and leave, what equipment they play on, for how long, with whom, how many accidents occur at each piece of equipment, etc. Alternatively, the challenge may be to observe and describe the interaction between children playing in same sex and different sex groups in the playground.

Wolcott identifies the dilemma of the observer who faces 'the problem of what to look at and what to look for and the never-ending tension between taking a closer look at something versus taking a broader look at everything' (1995: 96). Typically, the 'observational lens' becomes more focused in the later stages of enquiry as attention is directed to more salient features. In the list below I have loosely interpreted six of Spradley's (1980) nine suggestions about the kind of data that might be collected, and then added six from Denzin (1978). I have done this in the context of observations at a sporting event.

Key features

Example

Spradley

Actors and their relationships

The different kinds of people involved, e.g. among the crowd. Try also to note how they relate to each other – e.g. (un)friendly rivalry between fans and the relationship between players and referee.

Doing what with what consequences

e.g. chanting directed at the opposing fans or players, its purpose and the response.

Use of space

e.g. for meeting, showing-off, play, conflict.

Time – what happens when for how long

e.g. what happens as the crowd gathers, during the game, at half time and as people leave.

Impact of key events

e.g. a penalty miss or a sending-off.

Feelings – theirs and yours

The feelings of others might be evidenced through smiles, cheering, abuse, etc., but

Denzin

Dress

don't forget to record your own emotional response.

e.g. replica shirts.

Speech or behaviour patterns

e.g. conversations or chants (outside the stadium too); take a look at the body language of the various people involved at the press conference where the manager is given the ominous 'vote of confidence' by the Board.

Non-verbal gestures

e.g. when the team concedes more points/goals.

Salient social objects acted upon

as above for Spradley, key events.

Relationships of one actor to another

as above for Spradley, actors.

Rules of conduct displayed

e.g. in relation to the ethos of the game or conversely in relation to gamesmanship (sorry – I don't know the non-sexist equivalent).

It should be relatively straightforward to transpose these into your own research setting whether it be the gym, the club or the airport terminal, and to think of other categories. The field notes will then contain a log of all those things seen and heard in the setting (events, relationships, etc.). But more than that, they also record your thoughts as a consequence (making the link with other observations and beginning the process of interpretation), and your own experiences and how you feel about them. Produced over an extended period of observation these can become extensive.

This is all very well, but how can the researcher make a record of what is happening without revealing their purpose? Even when the purpose is already known, the recording may distract participants from their 'normal' behaviour. Knowing that a pen and note pad would compromise his ability to 'fit in' at the (night)club, Saipe had to adapt.

Initially mental notes were taken of numbers, atmosphere, sounds and behavioural patterns, and transferred to jotted notes made with small pad and pen in the privacy of the toilet and on leaving in car or taxi. Fuller notes were written upon returning home, but as this was usually in the early hours of the next morning handwritten notes triggered from mental and jotted notes were scribbled down. These were then completed the following day with a clearer mind and when the ringing in my ears had departed. (1995: 53)

Proof, Inference and Generalisation

Few advocates of participant observation suggest that it is free of problems as a means of contributing to knowledge of people and their lives. For example, it is not possible to prove that just because some outcome was observed following an action it was caused by that action. Even if it seems likely that it did, the same causal link may not hold in other circumstances. However, advocates of participant observation point out that the method is dependent upon repeated observation on multiple occasions (see Becker's quote on p. 91) so there is plenty of opportunity to 'check out' such links.

One of the important goals of research is to conduct it in a manner that will allow generalisation from the specific case(s) of the research to the general population. Gans (1962: 348) voices his concerns that of the 3,000 or so people living in the area he was studying he only spoke with 100 to 150 and had intensive contact with 20. Moreover, his contacts were with men rather than women, and with workers rather than those in the worst economic position. He agonises over his ability to generalise on this basis and is acutely aware that the validity of his findings ultimately rested on his judgments about the data. Does that mean that all we are left with in such circumstances is an interesting case study with no broader application to knowledge? That is the only role that some would allow, but others argue that instead of seeking to extrapolate in order to say something about patterns of behaviour in some larger population, the goal here is to contribute to theory by illustrating concepts and demonstrating processes. Inevitably some voices will go unheard. For all its celebrated status, Whyte's (1943) study has been criticised for ignoring women (particularly the role of the mother in the family) and the church, two central pillars in Italian-American communities of the time (Boelen, 1992).

Over the years people have queued up to criticise participant observation studies. Most commonly this takes the form of questioning the reliability and validity of the data, both on the basis that it is vulnerable to hearsay, but more importantly that it is dependent on personal observation and interpretation, thereby lacking objectivity. Moreover, typically lacking quantitative data, it is difficult to offer 'evidence' and proof.

For advocates of participant observation, on the other hand, it is this very subjectivity that sets it above other approaches. The researcher and research instrument become one and the same, and knowing comes from being there and gaining direct experience. Moreover, from a purely practical point of view, the researcher is around long enough to have plenty of opportunity to check both the information provided to them and their emerging theories. These internal checks allow unsatisfactory explanations to be discarded. Far from being a disadvantage, the

flexibility of being able to go to different places, observe different people and pursue different lines of enquiry makes it far superior to other approaches where all procedures are set in advance in the name of rigour. As explanations/theories begin to emerge the research can be redirected accordingly. The intensity of the activity allows exploration in greater depth than the alternatives. Of all the research approaches available it gets closest to the realities of social life. It is not divorced from the mess of everyday activities as experiments, questionnaires or even interviews are, but is part and parcel of what is going on.

Arguably dilemmas about 'going native' relate more to the process of analysis and interpretation than to behaviour. Should analysis and interpretation be conducted using the values and knowledge of an informed researcher or those of the group being studied? This is part of a broader debate about whether social understanding comes from the raw perspective of the insider's experience or the outsider's conceptual tools and theories. In practice, as long as the researcher is aware of this distinction it can provide a powerful tool for analysis.

Ethical Issues

Critics point also to the ethical problems associated with this style of research:

- * Do you disclose your position as a researcher? The critics expect to win either way here: conceal your purpose and you are little better than a spy; reveal your purpose and the behaviour you observe has been corrupted by your presence. This is independent of the next point.
- * To what extent can you intervene when you are meant to be studying them, not the consequences of your own actions? This relates to the role that is adopted, and can be most clearly recognised as an issue by considering the actions of some who work undercover for the media and 'make things happen for the sake of the story'. More generally, it is not always easy to distinguish between fitting-in and urging-on.
- * How to report without betraying confidences? The whole purpose of this approach is to find out things that other styles of research would not, but having done so it may not be fair to parade that for all to see. Anonymity may only provide a thin veneer that in some cases is easily penetrated.
- * Should the research and analysis be conducted using the values of the researcher or those of the group being studied? After engaging in the common, but illegal, practice of repeat voting Whyte (1943) decided that he had to

remain true to his own values, but if the researcher does not operate with the values of the other participants it has to be questioned whether it is fair to assess/judge people by standards that are just not part of their world.

These are certainly matters that need to be addressed, but then it is hard to conceive of any social research that does not involve ethical issues.

Benefits and Disadvantages

Pros – Proponents argue:

- less likely to be biased, unreliable or invalid – provides more opportunities for internal checks
- more responsive to the data than imposed systems – allows flexibility
- gets closest to the realities of social life – not divorced from the everyday
- intensity of the activity allows exploration in greater depth than the alternatives

Cons – Opponents argue:

- produces neither reliable nor valid data
- unable to generalise
- observer bias – depends on personal observation and interpretation
- problems of going native and suspending critical faculties
- subject to hearsay
- because it is non-quantitative it is difficult to present 'evidence' and proof

Despite his agonising about the reliability and validity of his participant observation, Gans (1962: 348) finally concluded:

Participant observation is the only method I know that enables the researchers to get close to the realities of social life. Its deficiencies in producing quantitative data are more than made up for by its ability to minimise the distance between researchers and their subjects of study.

Further Lines of Enquiry

In terms of doing participant observation, I still find two of the older contributions very useful. Whyte's (1943) *Street Corner Society* has a methodological appendix of some 100 words in which he discusses how he went about conducting his research. The collection of papers on *Field Research* edited by Burgess (1982) manages to combine practicalities with theory. In his own book *In The Field*, Burgess (1984) has a useful chapter on recording and analysing field data.

Business Applications of Repertory Grid

Valerie Stewart
Andrew Stewart
with Nickie Fonda

1981

AW-HILL Book Company (UK) Limited

· New York · St Louis · San Francisco · Auckland · Bogotá · Guatemala
· Johannesburg · Lisbon · Madrid · Mexico · Montreal · New Delhi
· Paris · San Juan · São Paulo · Singapore · Sydney · Tokyo · Toronto

1. Finding out about people

Once there was a psychologist called George Kelly. In his job — he was a clinician — he had to get to know many people, classify them, get to understand their points of view, help them understand themselves better. He was worried that the science of psychology as it had then developed was standing in the way of his meeting these objectives. In particular, he had three problems, which are discussed below.

Today's researchers in industry often share Kelly's problems. In fields as diverse as personnel and quality control, marketing and safety, there are people who need to do research — who need to get to know other people, to classify them, to understand their points of view, to help them understand themselves better. And often the research methods available to industry stand in the way of meeting these objectives. So let us begin by looking at Kelly's problems, as he saw them from his clinician's office in the American 1930s, and see how much they have in common with the problems of today's industrial researcher. Then we can see how easily the tool Kelly invented to overcome these problems — the Repertory Grid — can be transferred to industrial use.

1.1 Kelly's problems

The numbers game

In the 1930s, psychology was a very young science and many of its practitioners wanted it to have the respectability and the methodology of the physical sciences. They wanted to be able to utter laws about human behaviour — *if A, then B* — with the same degree of confidence that a physicist, engineer or chemist can. The textbooks and research papers of the time bear bulky testimony to the fact that, for many psychologists, this search was a life's work. And they did manage to produce some 'laws' about human behaviour, usually in the form of correlational studies showing, for example, that there is a link between cigarette smoking and extraversion, there is a link between birth order and verbal intelligence, there is a link between body type and mental illness . . . , the only problem being that in order to get a significant correlation you may have to study hundreds or thousands of people. For example, over 200 000 people you may find a correlation of 0.3 between cigarette smoking and extraversion, and on a population so large a correlation of this size is statistically significant. But Kelly was worried that although this kind of endeavour might satisfy the psychologists' need for law and order in human affairs, the 'laws' thus established did not help him very much when a chubby person rolled into his office, lit up a cigarette, announced that he was an only child and would like to talk about his problems. Studies of masses of people, even if they lead to laws which hold good for masses of people, do not allow one to make predictions about people taken singly.

Kelly wanted a way of making predictions in a rigorous way about individual people.

He wanted to be able to measure the clinical problems his patients came with, to use these measurements in his therapeutic approach, and to re-measure after therapy; for what you cannot measure, you cannot control.

And of course the researcher in industry is often faced with exactly the same problem — how to get insights and make predictions, with some degree of precision, about people taken singly or in small groups. If you have ever asked yourself questions such as:

‘How come Len spots sales opportunities when no-one else seems to?’

or ‘I wonder if that training course did Joe any good?’

or ‘I wonder if Sally and Jim will get on together if I put them on the Special Projects team?’

or ‘What sort of advertising campaign does he want, for Heaven’s sake? All he ever does is say No.’

then you share Kelly’s problem, his need to understand and map the thought processes of individual people.

Observer bias

Diagnosticians of all kinds — if they are honest with themselves — nurse a secret worry that they might contribute to what is diagnosed. For example, if you had had a psychiatric problem in the 1930s, and money to support it, you might have shopped around between therapists to see what they said about your malady. Taking it to a Freudian therapist, you would likely have been told that it was to do with potty training, Oedipal jealousy or repressed sexual needs. Taking the same problem to a Jungian therapist, it would be interpreted in terms of religious conflicts and identity crises. An Adlerian therapist would probably interpret it in terms of birth order in the family and frustrated will to power. And if you decided to choose one of the newly emerging schools of behaviour therapy they would not concern themselves with the source of the problem at all, but would probably give you electric shocks until you stopped showing the symptoms.

Psychologists have been able to name this problem for a long time. They call it ‘observer bias’. It creeps in every time we perceive something. Consciously or unconsciously our backgrounds, history and experience give us a set of expectations about the world so that we recognize familiar things and bend less familiar ones until they resemble what we already know. Pose a business problem to a committee of experts, and the marketing expert will see it as a marketing problem, the production expert as a production problem, the planning man as a planning problem, the advertising man as an advertising problem. Observer bias is a serious obstacle to understanding someone else’s point of view, and it is not something that can be overcome with self-discipline and a tightening of resolve. Observer bias can have serious consequences, too; the most notable example may be that of the school-

Group B children (though no such difference existed in fact). She taught the class for a term; and then the children were tested at the end of term the Group A children were indeed brighter than the Group B.

Anybody who makes a living trying to interpret problems has to guard against observer bias. But though psychologists and others were fairly quick to recognize and name the phenomenon, they were less quickly able to offer a solution. Kelly's technique — Repertory Grid — enables one to interview someone in detail, extracting a good deal of information about him from the superficial to the clinically diagnostic, and to do this in such a way that the input from the observer is reduced to zero.

Many problems in industry are as susceptible to observer bias. If you ever find yourself wearing any of the following 'hats', then a knowledge of Repertory Grid will help you become a better and more objective diagnostician:

Counsellor
Accident Investigator
Company Doctor (in either sense of the term)
Trainer
Quality Controller
Head Hunter
Peacemaker
Market Researcher

The role of the expert

Another of Kelly's worries was the extent to which laymen and patients in the clinical setting depended upon the word of an expert to tell them what their problems were. The popular image of the distant, beard-stroking professor, sitting out of view of his patient and muttering authoritatively in a Viennese accent from time to time, is not so far from the truth; most of today's clinical psychologists can remember at least one member of the older generation who acted thus without self-parody. Kelly took the view that this 'expertise' was somewhat over-rated. *If you want to know what is wrong with someone, ask him . . . he probably knows.* The therapist serves a useful purpose in forcing the patient to confront problems he would rather avoid, and in guiding the examination from the superficial to the deep; but, said Kelly, most people are sufficiently adult and intelligent to know what their problems are and to take responsibility, to a great extent, for their solution.

Repertory Grid technique allows the interviewer to get a mental map of how the interviewee views the world, and to write this map with the minimum of observer bias. Kelly's practice is then *not* to have this map 'interpreted' by an expert, who judges where the problems and the stresses are; rather Kelly's approach is to discuss the map with the interviewee, to talk about things that perhaps the interviewee had not faced about himself before, to discuss with the interviewee the survival value of that particular map as a means of navigating around his life-space — but all the while assuming that the interviewee can sort out most of the solutions for himself once he has a clear grip on the problem.

The relevance of this for people working in industry? Many managers are fed up with experts offering them ready-made solutions; while at the same time wise commentators from Father Brown to Professor Revans have said that for most people: 'It isn't that they can't see the solution, it's that they can't see the problem.' Help a manager to see his problems more clearly, and the chances are that he will not need an expert to help him arrive at a solution. Repertory Grid will help to draw out and make explicit the expertise that every manager has, and help lay out his problems in such a way that solutions may become more obvious. If your interest in using the Grid lies in applications such as counselling, team building or training-needs analysis, you should bear in mind that the Grid approach is to give people responsibility for who and how they are, while allowing you to hold up to them a mirror that can reflect their problems gently or relentlessly.

So, we have three important problems — the need to look with precision at individual people, the need to avoid observer bias and the need to acknowledge that people can take responsibility for their own development and do not need experts to put them back on the rails again. All these problems confronted Kelly in his role as a clinical psychologist, and they confront with equal force anyone who wishes to do research in industry or other organizations. We promise that Kelly's Repertory Grid technique will be helpful in solving these problems; but before commencing the series of self-administered lessons that will help you become proficient in Grid technique, we would first like to outline the theoretical underpinnings that Kelly was relying on when he invented Grid. You can skip this bit if you like, and return to it later; there is a strong argument for saying that a practical book like this should contain the minimum of theory. However, Grid technique is developing so rapidly that you may well find yourself innovating, and it is as well to have a little knowledge of the theory of flight before you start to design aircraft.

1.2 Personal Construct Theory — or why people get that way

Personality differences have fascinated scientists and poets, playwrights and politicians for years. Psychologists have set themselves the task of explaining personality differences, instead of just tolerating them like other people have to do. The psychological literature is full of attempts to classify personality (extravert — introvert, conservative — radical, cerebral — emotional, group-dependent — solitary, etc.) and to explain how differences arose (heredity? environment? date of birth? balance of body humours?). Kelly's attempt to explain how people get to be the people they are relies on the basic assumption that *Man is a Scientist*.

Think of two-month-old Baby Jane. When Jane screamed and cried, her mother dipped a dummy in rose-hip syrup, popped it into Jane's mouth, and cuddled her. One thing that any parent knows about small infants is that they learn very quickly; so very soon Baby Jane will learn to expect rose-hip syrup and a cuddle when she cries, and not long after that she realizes that if she fancies a cuddle and some rose-hip syrup the way to make it happen is to bawl a lot. Little Baby Jane is a scientist. She is learning a series of propositions, of laws about the world: *if A, then B*. Baby

Susan in the next house may get quite different treatment; she could get her legs smacked when she cries, in which case she learns that crying is followed by pain, and pain by crying, and crying by smacking; and the spiral of fear, apathy and helplessness remembered by so many people with unhappy childhoods is established in her view of the world.

Human infants (maybe those of some other species as well) are born hungry for symbolic learning. The speed at which they lap up and assimilate new information makes many an older person feel envious. Kelly stresses the active nature of this experience — hypotheses are developed, tested, modified or discarded, and the child gradually builds up a network of hypotheses (*if A, then B*) based on his own unique experience of the world.

If Kelly's theory had stopped there you might be forgiven for saying 'So what? All he's done is to provide some fancy names for the fact that people learn from experience, and made it sound a little more active than some other commentators.' Kelly goes a lot further, however. He said that not only does one's network of hypotheses reflect one's experience of the world; the hypotheses also come to influence and condition it. To take a simple example; Fred goes on a course about the contribution proper marketing can make to the success of a company. Fred is now more likely to interpret issues in terms of their marketing content. He may see some issues as marketing issues where other people would not. He might be slower in seeing other kinds of problems. The expectations he has about the world conditions what he sees in it.

Think of the team member who believes he is unpopular and therefore never seems to notice friendly gestures but is quick to spot when he is being rejected.

Think of the manager who believes that women workers experience a higher sickness rate, and so notices every time his secretary is away ill but never notices when the boy from the post room is off.

Think of how expectations influence perceptions in films such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The system of hypotheses which we begin evolving at birth and which continue to grow until death is not like a filing cabinet. Kelly says it is more like a pair of spectacles, through which you get information, but which also condition what you see and how you see it. Kelly had a good name for describing the system — he called it a 'construct system', because the word 'construct' carries with it both the sense of having been constructed or developed from experience, and also the sense of being that through which we construe — or see and interpret — the world. Thus if you can understand someone's construct system you can not only understand his history, but you can also make some predictions about how he is likely to behave in a given situation because you know something about what that situation is likely to mean to him.

Kelly invented Repertory Grid technique as a way of getting people to exhibit to him their construct systems.

Kelly's theory of personality, which he evolved from the basic notion of man-as-scientist, is quite complicated and we shall not describe all of it here. The researcher

in industry may find the following points useful:

1. The degree of agreement between the construct systems of two people is a measure of the extent to which they are like each other, and the extent to which they are likely to understand each other without effort.
2. The degree to which one person can understand or mimic the construct system of another is a measure of the extent to which he understands that other person – in other words a measure of the degree to which they can negotiate sensibly, be friends, predict what the other would do, etc.
3. Construct systems change over time to assimilate new information. Of course, the construct system is predisposed to interpret new information as familiar information, but there will always be a time when the amount or significance of the new information requires a change in the construct system. People vary a great deal in the extent to which their construct systems are open to new information; someone with an over-flexible construct system would probably be described as over-reactive, because he changes his views too quickly for the importance of the information; whereas someone with an over-rigid construct system would probably be described by his associates as a stereotyped thinker or one who would not see danger when it stares him in the face.
4. Construct systems have survival value for their owners. It is sometimes difficult, when one looks at the map of someone's construct system provided by the Repertory Grid technique, to understand how anybody can bear to have that network of perceptions about the world, and perhaps if he has come for therapy or counselling he feels that way too. But it is important to remember that the construct system has got him where he is today in one piece, without too many bruises, that the apparent contradictions or gaps have actually served a purpose in their time, and you should not be too quick to strip them away because you yourself do not find them terribly pretty.

You could learn Repertory Grid technique without bothering too much with Personal Construct Theory. But most serious practitioners of Grid find that PCT (as it is often abbreviated) is helpful in planning and understanding one's task and in working out what to do in a tight corner. The key points of PCT to remember are:

1. Perceptions influence expectations, and expectations influence perceptions.
2. The medium through which this happens is known as the construct system.
3. Construct systems are unique to the individual and develop throughout life.

We began this account by telling of George Kelly in his office in the 1930s in America, trying to get a theoretical basis and a practical technique for understanding people in a more rigorous fashion. What happened to bridge the gap between that position and the many places in industry where Grid technique is making a contribution?

Kelly was a modest man, and busy. He did not write up his work for a long time, and it was 1955 before his two-volume *Theory of Personal Constructs* was

and Europe than in the US, and groups of clinicians specializing in the use and development of Kelly's technique built up — names like Don Bannister, Fay Fransella, Anthony Ryle, Pat Slater, have become well known, and you will see some of their work listed in the Bibliography. Grid technique seems to have been destined to remain in the clinical field; a valuable tool, not particularly difficult to use, often life-enhancing for the therapist and intellectually compelling for the patient, and because of its fascination making its adherents seem exclusive and group-ish. The heavy clinical usage means that most of the books on Grid discuss clinical applications almost exclusively, and there is very little else in book form about its use in industry.

You cannot keep a good idea down, however; the use of Grid in industry seems to have started at several places at roughly the same time, as behavioural scientists began to make a contribution to industrial performance. First to use Grid in industry, we believe, were the market-research experts. Here the attraction was Grid's lack of observer bias; the technique of construct elicitation, which is central to the Grid process, can be used to tell you how the consumer views your products, and your competitors' products, without the distortion caused by intimate and specialized knowledge of the product. You may have worked for months developing Wizzo washing powder, and now you want to know how it compares with Blotto, the competition's offering. Chances are that you are so wrapped up in Wizzo that you find it difficult to view objectively. Grid will help you see Wizzo as the consumer sees it, without your prejudicing the outcome.

Two applications of Grid in the personnel area come next in the chronology as we have been able to uncover it. The increased interest in diagnosing training needs and evaluating training — an interest owing something to the Training Boards and something to cost-consciousness — led several people to conclude that Grid could help here. The special appeal of Grid in this case is the opportunity it gives to map someone's construct system in detail (training-needs analysis) and to measure the later changes (evaluation). Another use of Grid in personnel work began with our own efforts in the field of identifying management potential. We used part of the Grid technique to interview managers about their perceptions of effective and ineffective behaviour at work, so as to draw up a picture of the total company view of effectiveness. This then served as a basis for strategic planning, with the question: 'Is this the picture of effectiveness that will have maximum survival value for the next *n* years?'

Then came a group of applications of Grid based on its ability to force people to put verbal labels onto pre-verbal concepts arose. In quality control and inspection, for example, Grid helps to discover whether Nellie sees the same faults as Sarah, and sees them in the same way; will help discover what exactly Fred, the old gaffer who can always tell when the mix is going wrong even before the instruments show it, is perceiving in the atmosphere, so that we can get his replacement trained. Grid has also been used to help people specify more closely what they mean by concepts which they express in the abstract, but want interpreted in the concrete (e.g., helping a designer get a specification from his client, helping to arrive at a man-specification).

Applications have also centred around Grid's ability to elicit people's perceptions in a value-free and incremental fashion. Applications in the field of team building, for instance, get people to share constructs about common problems.

Applications are still growing. This book will be out of date in parts by the time it gets to the printer. The reader may well find he is using Grid in a new way or on a different kind of problem. Networks of Grid users have grown up as more and more people in industry see what a useful technique it is to learn.

It is not an easy technique to learn, however, although if you saw a Grid interview or received one you might not believe this. The reason is that Grid technique can be used in various different modes, and each mode requires slightly different treatment. If you heard one piece played on the organ you might not realize what a complex performance it is, because you would now know about all the possible choices of stops, combinations, manuals, etc., which the organist was choosing between. Hear two or three and you realize the many ways this instrument can be used. It is exactly the same with Grid; and any one example probably looks simple, but you need to see the full range of examples to appreciate the complexity of choice. So this book is set out to teach you not how to play just one tune, but to play the whole repertoire (and perhaps compose some of your own). Some chapters contain a series of exercises that are stepping-stones on the way to full proficiency. The exercises are useful in themselves and will give you some simple applications of Grid to use from the start. Follow the whole book through, and try to see an experienced Grid interviewer in action, and you will find that whatever your research project, it will benefit from your knowledge of Kelly's Repertory Grid.

2. Construct elicitation

The next few chapters are practical. If you follow the instructions you will learn Repertory Grid technique and be in a position to do the kind of investigations mentioned in the first chapter and covered in detail in the last section of this book. If you just read the chapters without trying the exercises we cannot guarantee anything like such proficiency.

For the following exercises you will need a dozen or so 3 x 5 inch cards, or pieces of stout paper, and some ordinary writing paper on which to make records. You may also need the services of a friend or colleague.

Begin by taking three cards. Write on one the word CAR. Write on the next the word TRAIN. Write on the third the word DONKEY. Now put the cards on the table or desk and regard them closely. Can you think of one way in which two of the objects represented by these cards are like each other and different from the third? Can you think of something that two of them have in common where the third has something different? Write down your answer in the form of two phrases separated by a hyphen, for example:

have wheels — have legs
hard — furry

Work on these three notions for a while, producing as many of these bipolar distinctions as you can. You may find that you can put different pairs together as different distinctions come to mind. This is quite legitimate. You may also find it helpful to move the cards about in front of you to see if different positions trigger new thoughts.

When we asked Joe to produce distinctions like these about CAR, TRAIN and DONKEY he came up with the following:

have wheels — have legs
hard — furry
carry few passengers — carry many passengers
go on rails — go where they please
useful end product — polluting end product
organic fuel — inorganic fuel
born — made
fast — slow
owned personally — owned by an organization
covered — open to the elements
appeal to children — no appeal to children

What you have just experienced is the fundamental process underlying Repertory Grid work — the process known as construct elicitation. You started off with a relatively simple task, just to get used to the mechanics of the process — the business

12 BUSINESS APPLICATIONS OF REPERTORY GRID

of taking three cards and asking in what way two of them are similar and different from the third. Now try something that may be a little more meaningful. Take another three cards and write on them the names of your mother, yourself and your boss. Now spend some time taking these three cards in various combinations, asking yourself: 'In what way are two of these people alike and different from the third?' or 'Is there something that two of these people have in common that they do not share with the third?' Again write down your distinctions in the bipolar form, as before.

When we asked Betty to produce distinctions like these about her MOTHER, BETTY and her BOSS, she came up with the following:

warm — cold
happy — unhappy
still hoping — given up
male — female
likes music — tone-deaf
votes Conservative — votes Labour
a graduate — not a graduate

We guess that your list about CAR, TRAIN and DONKEY was probably quite like Joe's list, but your list about MOTHER, SELF and BOSS would probably be quite different from Betty's list.

Next time, try something a little different. Think about the present job you are doing, and write down on the first card a brief description of the activity you regard as being amongst the most important in your job. The more specific you can make it, the better. On the second card, write down a brief description of an activity which you find very demanding on your skills. And on the third card, write down a brief description of an activity which you regard as a fairly routine kind of task. Now go through the triadic comparisons performance again, asking yourself the question: 'In what way can I say that two of these activities are like each other and different from the third?' You may find it helpful to think of the activities in terms of the demands they make on your skills.

We asked John, a computer salesman, to do this task for us. He named as a very important activity WRITING PROPOSALS. The activity which made many demands on his skills was COLD CANVASSING. And the routine activity was WEEKLY MEETINGS. The bipolar distinctions he produced were:

I enjoy — I do not enjoy
predictable outcome — unpredictable outcome
affects my commission — no effect on my commission
selling myself — selling the products
alone — with my colleagues
I control — other people control

Time for some definitions. The words that were written on the cards are called

elements. The matter. Chap distinctions : uses when h elements by from the th

The clai clearly see the materi as he saw interview great dea content broad or

The differe TRAIN

but of 1 you wa an T c

elements. They define the kind of interview you have, by selecting the subject matter. Chapters on the selection of elements follow later in the book. The bipolar distinctions are called *constructs*. They represent the dimensions the interviewee uses when he is thinking about the elements. The process of getting constructs from elements by asking the interviewee to put two of them together and separate them from the third is called *construct elicitation*.

The claims for Grid's being a technique free from observer bias can be most clearly seen if you think about the interview with John, the computer salesman. All the material in that interview came out of John's head — he wrote down the activities as he saw them, and he *construed* them to produce the bipolar constructs. The interviewer, had he gone on longer and with more elements, would have learned a great deal about John's job and his attitude towards it, without once suggesting the content of any of John's answers or leading him in any direction other than the broad one defined by the purpose of the interview.

The claims for Grid's attention to the individual are hinted at if you compare different people's constructs about the same elements. When Dora construed CAR, TRAIN and DONKEY she produced these constructs:

washable — not washable
cuddly — harsh
for boys — for both sexes
browns and greys — bright colours

but then Dora is a children's nurse and thought of them immediately as varieties of toys, whereas most people think of them as methods of transport. We guess that your constructs about MOTHER, SELF and BOSS are different from Betty's in a way that throws some light on why you are you and not Betty. John's colleague, another computer salesman, gave as his elements 1, 2 and 3 the activities: CLOSING THE SALE, FORMAL LOSS PROCEDURE and WRITING PROPOSALS, and his constructs about those three were:

making money — losing money
bad for my image — good for my image
competition involved — competition knocked out by then
on the alert — I have to force myself
fighting — recording the fight

but then he is a bit 'sharper' than John, a bit faster on his feet, perhaps, but less thoughtful, less deep.

Because the interviewer plays no part in suggesting the actual nature of the constructs, the constructs are a very personal reflection of how the interviewee sees the world, and individual differences in style and personality come quickly to the front. You can illustrate this for yourself by trying the MOTHER, SELF and BOSS combination with some good friends — but they must be good friends and you

should respect their wishes if they say they do not want to proceed. The corollary to there being little or no interviewer suggestion, combined with the fact that the construct-elicitation procedure is quite searching and precise, gives the result that a Grid interview is very difficult to fake — there is nowhere to hide. People who are uncomfortable or uncooperative in Grid interviews have very little opportunity to bluster. We will return to this subject later, but bear it in mind for the moment.

Construct elicitation is the first stage in a Grid interview. Some interviews do not need to go much further than construct elicitation, others go a lot further. You will learn the decision rules later. For the sake of simplicity we started you off with only three elements; in practice the interview uses more than three — 8, 9, 12 or even 24 — taking them three at a time in combinations. Obviously this gives many more constructs the opportunity of appearing, and gives variety to both parties.

Let us eavesdrop on the interview between Pat, an internal consultant in a large organization, and the interviewer who is getting Pat's constructs about the various in-house clients Pat has in order to check Pat's progress in her new job. The interviewer has nine names on the cards — all the first names of Pat's clients.

INTERVIEWER Now, Pat, I want to ask you some questions about these clients of yours — to get you to tell me how you feel about them. Let's take the cards TED, TONY and JOHN. Can you look at those three people and tell me which two of them are most like each other, and why?

PAT Ted and Tony are most alike, I'd say.

INTERVIEWER On what basis are they alike?

PAT They're both career specialists, they're doing the job they were trained for.

INTERVIEWER And does that apply to John as well?

PAT No. John started out doing something else and got into his line by accident.

INTERVIEWER So we can say that Ted and Tony are both career specialists, whereas John got into his career by accident. I'll write that down. Can you tell me anything else that two of them have got in common that they don't share with the third?

PAT Ted and Tony tend to be a bit self-protective, John's more of a buccaneer.

INTERVIEWER Good. This is the form that the interview is going to take — I'm going to give you these people in various combinations of three, and I want you to tell me one or more ways in which you can put two of them together so that they are like each other and different from the third. OK?

PAT Fine.

INTERVIEWER Right, let's take the next three. We've got Shirley and Alan and Frances — can you put two of them together so that they are like each other in some way and different from the third?

PAT Well, there's the obvious one, that two of them are women and the third is a man — I guess you wanted something a bit deeper than that, did you?

INTERVIEWER If you can manage it, yes please.

PAT Alan and Frances are both likely to be drawn by the latest fad — somebody's told them that all their problems can be solved by going over to flexitime, or

installing some new piece of equipment, and they don't really think it through before getting me in. With Shirley, you know that you won't get called in unless she's done some thinking about the problem herself.

INTERVIEWER So if we were to summarize the similarity and difference what would we say?

PAT We'd say that Alan and Frances are both swayed by fads, but Shirley knows what she wants. Alan and Frances are impulse buyers, Shirley has a shopping list.

INTERVIEWER Thank you. Now let's look at the last three in the same way — Douglas, Bob and Louise. Can you do the same thing — tell me something that two of them have in common that the third one doesn't? Move the cards around if it helps.

PAT That's more difficult — I don't know them as well as I do the others. Well, Douglas and Bob are both much more experienced than Louise — she's very new, they've both got twenty years or more. They would both say of themselves that they've come up the hard way, whereas Louise is a graduate entrant and maybe has her path made smooth for her.

INTERVIEWER Can you point to any consequences this difference has, in the way they behave with you?

PAT Yes, I think both Douglas and Bob tend to be trimmers, they are aware of the political realities — too aware, they start to compromise too early in the game, in my opinion. Louise is still at the stage where she thinks that rational argument will solve any problem and that people will do what's right even if it costs them face.

INTERVIEWER I see. Let's take another three now — Ted and Shirley and Douglas. Can you put two of them together so that they are like each other and different from the third?

PAT The male — female one again, of course — sorry, I have to say it to get it out of the way —

INTERVIEWER That's all right.

PAT There's an interesting one here, to do with whether they're still growing — let me see if I can get it straight. Is it all right to pair them one way and then a different way?

INTERVIEWER Yes, that's splendid.

PAT Well, if you look at them at work, Shirley is the odd one out because at work she is still growing and developing, while the other two have given up and settled into a little niche. But if you look at them outside work, in their personal life, it's Douglas who's still growing because he's taking up all sorts of new hobbies — painting, furniture restoring — and doing them seriously, whereas the other two have settled into a domestic rut.

INTERVIEWER Thank you. That's very interesting. Can we try with the next three please?
etc., etc.

You might find it useful to go back over the record of that interview and write down the constructs as you think the interviewer recorded them.

What he actually had looked like this:

<u>123</u>	career specialists	— got into line by accident
<u>123</u>	self-protective	— buccaneer
<u>456</u>	woman	— man
<u>456</u>	swayed by fads	— knows what wants
	↓	↓
	(impulse buyers)	— (have shopping list)
<u>789</u>	more than 20 years' experience	— very new
<u>789</u>	would say of self	— had path made smooth
	'come up the hard way'	(graduate entrant)
<u>789</u>	trimmers, aware of political realities	— think rational argument will solve any problem
	(too much, start to compromise too early)	— people do right even if costs face
<u>147</u>	(at work) stopped growing	— (at work) still growing & developing
<u>147</u>	(outside work) stopped growing	— (outside work) still growing & developing

On the far left of the record are three numbers — beginning with 123. These represent the element cards used in that triad — TED is 1, TONY is 2, JOHN is 3, and so on up to LOUISE, who was card 9. The interviewer writes down the numbers of the three cards he has used, and then underlines the numbers of the two that were paired — in the first triad Pat put Ted and Tony together, so the interviewer underlined 1 and 2. Then the interviewer wrote down the descriptor of the *pair* on the left of the hyphen, and the descriptor of the singleton element on the right. This tells him all he needs to know about how this construct was derived from these three elements, should he want to go back and do further work on it later.

The way one records Grid interview data is, in fact, another great advantage of the technique. The record is extremely full — it is possible to reconstruct all the substantive points that occurred in the interview by looking at the record. If, later in our interview, the interviewer wants to question Pat about the construct *swayed by fads — knows what wants* and Pat cannot remember where it came from, the interviewer can go back to the records, check, and then say: 'You were looking at Shirley, Alan and Frances (laying the cards down again) and you put Alan and Frances together saying that they were easily swayed by fads, whereas you said that Shirley usually knew what she wanted.' It is rare for this procedure to fail to trigger the interviewee's memory. Another advantage of this full, but structured, recording system is that several Grid interviewers can work on a problem and everyone can understand everyone else's interview records without the need for long meetings

various interviews. Anyone who has done research under pressure of time and resources will guess what a boon it is to be able to have interviewers send in their record sheets as soon as they are completed, able to be worked on immediately without need for further clarification.

Two more points need to be made about constructs before you move to the exercises and examples that conclude this chapter. The first is in response to the question: 'Why is a construct bipolar? Surely one word would do, instead of at least two?'

Kelly discusses this objection in his exposition of Personal Construct Theory. He says that you can only understand what I mean by 'good' if you also understand something of what I mean by 'bad'. Light is nonsense without shade; blunt is nonsense without sharp; soft is nonsense without hard. An interesting philosophical point, you may think, but of little relevance to industry. But suppose you are doing an appraisal interview with a subordinate, and he describes his present job as 'quite comfortable'. If, for him, the opposite of *comfortable* is *uncomfortable* he is telling you one thing; but if for him the opposite of *comfortable* is *challenging* he is telling you something else. Contrast the pairs of statements *he is sharp* – *he is honest* and *he is sharp* – *he is slow-witted*. It is a great discipline to have to put words into their context, a great preventer of sloppy thinking. The triadic-comparisons procedure, by asking for both a similarity and a difference, gets out both end of each construct, and as a result the data are much tighter, crisper, easier to understand and contain less dissimulation.

The second point concerns the format of the constructs themselves. A construct is not necessarily composed of a phrase and its semantic opposite; it is a contrast, but not a simple dictionary opposite. It is important to bear this in mind when interviewing, because some interviewees will guess that only dictionary opposites are acceptable to you. But you should strive to get both ends of the construct equally clear, and this usually means avoiding attaching a simple negative to the opposite pole. If you take a word such as *critical*, applied to people, there are various ways of describing its opposite: *uncritical*, *not critical* or (say) *accepting*. Actually, people who study these things for a living have found that there is significantly less 'meaning' or 'weight' behind modified forms such as *uncritical* or *not critical* than there is behind the unmodified, unprefixed word like *critical* or *accepting*. For this reason the interviewer should try to get a construct that consists of pairs of descriptors in their own right rather than one descriptor and its negation. You will find there are other good reasons for adhering to this practice, when we come to examine techniques such as laddering.

2.1 Practical uses of construct elicitation

The second part of this book is entirely given over to applications of the Grid technique, so we will not go into detail here. However, construct elicitation as a technique in its own right is useful whenever you want to examine the vocabulary with which someone thinks about the particular bit of the world you are interested in. For example, when we needed to get doctor's perceptions of the appeal of different

medical specialties, we designed the questionnaire after construct-elicitation interviews with some doctors, using different specialties as elements. The way they construed specialties was often totally different from the way laymen construed them, with many doctors having constructs that the laymen could not have imagined for themselves; had we designed the questionnaire in laymen's language, we would have missed the systematic questioning on areas of importance that the construct-elicitation procedure allowed.

In another example of construct elicitation at work, a large American company with an operation in the UK wanted to know whether the performance-appraisal criteria that had been established by research in the USA would be applicable in the UK. We performed construct-elicitation interviews with senior managers, using as elements colleagues, subordinates and self; then we classified the constructs to see if there were any judgements the US research required managers to make which our managers did not make naturally, and whether there were any judgements which our managers made naturally but which did not appear in the US results.

Yet another example of construct elicitation at work is when it is used to force people to put into words perceptions they have but have never verbalized — in quality-control work, for example, where the little old lady sitting at the end of the line, running her fingers over the ball bearings and rejecting the faulty ones without being able to say on what basis she makes the rejection, is retiring in six months and her replacement has to be trained. Here construct elicitation using a sample of faulty and good ball-bearings has helped the inspector reveal her construct system — though she usually needs some reassurance that no-one will laugh at any private language she may have developed. This use of construct elicitation has been practised with products as varied as clothing and chocolates, ball-bearings and ladles of steel, injection mouldings and machine faults.

Our final example — though it by no means exhausts the possibilities — is an illustration of the market-research applications of construct elicitation, and at the same time shows how the technique allows the individual differences in perceptual style to emerge. A drug manufacturer asked three people to produce constructs about a list of painkillers. The housewife and mother produced:

quick-acting — slow acting
 cheap — expensive
 easy to carry — difficult to take with you
 look effective — plain coloured
 give to the kids — would not give to the kids
 tastes nice — tastes nasty
 big tablet — small tablet
 I use regularly — I hardly ever use

whereas the doctor produced:

react with other drugs — do not react with other drugs
 over the counter — prescription
 liquid — tablet
 active — placebo

difficult to overdose — easy to overdose
slow release — quick release
central action — peripheral action
safe — dangerous

and the drug salesman produced:

over the counter — on prescription
new products — 'me too' products
side effects — few side effects
our product — others' products
new product — old product
long shelf life — short shelf life
well packaged — unattractive packaging
good advertising — poor advertising

You might like to reflect on how knowledge of the differences between the way these three people perceive their products would help the marketing department write the promotion literature in a more tailor-made fashion — using familiar concepts if they wanted, or adding some consumer education in a measured fashion.

Before you go on to the next chapter, here are some exercises for you to try. They are designed to give you some practice in construct elicitation, and also some ideas of places where you could use the technique yourself.

Exercises

1. Elicit constructs from a friend, using nine television or radio programmes as elements. Try to do the same with another friend of different tastes from the first, and compare results. If you are using nine elements, a good order of administration is: 123, 456, 789, 147, 258, 369, 159, 267, 348. You can remember this by drawing the numbers up like this:

123
456
789

and then go across three times, downwards three times, and diagonally three times; this does not exhaust all the possibilities but it does give you every possible pair at least once.

2. Produce as many constructs as you can to the following triads of elements:

RICHARD NIXON
MAO TSE-TUNG
MARGARET THATCHER

ELIZABETH TAYLOR
MARILYN MONROE
JANE FONDA

STEAK DIANE
MACARONI CHEESE
YORKSHIRE PUDDING

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL
REBECCA
JANE EYRE

Get some other people to do the same. See how you can help them over the blank patches without suggesting any actual constructs.

3. Provide at least six possible opposites to each of the following words: new, green, dull, smooth, adult, aggressive, good, comfortable.

Doing Qualitative Research Differently

free association, narrative and the interview method

Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson

2007



SAGE Publications

London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

INTRODUCTION: THE NEED TO DO RESEARCH DIFFERENTLY

What do you, the researcher, assume about a person's capacity to know, remember and tell about themselves? In this book, we argue and illustrate the proposition that social researchers need to revise their assumptions about the nature of that person – the research subject¹ – and that this revision should change their research practices.

Assume that you have to do a piece of research. As an example, let us suppose that you are interested in the fear of crime. Reading the literature, much of which is survey-based, you have learned that women consistently come out as more fearful than men, but there seem to be no satisfactory explanations for this, especially since young men seem more crime-prone. Moreover, you have women friends who claim to be unafraid of crime and you suspect that some of your male friends are more afraid than they are letting on. From this common-sense starting-point you frame your central research questions, namely: (a) what is the meaning of the finding that women are more fearful of crime than men; and (b) (if this finding is valid) why are they?

You then identify a number of female and male acquaintances (of a range of ages because age differences have also been found to be significant) who are willing to be informants to see if you can shed some light on these questions. This poses the problem of how you can find out relevant information from your informants. Do you just ask them directly the question(s) to which you wish to find an answer? If not, why not? How else would you approach them? Would it be feasible to observe them in relevant situations? If you decide on a face-to-face interview is it best to structure it through a series of questions? What should they cover and how many do you need? In other words, just how are you going to produce data which, when analysed, will help answer your starting questions?

Let us assume that you have constructed a series of questions, designed to explore face to face the fearfulness of your male and female respondents. This is the most common qualitative method used in the social sciences. You interview them. What then? Will you believe everything you are told? If not, how will you distinguish between truth and untruth? Even if you believe everything you are told, will you be satisfied that you have been told everything that is relevant? How would you define this, and how would you know? What do you assume about the effect of people's motivations and memory on what they tell

you? What will you assume about your effect as interviewer on the answers given? Does your sex, race, age and so on make a difference? Will men talk readily about their fear to a woman or a man, or to neither? How do you know?

Beyond questions of the veracity of the data produced are the questions of their significance. How will you analyse your interviewees' answers to make some overall sense of them, especially when their accounts are littered with contradictions and inconsistencies? If you conclude that Tom is more fearful than he lets on, or that Anna is fearful out of all proportion to the risks she runs, what is informing these judgements? Why might your conclusions be more, or less, reliable than theirs? Can their answers help answer your starting questions, and if so, how? What theories of gender difference and of fear do you apply to your analysis and how?

All these questions faced us when we decided that existing approaches to research into the fear of crime seemed unable to explain satisfactorily the basic finding of women's greater fear of crime. The finding seemed clear enough as it was endlessly reproduced (see below), but its meaning was puzzling given that women apparently are less likely to be victims of crime outside the home. Perhaps the problem lay with the question generally asked ('How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?'); perhaps with the truthfulness or otherwise of the answers given; perhaps with the range of unexamined meanings such answers contained; perhaps a mixture of all three. In any event, existing, survey-based research into the fear of crime seemed ill suited to answer the very questions it made visible: 'why' questions and questions about what particular findings mean.

Survey research will do well enough to find out how many locks people have on their doors, or whether they have installed security lights, and other easily measurable factors. But, with something as complex (and hence unquantifiable) as fear, survey research has not been able to answer the 'what', never mind the 'why', of a given person's, or community's, fear of crime. To use another example that interests us, namely, sexuality, survey research might be able to find out how many sexual partners a person has had in a given period (although actually it might signally fail to do so), but it cannot find out what this means, nor why sexual behaviour of whatever kind is engaged in.

If quantitative survey-based research is not up to addressing 'what does this mean' and 'why' questions, it does not follow that the other, qualitative, research tradition has ready answers to such questions. In our experience, it has not. Primarily, this is because of the widespread assumptions in the tradition, by ethnographers, participant observers and interviewers alike, that their participants are 'telling it like it is', that participants know who they are and what makes them tick – what

we might call the 'transparent self problem' – and are willing and able to 'tell' this to a stranger interviewer – what we might call the 'transparent account problem'. Neither selves nor accounts are transparent in our view. Treating people's own accounts as unproblematic flies in the face of what is known about people's less clear-cut, more confused and contradictory relationship to knowing and telling about themselves. In everyday informal dealings with each other, we do not take each other's accounts at face value, unless we are totally naïve; we question, disagree, bring in counter-examples, interpret, notice hidden agendas. Research is only a more formalised and systematic way of knowing about people, but in the process it seems to have lost much of the subtlety and complexity that we use, often as a matter of course, in everyday knowing. We need to bring some of this everyday subtlety into the research process.

One of the good reasons for believing what people tell us, as researchers, is a democratic one: who are we to know any better than the participants when it is, after all, their lives? If we are prepared to disagree, modify, select and interpret what they tell us, is this not an example of the kind of power that we, as researchers, have that should be kept in check by being faithful to the voices of those we are researching? Feminists, in their efforts to diminish the power differentials between researcher and researched, have been strong advocates of the principle of giving voice to hitherto voiceless women. But, as Riessman (1993: 8) claims, 'we cannot give voice' since we 'do not have direct access to another's experience. We deal with ambiguous representations of it – talk, text, interaction and interpretation.' If we wish to do justice to the complexity of our subjects an interpretative approach is unavoidable. It can also be fair, democratic and not patronising, as long as this approach to knowing people through their accounts is applied to the researcher as well as the researched; as long as researchers are not seen as neutral vehicles for representing knowledge in an uncontaminated way (sometimes called 'God's eye view' or 'the view from nowhere'). In other words, it is legitimate as long as there is no special objective status that excludes us from being theorised as the same kind of subjects as our informants (albeit in a different position from them).

However, the now widespread recognition of the need to interpret accounts has led to the problem of just how to escape the 'hermeneutical circle' (Denzin, 1989: 141), the idea that there is no end to the interpretative process. If experiences can only ever be ambiguously represented, is interpreting these various representations, rather than the experiences themselves, the only possible activity for researchers? We think not. We think that, though it is far from transparent, there is a relationship between people's ambiguous representations and their experiences. This position is sometimes called 'critical realism'

(Bunge, 1993; Watkins, 1994–5). But, tracking this relationship relies on a particular view of the research subject: one whose inner world is not simply a reflection of the outer world, nor a cognitively driven rational accommodation to it. Rather, we intend to argue for the need to posit research subjects whose inner worlds cannot be understood without knowledge of their experiences in the world, and whose experiences of the world cannot be understood without knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds allow them to experience the outer world. This research subject cannot be known except through another subject; in this case, the researcher. The name we give to such subjects is psychosocial: our justifications for such a starting-point, and the consequent theoretical, methodological and ethical implications for research, constitute the subject matter of our book.

The book's content

In Chapter 2 we continue to work with the example of the fear of crime, showing how the survey research on which this area of enquiry was initially based made a series of unwarranted methodological and theoretical assumptions. However, we argue that qualitative research into the fear of crime has failed, as it has in other areas, to look critically at the assumptions it shares with survey research about the nature of the research subject on whose accounts knowledge about the fear of crime depends. We use the case examples of Roger and Joyce to illustrate how our understanding of psychosocial subjects can explain differences in the fear of crime in two people who share many social characteristics.

Chapter 3 is about producing data through the interview method. It looks closely at our initial failures in a pilot interview and makes the case, as a result, for moving from question- and answer-based interviewing to narrative interviewing. However, the theory of the subject implicit in narrative interviewing leaves no space for what we call the 'defended' subject (understanding the effects of defences against anxiety on people's actions and stories about them). The method that we developed to accommodate the psychoanalytic principles of the defended subject is based on eliciting and paying attention to free association. We illustrate how it works in the case of Jane's opening response in one such interview. In this way we introduce the free-association narrative interview method. Qualitative researchers take seriously the need to understand the role of the interviewer in the production and analysis of data and in this chapter we begin a theme which continues throughout the book, namely, the unconscious inter-subjective dynamics in the interview relationship, which we explain

and illustrate using concepts such as countertransference, recognition and containment.

Following the focus in Chapter 3 on data production, Chapter 4 is all about data analysis. Here, we take some extended and detailed examples from one family we interviewed (Ivy and two of her adult children, Tommy and Kelly) to demonstrate our approach to analysing unstructured qualitative data. In contrast to the widespread tendency in qualitative research to fragment data by using code and retrieve methods, we illustrate a method based on the principle of working with the whole data and paying attention to links and contradictions within that whole. We demonstrate not only the need for theoretically informed interpretation, but how we do it, based on what principles.

Having given a detailed account of methods of data production and analysis, we turn to the implications that this different approach has for some of the key issues in qualitative research, namely ethics and the generalisability of knowledge derived from case-based analyses. In Chapter 5, we take available ethical guidelines for the conduct of social-science research and assess their appropriateness in three cases chosen from our own research. We demonstrate their inadequacy in this new domain and map out the contours of an alternative approach, based on principles of honesty, sympathy and respect.

In Chapter 6 we examine the tension in our research into the fear of crime between the use of case studies and the need for research to be able to generalise its findings. We show the weaknesses involved in coding and clustering our 37 cases for the purposes of generalisation. We use a series of mini-examples to demonstrate how cases with identical codings were not similar once personal meanings were taken into account and how women's shared risks of sexual assault did not account for their fear of crime. We conclude that generalisations about the fear of crime need to be based on biography as well as demographic factors.

Throughout the book, we conduct our argument using detailed case-study illustrations. In Chapter 7, we demonstrate, through a single, extensive and multifaceted case study of a 24-year-old burglar, Ron, what can be achieved through the free-association narrative interview method, our approach to data analysis and our psychosocial theory of the subject. This is a case study which goes well beyond description and uses and refines theory to provide insights into the importance of Ron's biography and his inner world in understanding his criminal activities. In addition, we address some central issues in qualitative research concerning the role of memory and the possibility of gaining access to truth through interview-based research.

We end with a short Afterword which outlines the difference that adopting our view of the research subject might make to qualitative research.

Note

1 The history of the term 'subject' in this – research methods – context may have come full circle. We use 'subject' not in the tradition of experimental psychology (where the term is criticised, paradoxically, for objectifying the people taking part in research) but in the philosophical sense. Here 'subject' refers to the person and how s/he is theorised.

CREATIVE METHODS IN ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH

MIKE BROUSSINE

with

Mick Beeby, Robert French, Louise Grisoni, Philip Kirk,
Margaret Page and Peter Simpson

2008



Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore

CREATIVE DIALOGUE

Mick Beeby and Peter Simpson

OVERVIEW

- Creative dialogue as a form of collective inquiry
- Underlying principles and theory
- How to use creative dialogue in organizational research – creative dialogue for a shared organizational problem, or dialogue in a collaborative research group
- Two case studies showing creative dialogue in practice
- Working with the data
- Conclusion
- Discussion questions
- Further reading

CREATIVE DIALOGUE AS A FORM OF COLLECTIVE INQUIRY

Alan took the creative dialogue method to a compound in Lusaka, Zambia, where three key people from different aid agencies had major difficulties with each other. This was threatening the future existence of the health project, affecting up to 80,000 people. Alan took his flipchart and spent the weekend with the three leaders, working together using a dialogue procedure to explore their shared problem. At a pivotal moment, one of the trio stood up and wrote, 'It's me – I'm the problem' on the flipchart. This moment of insight did not lead to a scapegoating of this one individual – on the contrary, it freed all three leaders to reinterpret their struggle,

not as a battle with each other, but as the challenge of finding constructive ways of working together. The three leaders have now put forward a proposal to their agencies, which has been accepted. Alan was ecstatic – 'It works!' he wrote in an airmail letter from the compound.

This is not a piece of research, but it is an event that arose from the use of dialogue as a research method. A friend of Alan's was participating in a collaborative research group using a dialogue method. She suggested to Alan that he might consider using the method to prepare for the task that he would face in his new role, where he would be involved in projects seeking to improve the lives of families hit by AIDS and HIV. Alan took up the offer, and so, on a sunny afternoon in a Devon garden, a group of friends and colleagues worked together to produce three learning maps that eventually travelled from a Devon back-garden to a shantytown compound in Zambia, where the process was successfully replicated.

By engaging in dialogue with others, Alan was able to explore his thoughts and feelings about his new role ahead of time, and to envision the inherent challenges and possibilities in ways that he had not previously considered. Our own experience had been similar when, in our collaborative research group, we experienced the power of dialogue to recreate meaning when new and shared understandings of issues and events seemed somehow to unfold from our public discussions. Dialogue creates a novel setting that changes the everyday ground-rules for interpersonal communication, and replaces these rules with prescribed roles and behaviours that determine who, when and how co-researchers will interact as storytellers, listeners and sometimes as flipchart 'artists'. In this way, unlike many other approaches, the procedure creatively incorporates multiple methods for accessing experiential data (for example, storytelling and artwork).

By way of explaining dialogue, we can start by asking whether the reader will remember occasions when she or he was in discussions with others about something in a group – a group of friends or colleagues, a meeting, tutorial or seminar for instance – and felt really frustrated. It might be productive to try to disentangle the possible causes of this frustration. Perhaps you felt you could not get a word in edgewise. Perhaps you noticed that someone else in the group could not find their voice. You thought at times that the discussion or argument was getting nowhere. Perhaps you were unimpressed by the ways that some people in the group dominated the discussion. And, ultimately, you felt that the discussion achieved nothing. These are the kinds of everyday experiences that we have where we know that there was something not right about the processes of engagement and communication between people.

What dialogue tries to do is to get underneath the causes of this kind of typically frustrating experience. Figure 3.1, lists the kinds of behaviours that are helpful to dialogue and therefore which can help us to address why meetings sometimes can be irritating experiences. We aim to show how this can be achieved in a research context.

- 1 Reliance on discussion, not speeches
Learning by talking – involves exchange of data, reasoning, questions and conclusions
- 2 Egalitarian participation
Equality: hierarchy is a great inhibitor of collective learning
- 3 Multiple perspectives
Differences foster collective learning – there is a need for a variety of perspectives to challenge accepted practice and to hold ensuing tension whilst new learning emerges
- 4 Non-expert-based dialogue
Organizational members thinking together have the capability to generate workable answers to the organizational problems and cannot act responsibly except on the basis of their own conclusions
- 5 Participant-generated database
Participants are the primary sources of data – public discussion constructs meaning
- 6 Creation of a shared experience
Provide a shared experience of acting in new ways
- 7 Creation of unpredictable outcomes
The meaning that the collective constructs is relatively unpredictable.

Figure 3.1 Critical Elements for the Facilitation of Dialogue (Adapted from Dixon, 1997)

Dialogue enables people who are trying to work together, like colleagues and/or co-researchers, to reveal, encounter and capture the nature, origins and consequences of sense-making processes in the 'here and now' of human interactions in organizations. Dialogue is collective inquiry into collective thinking and meaning-making processes that generates research outcomes in the form of collective learning. Collective learning can be viewed as a participant-generated database, as co-researchers are the primary sources of data from which their public discussions construct shared meanings.

Dialogue involves deliberately bringing to the surface the underlying assumptions and mindsets that govern people's individual and collective behaviour in social interactions. As with all of the creative research methods that are considered in this book, dialogue allows the researcher and research participants to access rich and multifaceted aspects of their lived experience in ways that may not normally be available. In this particular case, dialogue brings unconscious aspects of the participants' thinking and decision-making processes into conscious awareness.

In dialogue, personal and collective meanings may be said to 'vibrate', and are shaken around to reveal new understandings and action possibilities. It enables dif-

they can change what and how they think together as a means of attaining their visions and goals. Equally, this can be threatening to those who may be used to exercising power through their ability to impose their definitions of situations on others.

We have used dialogue successfully as a collaborative procedure for researching processes of organizational learning, strategic development and organizational culture change; group and team dynamics, with particular reference to decision making and problem solving; and leadership as a distributed process of reciprocal meaning-making (Beeby *et al.*, 2002). Dialogue can also be usefully integrated with the sense-making and action planning components of other interventionist forms of organizational inquiry such as action research and action learning. These approaches lend themselves to creative dialogue as they seek to implement organizational changes that are anchored in collaborative diagnoses of problem areas that typically involve the collection, discussion and interpretation of data as the basis for collective action.

As dialogue is a complex and elusive concept, we begin this chapter by considering alternative ways in which it has come to be defined and characterized in the literature. We then present two methods that we have used in our own research. We provide case-study examples of how we have used these methods in practice to collect, record and analyse experiential data.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES AND THEORY

Peter Reason (2006) has proposed that dialogue may be seen as central to action research, and as contributing to what he sees as the contemporary movement in qualitative research:

... away from validity criteria that mimic or parallel those of empiricist research toward a greater variety of validity considerations that include the practical, the political, and the moral; and away from validity as policing and legitimation toward a concern for validity as asking questions, stimulating dialogue, making us think about just what our research practices are grounded in, and thus what are the significant claims concerning quality we wish to make.

(Reason, 2006, p. 191)

The concept of dialogue came to the fore in the literature on organizational learning and knowledge management during the 1990s, as a new type of communication process that is characterized by collective thinking (Beeby and Booth, 2000). Dialogue emerged as a special kind of talk that involves more than the familiar everyday communication processes of conversation, discussion and debate (Schein, 1993;

Watkins and Golembiewski, 1995; Dixon, 1998). It additionally embraces the thinking processes and patterns that underpin such transactions between people. In a seminal contribution to this field, Isaacs defines dialogue as 'a sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions and certainties that compose everyday life' (Isaacs, 1993, p. 25) and reports its emergence as a 'process for transforming the quality of conversation' (Isaacs, 1993, p. 25) in group settings.

Schein states that 'an important goal of dialogue is to enable *the group* to reach a higher level of consciousness and creativity through the gradual creation of a shared set of meanings and a common thinking process' (Schein, 1993, p. 43). He argues that dialogue as 'a basic process for building common understanding' (Schein, 1993, p. 47) is a necessary condition for effective communication between members of different cultural subgroups, and thereby for tapping into the collective intelligence of disparate group members to enhance organizational learning.

Dixon (1997) uses the metaphor of *hallways* to locate dialogue as the second stage of a three-stage process of organizational learning. The metaphor represents the process by which individually held tacit and explicit meanings are made accessible to others and thereby become shared, collective meaning. Dixon's model is summarized in Figure 3.2.

In this metaphor, individuals working alone construct meaning from their experience in *private offices*. What is known by the individual remains private unless and until it is made accessible to others during meetings in *hallways*, where collective

Private Meaning (Private Office)	Accessible Meaning (Hallways)	Collective Meaning (Storeroom)
Meaning is constructed by individuals out of their experience.	Collective meaning is constructed among organizational members through dialogue.	Meaning is held in common by organizational members
Individuals hold both explicit and tacit meaning.	Only explicit meaning can be communicated to others, but, in the process, tacit meaning can be revealed.	Both explicit and tacit meaning are held in the storeroom: explicit meaning in documents and policies, and tacit meaning in the culture and actions of organization members.
What is known by the individual is not accessible to others.	What is known by individuals is made accessible to others.	Explicit meaning that is held in common is accessible; tacit meaning that is held in common is inaccessible.

in common by them as if in a *storeroom*.

Dixon (1997) identifies learning maps as one of several *hallways* that are currently in use in the real world of organizations. By learning maps, she means 'graphic, wall size illustrations of an issue an organization is dealing with', around which learning occurs via team discussions that are characterized by seven critical elements. These are elements that 'any such process would need in order to facilitate collective meaning' through dialogue. The elements are listed in Figure 3.2.

Much of the literature on dialogue merely assumes its validity as a research tool, and focuses instead on its use in organizational interventions. Although this is clearly a strength of the method, and as such it may be located broadly within the field of action research, it is also worth situating it within the appropriate research literature before exploring particular research methods based on dialogue.

From the research perspective, Reason and Heron's articulation of co-operative inquiry may be viewed as an early description of dialogue as research. They describe co-operative inquiry as a methodology for research 'with persons', in which all those involved are co-researchers and co-subjects 'participating in the activity that is being researched' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 458). In co-operative inquiry (as in dialogue), research conclusions are 'rooted in and derived from the experiential and practical knowledge of the subjects of the inquiry' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 458), and generated by those involved in the experience of being researched.

In this model, co-operative inquiry alternates between action and reflection in four phases. At the outset, in *phase 1*, 'a group of co-researchers agree on an area for inquiry and identify some initial propositions', and 'may also agree to some set of procedures by which they will observe and record their own and each others experience' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 459). When under way in *phase 2*, 'the group then applies these ideas and procedures. They initiate the agreed actions and observe and record the outcomes of their own and each other's behaviour' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 460). *Phase 3* is fundamental to the inquiry. Here the co-researchers become fully immersed in the activity and experience, to the extent that 'at times they will be excited and carried away by it: at times they will be bored and alienated by it; at times they will forget they are involved in an inquiry project' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 460). However, during this phase they also may develop 'an openness to what is going on for them and their environment, which allows them to bracket off their prior beliefs and preconceptions and so see their experience in a new way' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 461). *Phase 4* of co-operative inquiry completes the cycle of action and reflection, as 'the co-researchers return to consider their original research propositions and hypotheses in the light of experience, modifying, reformulating and rejecting them' at which point 'they may also amend and develop their research procedures' (Reason and Heron, 1986, p. 461).

HOW TO USE CREATIVE DIALOGUE IN ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH

Creative dialogue is a group-based method of organizational research that generates data through processes of collective inquiry. There are many ways of approaching such an endeavour using the general principles outlined in the previous section. Here we will consider two approaches. The first is an approach for working with groups of individuals from the same organization who have a shared problem that they wish to inquire into. This approach draws considerably on the work of Isaacs (1993). The second involves the formation of a Collaborative Research Group (CRG) with members from a number of organizations. This is a development of Nancy Dixon's (1997) approach, incorporating an original mapping procedure.

Creative dialogue for a shared organizational problem

Isaacs (1993) developed a set of principles for taking a group into dialogue rather than discussion, and describes its use in bringing together organizational members who are in conflict situations (in particular, a case study of union-management conflict is presented). Such cases of extreme difficulty in collective activity expose clearly the differences of intention and conflicts of interest that exist between different individuals in all organizations. As a research method, the principles of dialogue are consequently ideal for accessing the rich and multifaceted differences between organizational members at the deep levels of intentionality and assumption. A dialogue inquiry can be set up based on any shared organizational problem where there is a sufficiently strong common desire to work co-operatively together and yet where the organizational group is failing to reach a resolution on the matter. Stuart's case study is a very good example of the type of issue that we are talking about.

Case Study: Stuart – a PhD student's story

I have a friend who is a trustee for a charity that works in some of the poorest areas of a UK city. Like many charities, they were finding that money was hard to come by. My involvement was triggered by an 'opportunity' to raise a significant amount of money through Lottery funding. Unfortunately for those who thought that this could be the answer to their dreams, there was a small but significant group who did not want to have anything to do with money that was raised from gambling. Their argument was that gambling addiction was one of the problems that affected a number of clients that this charity sought to support. It appeared that this group would rather the charity fail to survive than compromise its principles. I must admit, I could see where both sides were coming from.

making in difficult situations, sometimes using dialogue as a method, and asked me if I might be able to help. The charity could not afford to pay – perhaps it might be useful for your research?’ I agreed to meet with the decision-making body of the charity, which comprised eight full-time employees and four trustees.

My friend talked me through the situation in some depth – particularly nature of the characters involved and key relationships/conflicts, as well as aspects of context, such as the organization’s history. I gained the impression of a group that was genuinely concerned about the work that it was trying to do, but with different views about how this might be achieved. The strained relationships that existed were as a result of these tensions, rather than particularly individual personality.

I planned a simple dialogue session to last 90 minutes, inquiring into the question: ‘How can we take the work forward?’ I began by briefly introducing myself, the aim for the session, and the proposal that we use the dialogue method. As no one had come across the method before, I asked the group if they were prepared to trust me that this would probably be a good process. They agreed. I then explained some of the principles that we were going to use – talking through the following ideas, in the form of a handout.

Explaining dialogue

- Our ability to think and make good decisions is generally damaged by things: false harmony and constant arguments. Both stop us thinking together
- Dialogue is the art of thinking together
- The intention in dialogue is to reach new understanding and in doing so form a new basis from which to think and act
- We seek to uncover shared meanings that can help align our actions with our values
- Dialogue is a conversation in which people think together. You relax your grip on certainty and listen to the possibilities that emerge
- Dialogue is a conversation with a centre – not sides
- Dialogue attempts to bring about change at the source of our thoughts and feelings
- Dialogue requires people to work with their uncertainties. It is not about defending one’s certainties.

There was some discussion of dialogue, and after checking that there were no more questions, I restated the question and handed the task over to the group. I then worked at staying silent, encouraging the group to allow me to let go

the leadership role that I had taken on in setting up the exercise. After a few questions, which I answered briefly, the group grasped the fact that it was down to them. I then worked hard at intervening rarely, and then only to gently remind the group of the principles of dialogue – particularly when disagreements and discussion (sometimes heated) began to develop.

I concentrated on note-taking, because I find that it helps me to track the pattern of contributions and the emerging meanings and issues as they develop. This also serves a research purpose, although I tend to place even greater emphasis on making field notes – both in preparation, before the event, and in reflection, after the event.

As always seems to occur, all of us were struck – and sometimes amazed – at how easily resolvable misunderstandings had developed between people, and that the positions people appeared to have taken were not actually as hard-and-fast as others had assumed. The Lottery issue was barely addressed as the group joined together in exploring 'how to take the work forward' – the dialogue method seemed to encourage a richer exploration of the complexities of the work and each individual's reasons for being involved. The emotional texture of the conversation was thick with meaning, as individuals expressed their thoughts and concerns for their clients, the origins of the work, and their hopes for the future.

Together we entered a different mental space. There was no panacea, but there was a quality of conversation that exposed some of the depths that ran beneath the individual and collective activity that characterized this organization.

Dialogue in a collaborative research group (CRG)

Dialogue can be a potent reflective process. For researchers, the reflexive dimension of dialogue is equally important, providing a process for exploring one's role as researcher in the research process. Consequently, when it is possible to engage participants as co-researchers, dialogue becomes particularly powerful as a research method.

We recently established a collaborative research group comprising academic researchers with co-researchers from organizations in the region. This group was set up as one of the outcomes of a conference that had created research groups 'in which academics and practitioners could work together to reflect on and inquire into major issues facing local government' using collaborative and action research methodologies. With a shared interest in the method, our group chose to inquire into the practice of dialogue, meeting every six weeks for a year.

We will now discuss how this group developed its collective inquiry, and will use

Phase 1: co-researchers agree on an area of inquiry

At an early meeting of the CRG, we discussed and agreed our overall aim as follows:

To develop members' individual and collective understandings of the theory and practice of dialogue and to evaluate its potential worth and practical utility as an improved means of communications in local government.

We subsequently formulated research questions to provide a more specific operational focus for the research in areas of particular interest to us. Our research questions were:

- What is dialogue?
- Can we make it easy and simple to apply?
- Will it work in our own organizations, and, if so, where?

Thus the research task that we had set ourselves was that of transforming the complex, multifaceted and abstract concept of dialogue into a practical, easy-to-use tool for enhancing the quality of communication in our organizations by means of co-operative inquiry methods.

Phase 1 (continued): co-researchers ... agree to some set of procedures by which they will observe and record

The group met regularly every six weeks, on ten occasions, for sessions that lasted three hours. Immediately following the conference, we agreed that we would individually re-engage with the literature on organizational learning in a search for a set of practical guidelines that might enable us to engage in dialogue quickly and easily.

Based on Dixon's discussion of the core notions of the hallways, critical elements for dialogue, and learning maps, we were able to devise and agree an integrative, original set of procedures by which we would observe and record our own and each other's experience. This process began with each member of the group taking a turn at presenting a case story. The procedure that we developed and adopted is summarized in Figure 3.3.

In this way, we applied Dixon's (1997) three-stage model of organizational learning as both a practical, procedural means of structuring the design of our subsequent dialogue sessions, and as an analytical tool for inquiring into and making sense of their content and processes.

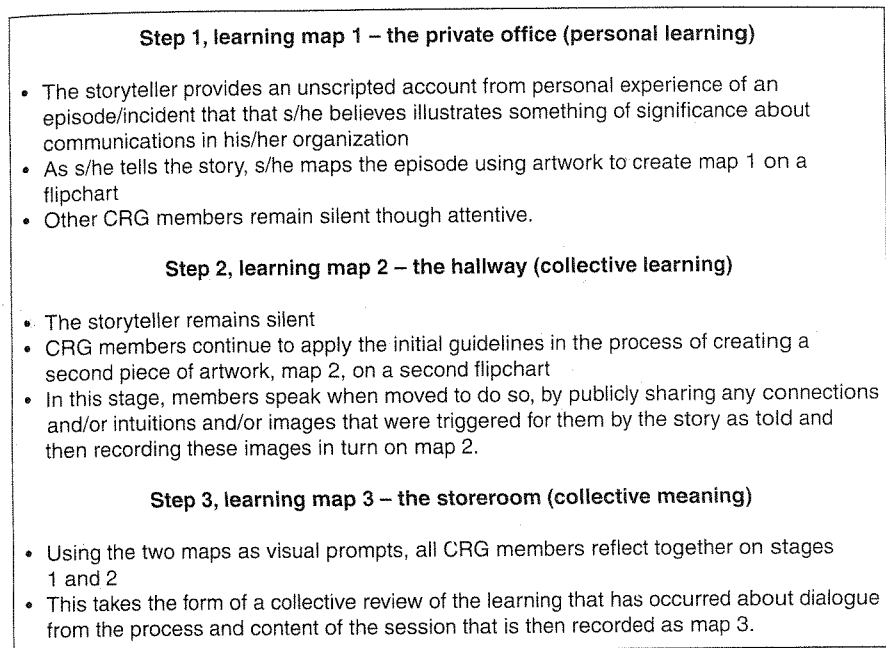


Figure 3.3 The 'Three-Maps' Dialogue Procedure

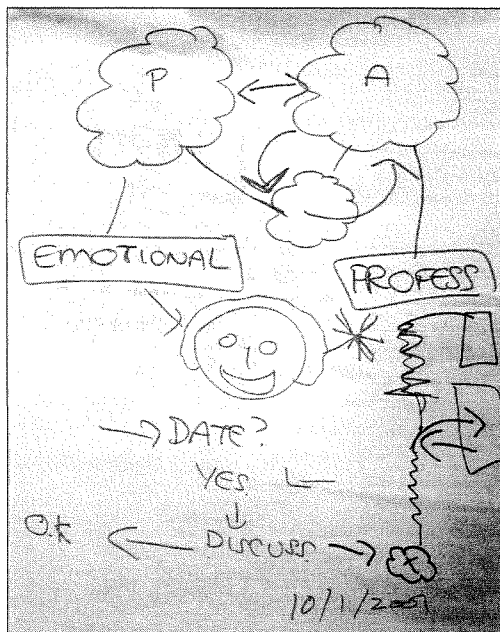
Phase 2: the group then applies these ideas and procedures

We subsequently used the 'three-maps procedure' at five successive meetings of the group, at which a personal case-oriented approach was deliberately used to ground sessions in current organizational realities and to inform our evaluation of dialogue as a practical and helpful tool for application in organizational settings.

Session by session, each CRG member in turn told of personally significant episodes of organizational communications, whilst simultaneously creating a pictorial representation of their story on a flipchart (see, for example, Figure 3.4). In this way, we told each other stories about the personal effects of rumour-mongering; the politics of taking up a promotion; responding to a colleague's anger; the feelings aroused by a boss's departure; and power and influence in facilitation (i.e. private office, private meaning).

The listeners then created a second learning map containing images of the thoughts, associations and intuitions that had been triggered for them during the storytelling (i.e. hallway, accessible meaning, and dialogue), see Figure 3.5.

Finally, and for each story, a third learning map was produced by the storyteller and the listeners together. This recorded in writing the learning that emerged for all participants from a review of the process and content of the session (i.e. the



Figure

Figure 3.4 Example of Learning Map 1



Figure 3.5 Example of Learning Map 2

Each
prima
selecte
difficu
of co-
learnin
encou
This p
what i
At
disclos
(and o
discov
guilt a
questio
we be
was ne

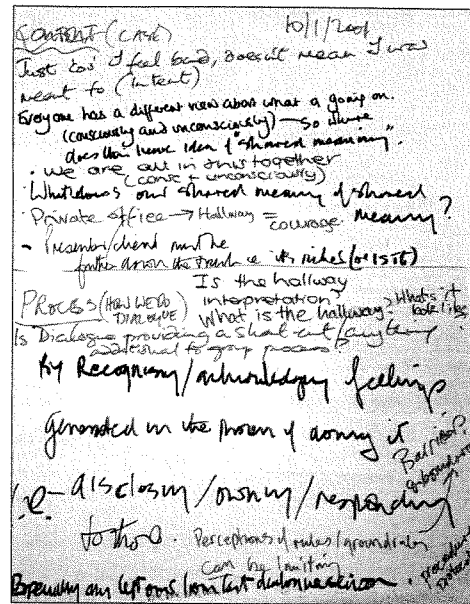


Figure 3.6 Example of Learning Map 3

Phase 3: co-researchers become fully immersed in the activity and experience

Each meeting of the research group was an intensely emotional experience. This was primarily due to the personal (often hurtful) significance of the organizational stories selected for telling, and the feelings that they aroused for the teller as she or he revisited difficult encounters and (re)presented these in picture form on a flipchart in front of co-researchers. At times, in response to hearing such stories, we abandoned the learning-maps procedure to counsel and support each other in relation to problems encountered in our other worlds 'as needs be' and as an emergent part of our practice. This provides an interesting element in our answer to our first research question – what is dialogue?

At other times, in other sessions, we laughed, cried, argued, confided, worried, disclosed, trusted, defended, accepted, disagreed, bonded, smiled, listened, owned (and owned up to), let go of, confronted, challenged, experimented, risked, worked, discovered, and learnt. In our individual and collective anxiety, the emotions of fear, guilt and anger were often to the fore. In part this answered our second research question – can we make it easy? – for although we had developed a procedure that

WORKING WITH THE DATA

Whilst it is clearly possible to analyse the data from dialogue events in one's 'private office' as a lone researcher – and indeed this is necessary when participants do not wish to become co-researchers – we will consider here the process of analysing and interpreting research data whilst still engaged in the process of dialogue. This was the final phase of our CRG's research activity.

Phase 4: co-researchers return to consider their original research propositions

We have no doubt that in the example we are using here, all CRG members became fully engaged in the research process. This meant working with, against and around the research questions at different times, individually and collectively, during meetings, whilst moving in and out of (though always returning to) the three-map procedure.

We found learning maps to be a rich source of alternative perspectives on each of our stories, as told in line with Dixon's (1997) claim that because graphics are more ambiguous than words, the maps provide a focus for the discussion yet allow a wide range of ideas to emerge. Unlike when using word-based cognitive maps, the emergence of new and different meanings was graphically illustrated quite literally within the predominantly pictorial three-maps procedure. This occurred on five separate occasions when viewing map 1 (personal learning) alongside map 2 (collective learning) for the purposes of reviewing and recording our learning on map 3 (collective meaning). When compared with learning-map 1, learning-map 2 was often starkly different in tone and texture, and in the use of symbols, colours and shapes.

The differences between maps 1 (individual) and 2 (collective) may be viewed as the concrete and visible outcomes of a collective process of reality reconstruction that provided the storytellers in every case with an immediately accessible and visual alternative interpretation of personally significant events.

In our experience, in so far as each story revealed the storyteller's prior beliefs and preconceptions – and the learning maps also captured these – then these beliefs and preconceptions no longer need to limit or constrain individual learning. Group members were able to respond to individual mindsets, once these had been surfaced in story and picture forms, to produce collective and visible reconstructions of reported events that enabled each storyteller, should s/he choose, 'to see their experience in a new way' and to act differently.

At the CRG meeting that followed the sequence of five consecutive storytelling meetings, all the sets of learning maps were displayed together for the first time and reviewed in a reflective two-hour discussion. The discussion moved freely between the research questions, and also drew on members' experiences when testing the procedure in a range of organizational settings.

The discussion was tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed and content analysed by all members of the CRG collectively in open session. In this way, initial conclusions about the nature of dialogue and its relevance and application in local government settings were identified and agreed in line with the original research questions and aim.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that creative dialogue approaches are methodologically 'rich', in that they provide the opportunity for co-researchers to use, in combination, a range of means of progressing their inquiry, including the use of art, storytelling and, of course, an application of the principles of dialogue. One of the challenges that we set ourselves in our exploration of dialogue that led to our adoption of the three-maps procedure was to simplify a complex process. Isaacs' principles of dialogue are to an extent straightforward. However, there is no doubt that a group-based research method that encourages participants to surface and work with deep feelings and assumptions will inevitably be complicated to manage at times.

This means that this approach has certain emotional risks attached to it for all involved that are, perhaps, as difficult to manage as some of the other methods that are explored in this book. For this reason, we would suggest that the organizational researcher seeks experience in dialogue events in relatively safe environments (such as working with experienced practitioners, or with a small group of colleagues), before launching into an event with virtual strangers (as Stuart did in his work with the charity). This is important, as we have a responsibility as researchers to help potential participants to make informed choices about engaging (or not) with procedures that can trigger deep-seated emotions such as fear, guilt and anger. A degree of experience on the part of the researcher is therefore required, unless the co-researchers are already skilled in group process work.

Potential limitations of the approach relate to the length of time required to develop sufficient trust between co-researchers to maximize openness in their exchanges. This is likely to be the case in research teams new to this approach and to each other, and these teams will also need to invest time in developing a shared understanding of dialogic principles and how to apply them in their interactions.

On balance, we see the need for a flexible and contingent implementation strategy that emphasizes different dimensions of a dialogue approach (for example, Dixon's hallways model and/or Isaacs' principles of dialogue and/or our own three-maps procedure) as judged appropriate or not for different groups by the researcher *in situ*.

Once a group is under way, the researcher's role is to intervene in timely and appropriate ways to ensure that the group's behaviour accords with the principles of effective dialogue. In particular, this will involve finding ways to slow down the

they had just heard, in line with the procedure. These are important procedural interventions that can also help to create a safe container for dialogue by holding the boundaries of the session.

The three-maps procedure outlined in this chapter is a valid, robust and easy-to-follow set of guidelines for doing dialogue in a way that accords with Reason and Rowan's characteristics of collective inquiry, as well as Isaacs' principles of dialogue and Dixon's (1997) critical elements. In our practice, for example, the process was *egalitarian*, in that each person in turn was a storyteller. Everyone also had a meeting allocated to their story. Although sessions varied, each took the form of a *discussion* in which ideas and other forms of *data* were *generated by group members* as we participated in a *shared experience* of storytelling and retelling, of drawing and redrawing pictures, and of collective sense and (non) sense-making.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the distinction between a 'normal' work meeting and a creative dialogue, and why not use the former as a research tool instead of dialogue?
2. Why might participants in a creative dialogue resist the process?
3. How do you see the differences between dialogue and other processes for working with different viewpoints such as mediation, conciliation and arbitration?
4. Why would it be helpful for co-researchers' initial ideas about creative dialogue to be mapped at an early stage in the research process using the three-stage procedure discussed in this chapter?

FURTHER READING



Dixon's and Isaacs' articles, both published in *Organizational Dynamics* in the 1990s, are seminal outlines of the theory and practice of dialogue in organizational settings, and therefore represent important additional reading in support of learning from this chapter. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) make the case that strategies for participant-driven and collaborative research, such as the approach outlined in this chapter, have their origins in resistance – particularly among participatory action researchers – to conventional research practices. Their chapter brings together the authors' earlier work, and provides a comprehensive survey of the nature of participatory action research (PAR), its origins and traditions, key features, the role of the facilitator in action research and the politics of PAR.

- Dixon, N.M. (1997) 'The Hallways of Learning', *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 25, No. 4: 23–34
- Isaacs, W.N. (1993) 'Taking Flight: Dialogue, Collective Thinking, and Organizational Learning', *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 22: 24–39
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2005) 'Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere', in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 559–603

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Figure 3.2 and excerpts from Nancy Dixon 'The Hallways of Learning' in *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 25, No. 4: 23–24 reprinted with permission from the author.

beginner's guide to action research ¹

This is a resource file which supports the regular public program "areol" (action research and evaluation on line) offered twice a year beginning in mid-February and mid-July. For details email Bob Dick bdick@scu.edu.au or bd@uq.net.au

... in which action research is briefly described, and the simultaneous achievement of action (that is, change) and research (that is, understanding) is discussed

Contents

- Introduction
- Action research in more detail
- Cyclic, participative, qualitative
- "Good" action research
- Summary
- Notes
- References

Action research consists of a family of research methodologies which pursue action and research outcomes at the same time. It therefore has some components which resemble consultancy or change agency, and some which resemble field research.

Conventional experimental research, for good reason, has developed certain principles to guide its conduct. These principles are appropriate for certain types of research; but they can actually inhibit effective change. Action research has had to develop a different set of principles. It also has some characteristic differences from most other qualitative methods.

Action research tends to be...

- cyclic -- similar steps tend to recur, in a similar sequence;
- participative -- the clients and informants are involved as partners, or at least active participants, in the research process;
- qualitative -- it deals more often with language than with numbers; and
- reflective -- critical reflection upon the process and outcomes are important parts of each cycle.

In fact, some writers insist on those characteristics.

To achieve action, action research is **responsive**. It has to be able to respond to the emerging needs of the situation. It must be flexible in a way that some research methods cannot be.

Action research is **emergent**. The process takes place gradually. Its cyclic nature helps responsiveness. It also aids rigour. The early cycles are used to help decide how to conduct the later cycles. In the later cycles, the interpretations developed in the early cycles can be tested and challenged and refined.

In most instances the use of qualitative information increases responsiveness. It is possible to work in natural language, which is easier for informants. There is no need to develop a metric (which may have to be abandoned later if it doesn't fit the emerging situation).

The use of language also makes the whole process more accessible to participants. They can develop enough understanding to become co-researchers in many situations.

One crucial step in each cycle consists of **critical reflection**. The researcher and others involved first recollect and then critique what has already happened. The increased understanding which emerges from the critical reflection is then put to good use in designing the later steps.

The cycle best known in Australia is probably that of Stephen Kemmis and his colleagues at Deakin University. The steps are:

plan --> act --> observe --> reflect (and then --> plan etc.)

The reflection leads on to the next stage of planning. The "planning" isn't a separate and prior step; it is embedded in the action and reflection. Short, multiple cycles allow greater rigour to be achieved.

As change is intended to result, effective action research depends upon the agreement and commitment of those affected by it. This is usually generated by involving them directly in the research process. In many instances, researchers try to involve them as equal partners.

Action research in more detail

I regard action research as a methodology which is intended to have both action outcomes and research outcomes. I recognise, too, that in some action research the research component mostly takes the form of understanding on the part of those involved. The action is primary. In distinction, there are some forms of action research where research is the main emphasis and the action is almost a fringe benefit.

I regard all of these as action research. This definition is capable of encompassing a variety of research and intervention methods. It is broad enough to include, as examples, the critical action research approach of Carr and Kemmis (1986), the soft systems methodology of Checkland (1981), and perhaps even the evaluation of Guba and Lincoln (1989), to name just a few.

The responsiveness of action research allows it to be used to develop hypotheses from the data, "on the run" as it were. It can therefore also be used as a research tool for investigative or pilot research, and generally for diagnosis or evaluation.

Cyclic, participative, qualitative

Most writers on the topic state or assume that action research is cyclic, or at least spiral in structure. To put this differently, certain more-or-less similar steps tend to recur, in more-or-less similar order, at different phases of an action research study. At the same time (so the action researcher hopes) progress is made towards appropriate action and research outcomes.

A commonly known cycle is that of the influential model of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) mentioned earlier -- plan, act, observe, reflect; then, in the light of this, plan for the next cycle.

It is also generally held that action research is participative, though writers differ on how participative it is. My own preference is to use participative methods. On the other hand I don't see why action research must be limited to this.

So, the extent of participation may vary. In some instances there may be a genuine partnership between researcher and others. The distinction between researcher and others may disappear.

On other occasions the researcher may choose for whatever reason to maintain a separate role. Participation may be limited to being involved as an informant. The participants, too, may choose something less than full partnership for themselves under some circumstances.

Most action research is qualitative. Some is a mix of qualitative and quantitative. All else being equal, numbers do offer advantages. In field settings, though, one often has to make other sacrifices to be able to use them. Most importantly, sometimes numbers are not easily applied to some features of a study. If these include features of particular interest or importance, the choice is between qualitative research or omitting important features.

In addition, developing a suitable quantitative measure is often difficult and time-consuming. It may be more time-efficient to use qualitative data. As I mentioned before, it is also easier to be flexible and responsive to the situation if you are using qualitative methods.

In short, it is my view that action research more often than not exhibits certain features. It tends to be, in some sense of the terms, cyclic, participative, qualitative and reflective.

I see all of these features except the last as choices to be made by the researcher and the other participants. In my view, good action research (and good research of any variety) is research where, among other features, appropriate choices are made. Perhaps even critical reflection might be abandoned for sufficient reason.

"Good" action research

Whatever action research is, I suspect it is mostly or always emergent and responsive. In fact, I think that the choices made about its cyclic and qualitative nature are mostly to be justified in terms of the responsiveness which they allow. This may be true of decisions about participation too.

In many field settings it is not possible to use more traditional quasi-experimental research methods.² They can't readily be adjusted to the demands of the situation. If you do alter them in midstream you may have to abandon the data collected up to that point. (This is because you have probably altered the odds under the null hypothesis.)

But to achieve both action and research outcomes requires responsiveness -- to the situation, and the people, and the growing understanding on the part of those involved. Using a cyclic process in most circumstances enhances responsiveness. It makes sense to design the later stages of an action research activity in such a way that you capitalise on the understanding developed in the early stages.

It is the cyclic nature of action research which allows responsiveness. It is often difficult to know just where a field intervention will end. Precise research questions at the beginning of a project may mislead researcher and clients.

Imprecise questions and methods can be expected to yield imprecise answers initially. But if those imprecise answers can help to refine questions and methods, then each cycle can be a step in the direction of better action and research.

In other words, there are times when the initial use of fuzzy methods to answer fuzzy questions is the only appropriate choice. Action research provides enough flexibility to allow fuzzy beginnings while progressing towards appropriate endings.

To my mind, a cyclic process is important. It gives more chances to learn from experience provided that there is real reflection on the process and on the outcomes, intended and unintended. Qualitative information is less constraining of the process.

Participation is a somewhat different issue, more to do with action than research. Action outcomes can usually be achieved only with some commitment from those most affected. One of the most important ways of securing that commitment is through involving those affected.

There may well be other reasons, too. For instance, for some researchers it is more ethical to use participative methods (in general, this is my position in the action research I do). On some occasions the eventual interpretation of information is richer if involvement is greater.

So far, I have taken the view that action research can take many forms. There are some conditions, however, that I believe are more important. As a starting assumption I assume that good action research is empirical: responsive to the evidence. I also think it is important that the evidence is used critically rather than uncritically.

Again, a cyclic process allows this to happen more easily. If each step is preceded by planning and followed by review, learning by researcher and client is greater.

The quality of evidence can also be increased by the use of multiple sources of evidence within all or most cycles. Differences between data sources, used critically, can then lead the researchers and the participants towards a deeper and more accurate understanding. Literature can be such an alternative data source.

I would sum up my recommendations for good action research in this way:

- Use multiple cycles, with planning before action and critical analysis after it.
- Within each cycle --
 - use multiple data sources;
 - and try to **disprove** the interpretations arising from earlier cycles.

Action research is a family of research processes whose flexibility allows learning and responsiveness. Vague beginnings can move towards better understanding and practical improvement through the critical analysis of the information, the interpretation of it, and the methods used.

Good action researchers, I think, critique what they do and how they do it, the better to learn from the experience. It is the balance between critical reflection and flexibility which allows adequate rigour to be achieved even in confused field settings.

In summary, I assume that action research is true to label: it pursues action and research outcomes. It is most effective when the end result emerges from the data. The conclusions drawn are data-based, preferably drawing the data from multiple sources. The conclusions emerge slowly over the course of the study. At each cycle the researchers challenge the emerging conclusions by vigorously pursuing disconfirming evidence.

I think that the major justification for action research methods is that they can be responsive to the situation in a way that many other research methods can not be, at least in the short term. On these grounds I think action research will usually, though perhaps not always, be cyclic in nature. In the interests of rigour, each cycle will include critical reflection. In most instances it will also be qualitative and participative to some extent.

Notes

1. Modified from Arcs Newsletter, Vol 1. No. 1, May 1993, pages 5-9. I am pleased to acknowledge the help of Ron Passfield and Paul Wildman with the earlier version of this document. [[back](#)]
2. I invite you to choose some simple quasi-experimental field study, and study how well it meets the threats to the validity of its results. Then compare how easily action research might fare in the same setting. Some quasi-experimental research is superb. But I think sometimes the difficulties of field research are used to justify poor quasi-experimental designs. This appears to be because they are traditional, because the

same liberty is less often extended to other research paradigms.
[[back](#)]

References

- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming critical: education knowledge and action research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Checkland, P. (1981) *Systems thinking, systems practice*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1989) *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage.
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R., eds. (1988) *The action research planner*, third edition. Victoria: Deakin University.

Copyright (c) Bob Dick, Ron Passfield, Paul Wildman 1995-2000. This document may be copied if it is not included in documents sold at a profit, and this and the following notice are included.

This document can be cited as follows:

Dick, B. (2000) *A beginner's guide to action research* [On line]. Available at <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/guide.html>

Maintained by [Bob Dick](#); this version 1.08w last revised 20000429

A text version is available at URL <ftp://ftp.scu.edu.au/www/arr/guide.txt>

Return to Papers by Peter Reason

THE ACTION TURN

Toward a Transformational Social science

Reason, P., & Torbert, W. R. (2001). Toward a Transformational Science: a further look at the scientific merits of action research. *Concepts and Transformations*, 6(1), 1-37.

Peter Reason

Center for Action Research in Professional Practice

University of Bath

Bath BA2 7AY, United Kingdom

William R. Torbert

Carroll School of Management

Boston College

Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

The Action Turn

Toward a Transformational Social Science

Abstract

This article offers an epistemological basis for action research, in order to increase the validity, the practical significance, and the transformational potential of social science. The article starts by outlining some of the paradigmatic issues which underlie action research, and argues for a "turn to action" which will complement the linguistic turn in the social sciences. Four key dimensions of an action science are discussed: the primacy of the practical, the centrality of participation, the requirement for experiential grounding, and the importance of normative, analogical theory. Three broad strategies for action research are suggested: first-person research/practice addresses the ability of a person to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life; second-person research/practice engages a face-to-face group in collaborative inquiry; third person research/practice asks how we can establish inquiring communities which reach beyond the immediate group to engage with whole organizations, communities and countries. The article argues that a transformational science needs to integrate first- second- and third-person voices in ways that increase the validity of the knowledge

we use in our moment-to-moment living, that increase the effectiveness of our actions in real-time, and that remain open to unexpected transformation when our taken-for-granted assumptions, strategies, and habits are appropriately challenged. Illustrative references to studies that begin to speak to these questions are offered.

The Action Turn

Toward a Transformational Social Science

In an important article published in *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1978 Susman and Evered reviewed the scientific merits of action research. Given the emergence of constructivist thinking and the significant developments in both participatory philosophy of science and action research practice that have occurred globally during the past twenty years, it seems timely to offer a further look at the merits of action research from a wider and more radical view of the nature of scientific inquiry.

In this article we adopt the perspective that discussions of research methodology in organizational and social science are trapped in a tension between the "empirical positivist" view which dominates the academy and a counter-movement which we will call "postmodern interpretism". The empirical positive perspective adopts a realist ontology and draws on methods based on operationalization, measurement, and the generation and testing of hypotheses ideally through rigorous experiment. Postmodern interpretism, drawing on what is often referred to as the "linguistic turn", views reality as a human construction based in language; and draws on a variety of qualitative methodologies which attempt to portray these constructions, and often to see through or deconstruct taken-for-granted realities.

In making this distinction we are adopting a convenient fiction which obscures important distinctions and arguments. But our purpose here is not to engage in these debates, but to make the wider point that neither of these broad approaches form a satisfactory epistemological basis for action research. We argue that this can only be reached by taking an "action turn" toward studying ourselves in action in relation to others. The action turn, which complements the linguistic turn, places primacy on practical knowledge as the consummation of the research endeavor.

We use the terms *research/practice* and *transformational action research* to differentiate these emergent forms of inquiry from notions of action research based on empirical positivism. We argue in detail the importance of practical knowing, and identify other key features of a transformational action research—participative relationships, experiential grounding and normative theory. Finally, we explore and exemplify three strategies for transformational action research—the first-person, primarily subjective research of individuals inquiring in the midst of everyday practice; the second-person, intersubjective inquiries of groups and communities of co-researchers engaged together critical research/practice; and more distant, and in some senses more "objective", the third-person research/practice of a wider community or organization engaged critical self-exploration.

Positivism, the linguistic turn and the action turn

Susman and Evered pointed to a crisis in organizational science in that "the findings in our scholarly management journals are only remotely related to the real world of practicing managers" (p.582). They pointed out that the positivist approaches to science which have dominated our perspective on research "are deficient in their capacity to generate knowledge for use by members of organizations" (p.585). They point out that action research is future oriented, collaborative, implies system development, generates theory grounded in action, and is agnostic and situational and as such

is clearly *not* supported by a positivist view of science. Susman and Evered argued that the conditions in which all of us try to learn in everyday life are better explored through a range of alternative philosophical viewpoints; Aristotelian praxis, hermeneutics, existentialism, pragmatism, process philosophies and phenomenology all point toward methods for improving validity under action conditions. Susman and Evered concluded:

We hope that this article will enable others to assess the scientific merits of action research. We believe that action research is both ascientific in terms of the criteria of positivist science and relevant in terms of generating good organizational science. As a procedure for generating knowledge, we believe it has a far greater potential than positivist science for understanding and managing the affairs of organizations (p.601).

Despite such arguments, positivist, realist science still holds sway in the core quantitative methods Ph.D. courses and the practices of most academically-based management researchers. Pfeffer has recently argued strongly that the field of management needs to adopt a unifying paradigm for inquiry if it is to achieve the stature and influence of fields like economics and political science, which have achieved increasing consensus on the positivist "rational choice" approach (Pfeffer, 1993). However, empirical positivist assumptions are increasingly called into question and their place as the dominant paradigm of our times increasingly challenged (Gergen, 1994; Van Maanen, 1995a). Indeed, some well-regarded champions of qualitative research strategies have gone so far as to assert that "positivism is passé" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:24).

From our point of view, while the research strategies associated with positivism have their place, it must be a limited place, primarily because *as a point of view* empirical positivism eschews by far the greatest part of the variance in life, and by viewing life from the outside and under strictly controlled conditions, seriously limits the utility of the knowledge produced, as Susman and Evered so clearly explain. This is not to say that there are not many research institutes based in a positivist model that engage in "applied" or "policy" research: it is to say that the positivist paradigm as a whole is misleading when applied to practice. It's focus is entirely on truths in the "out-there" world, rather than on awareness and inquiry into the present relationships among the "in-here," subjective world, the "among-us," interactional world, and the "out-there," world we take as our reality. Therefore, however unequivocal or certain a fact or theory may be as determined from an empirical positivist perspective, it is only indirectly related to the worlds each of us also inhabits and through which we each act. Indeed, by overlooking these worlds and their primary demands (e.g. for effective practice with dignity, passion, and timeliness), or by attempting to subordinate the subjective and the intersubjective moments of life to the objective, the empirical positivist approach becomes actively misleading.

The 'linguistic turn' which has swept the social sciences and humanities since the 1960s places the experiencing subject as more centrally constructing their world. As Reason and Bradbury put it, it brings into mainstream scholarship the Kantian differentiation between the world itself (das Ding an sich) and the phenomenon, or our interpreted experience of the world.

The cognitive turn focused on the cognitive structures (schemata or mental models) which allow us make sense of the world. The linguistic turn, rediscovering Nietzsche's sense of language as an 'army of metaphors', looked at the hitherto underestimated role of language in our construction of our world in which we are always seeking to make (or give) sense. It is now difficult to sustain a position of 'naïve realism.' In scholarly circles it is difficult to suggest that the world exists outside our construction of it (Reason and Bradbury, 2000)

The language turn shakes the foundations of empirical positivism when the individual recognizes that there is an infinite territory of first-person research that positivism ignores. As Van Maanen has

it

Language is auditioning for an a priori role in the social and material world. Moreover, it is a role that carries constitutional force, bringing facts into consciousness and therefore being. No longer then is something like an organization or, for that matter, an atom or quark thought to come first while our understandings, models or representations of an organization, atom or quark come second. Rather, our representations may well come first, allowing us to see selectively what we have described (1995a:134).

In the terms we develop in this article, the language turn invites us to consider what kind of first-person "critical subjectivity" can help each of us become aware of, "deconstruct," and "transgress" beyond our taken-for-granted assumptions, strategies, and habits (Bourdieu, 1991; Macey, 1993; Van Maanen, 1995a). More generally, constructivist approaches (Gadamer, 1981; Gergen, 1985, 1994; Schwandt, 1994; Morgan, 1983; Shotter, 1993) emphasize the important principle that *all* ways of framing and interpreting the world are human constructions framed by language in social interaction. And this is hugely important.

However, while there are 'engaging sympathies' between constructionist approaches and action research (Lincoln), to the extent that the former remain reflective they do not address the action dimension raised by Susman and Evered. They do not address how we inquire in those moments of action when our own subjective framing of situations is unclear, ambivalent, falsely clear, or in conflict with others' framings. They do not address those moments when we are uncertainly in action rather than reflectively "at rest" analyzing a data set. These are times when the question is how to act, not (or not only) in a universalizable fashion, but rather (or also) in a timely, idiosyncratic, ecologically sensitive fashion that catalyzes self or other transformation when appropriate. And when is this *not* the question?

With the advent of paradigmatic pluralism, several authors have attempted to trace the recent history of our changing view of social scientific knowledge. Denzin and Lincoln in their *Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry* identify a series of "moments" or "successive sets of new sensibilities" in the story of qualitative research. In the same Handbook, Guba & Lincoln (1994) offer a very useful discussion of positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism as competing paradigms that frame research, describing each in terms of its ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Overall, these give an account of a move from the clarity and unity of a positivist perspective rooted in a clear sense of Northern World superiority, to current times of relativism, pluralism and constructivism.

But still another transformation, this time toward the *action turn*, is necessary to reach a full understanding of the action research that Susman and Evered called for so long ago. In making the action turn we re-vision our view of the *nature* and *purpose* of social science. Drawing on a participatory paradigm for research (Heron and Reason, 1997; Reason and Bradbury, 2000) we argue that since all human persons are participating actors in their world, the purpose of inquiry is not simply or even primarily to contribute to the fund of knowledge in a field, to deconstruct taken-for-granted realities, or even to develop emancipatory theory, but rather to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action, so that inquiry contributes *directly* to the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the ecosystems of which they are part.

To highlight the radical shift between the basic aims of empirical positivism and participatory action inquiry, we can say that whereas empirical positivism aims at *universalizable, valid certainty in reflection about particular pre-designated questions*, inquiry after the action turn aims at *timely, voluntary, mutual, validity-testing, transformative action at all moments of living*. This is a move away from a primarily reflective science about action and toward critical inquiry-in-action, in

individuals, groups, organizations and the wider community. In our view, action research has for the past 50 years failed to fulfil its promise, failed to make the kinds of contributions that Susman and Evered advocated, because it has remained caught in an empirical positivist view of academic knowledge as being of value for its own sake (Guba and Lincoln, 1994)

However, "postmodern interpretivism" while making an important contribution in moving us beyond the objectivized work of positivism, continues, in our view, owes too much to modernist, reflective science, and fails to embrace the challenge, with which each of us is faced, of how to inquire in the midst of action and to how create communities of inquiry within communities of social practice (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985; Torbert, 1976). It will require fundamental epistemological, political, and spiritual transformations if we are to learn, through constructive, compassionate, and validity-testing actions in real-time communities, the nature and quality of inquiring action. For we would argue that the most significant question any human being faces is how to act in daily life, whether or not the questions or the evidence is clear.

Transformational Science as Research/Practice

Despite the efforts of Susman & Evered and many others to achieve greater legitimacy for action perspectives and despite the current paradigm contestation that we have referred to above, empirical positivism has remained the unquestioned criterion for what constitutes "social science" in at least one major, implicit sense: social science continues to be regarded as a specialized activity pursued by a class of professionals in particular institutions (universities and research institutes)—a specialized activity in which one studies almost anything *except* how one is acting in the present with others. To go beyond the language turn in social science to the action turn is to bring scholarship to life, is to bring inquiry into more and more of our moments of action—not just as scientists if that happens to be our profession, but as organizational and family members, and in our spiritual, artistic, craft, exercise, conversational, sexual, and other activities. The action turn in the social sciences is a turn toward a kind of research/practice open in principle to anyone willing to commit to integrating inquiry and practice in everyday personal and professional settings. In fact, we all inevitably integrate inquiry and practice *implicitly* in our everyday conduct. Nevertheless, the call to integrate inquiry and practice both explicitly and implicitly in our everyday conduct represents a demand that few persons in history have attempted to accept.

We want to highlight four important dimensions of inquiry which are ignored by empirical positivism, by postmodern interpretivism, and even by action research when it is practiced within paradigmatic assumptions prior to the action turn (for a slightly different slant on what follows, see Reason and Bradbury 2000). First, whereas the primary purpose of research in the academic tradition is to contribute to an abstract "body of knowledge" available to third-persons, the primary purpose of research/practice after the action turn is a *practical knowing* embodied in the moment-to-moment action of each research/practitioner, in the service of human flourishing and the flourishing of the eco-systems of which we are a part. Second, since human persons are fundamentally social creatures, human knowing after the action turn is essentially *participative*, growing from collaborative relations with each other as co-inquirers into our world; and in addition, since human persons and communities are a part of the larger cosmos, all knowing is grounded in participation in the wider ecology of living and non-living things. Third, all knowing is based in the sensing, feeling, thinking, attending *experiential presence* of persons in their world. Any form of inquiry that fails to honour experiential presence—through premature abstraction, conceptualization and measurement, or through a political bias which values the experience only of socially dominant or religiously like-minded groups—ignores the fundamental grounding of all knowing. And fourth, all movements of the attention, all knowing, all acting, and all gathering of evidence is based on at least implicit fragments of *normative theory of what act is timely now*. Let us explore these three characteristics of human inquiry after the action turn in more depth.

The consummation of knowing in practice - First, we argue that the very purpose of knowledge is

effective action in the world. Research and action, even though analytically distinguishable, are inextricably intertwined in practice (both the practice of professional researchers as they conduct, analyze, and communicate research and the practice of any of us as we conduct our daily lives). Knowledge is, thus, always gained through action and for action (Macmurray, 1957a; Polanyi, 1958). This has recently been argued to be true even of pure mathematics: attempts to ground mathematics in pure logic have failed (Kline, 1980; Torbert, 1993, Lecture 5). From this starting point, the question of validity of social knowledge is the question, not so much how to develop a *reflective science about* action, but also and primarily how to develop genuinely well-informed action in real-time social life—how to conduct an *action science*. (Torbert, 1976; 1981:145). Argyris (1980; Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985), Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), and Senge (1990) all make similar moves in advocating such related notions as "knowledge organizations" and "organizational learning."

The Scottish philosopher John Macmurray (1957a) argued long ago that "I do" rather than "I think" is the appropriate starting point for epistemology (p. 84).

... most of our knowledge, and all our primary knowledge, arises as an aspect of activities that have practical, not theoretical objectives; and it is this knowledge, itself an aspect of action, to which all reflective theory must refer (p. 12).

As Macmurray also pointed out, the concept of 'action' is inclusive:

In acting the body indeed is in action, but also the mind. Action is not blind... Action, then, is a full concrete activity of the self in which all our capacities are employed (p. 86).

Similarly, John Heron (1996a; 1996b) argues for the consummation of knowing in practice, that "practical knowing... is the consummation, the fulfillment, of the knowledge quest" (1996a:34). If they are to be at all valid and effective, all other ways of knowing (see Table 1) support our skillful being-in-the-world from moment-to-moment-to-moment, our ability to act intelligently in the pursuit of worthwhile purposes:

To say that practice consummates the prior forms of knowing on which it is grounded, is to say that it takes the knowledge quest beyond justification, beyond the concern for validity and truth-values, into the celebration of being-values, by showing them forth. It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action (Heron, 1996a:34).

Empirical positivist research, based on a realist ontology and a correspondence view of truth, is driven by the methodological imperative of removing the bias of the human researcher through watertight methodology—ideally in a double-blind cross-over experimental design (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). The action turn returns the fundamental questions concerning the quality of knowing to the practice of the knowing person in community (see also Shotter, 1993:52). So, the instruments of inquiry and the criteria of excellence in social research after the action turn are no longer primarily methodological. No longer do we ask first, "Is this the "right" method?" Instead, we ask, "What is the quality of knowing within the practice of this person and community? and what qualitative and quantitative evidence—appropriate measures, narratives, and other 'data' of both inquiry process and outcome—can be shown to demonstrate claims to quality?"

It is important to emphasize that this does not mean that the action turn discards the insights of the language turn, or that it ignores methodology as an aspect of inquiry. Of course, the way in which we use language to create our reality is important, but in an action science we use this to construct theories, models, worldviews which have purpose and meaning, which will inform our awareness and practice from moment-to-moment and guide us toward greater human flourishing. And the

various forms of action research can be described in methodological terms: for example, in the planning, action, and evaluating cycle originally described by Lewin (see e.g. Dickens & Watkins, forthcoming 1999); in the rules and methods of action science (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985:236-265); in the democratic dialogues and search conferences of developmental action research (Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996); in the cycles of action and reflection, integrating experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996a); in the integration of four territories of experience of action inquiry (Torbert, 1991); in the four-dimensional cycle of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider, 1998), and so on. But these forms of research/practice are not dominated by methodology; rather they use methodology, just as they use the insights of the language turn, to enhance the inquiring capacity of persons, organizations and communities.

Finally, we want to reemphasize that we are using "action" to encompass both agency and the manifestation of worthwhile qualities of being. We do not want to overemphasize the doing of "agency" over qualities of "being" or "communion," such as presence, relatedness, and empathy (Bakan, 1966; see also Marshall 1984). We would also note at this point that the notion of what constitutes flourishing is itself a question for inquiry, and one which is often neglected among action researchers (see Bradbury and Reason, 2000)

The participatory imperative - Since action is always *interaction*, the action turn in research emphasizes the participatory, relational nature of research. Fundamentally, if one accepts that human persons are agents who act in the world on the basis of their own sensemaking; and that human community involves mutual sensemaking and collective action, it is no longer possible to do research *on* persons. It is only possible to do research *with* persons, including them both in the questioning and sensemaking that informs the research, *and* in the action which is the focus of the research. As we have seen, Macmurray described the self as agent, and he goes on to show how this agency necessarily arises through the interaction of persons in relation (Macmurray, 1957b), which brings him close to the constructionist position of human knowing rooted in relationship expressed by Gergen as *communicamus ergo sum* (Gergen, 1994:viii).

The "reality" of groups, organizations and wider society is a social construction which is primarily established and maintained by conversation (Ford and Ford, 1995). Good conversation requires attuning to hearing and responding to, influencing and being influenced by, other voices and perspectives (Evered & Tannenbaum, 1992). Implicitly in everyday life and explicitly in an action science, persons need to reach beyond merely acknowledging the existence of multiple perspectives and voices to working with them. This means responding intelligently in the moment, coming to timely decisions, exploring presuppositions, inferences, or attributions, and reforming oneself or the conversation from time to time (Torbert, 1999d). Hence, an action science is necessarily a participative form of inquiry (see also Skolimowski, 1994). The inquiry process - which in modern science is idealized as a dispassionate process carried out in reflection (though Mitroff [1974] showed how untrue this was in practice even of physicists) in action science is a passionate embodied and emotional process (as well as an intellectual process) carried on in the heat (or cool) of action.

And, as is already implicit in the foregoing paragraphs, participation is a political as well as an epistemological imperative which affirms the basic human right of persons to contribute to decision which affect them and to knowledge which concerns them and purports to be about them. As Heron points out, this is a necessary extension of the doctrine of Universal Human Rights to the practice of research and the creation of knowledge (1996a:17).

Reason (forthcoming a) goes further to argue that participation is also an ecological imperative, since human persons are a part of (rather than apart from) the planet's life processes. As Abram (1996) has so eloquently argued, human persons interact not only with other persons, but also with the "more than human" world. Following the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Abram shows how the very

process of perception involves participation, and that there is "underneath our literate abstractions, a deeply participatory relation to things and to the earth, a felt reciprocity...." (Abram, 1996:124). We need to see ourselves as participants in what Bateson (1972a) might call a wider ecology of mind.

Experiential grounding - The third attribute of research after the action turn is that it is rooted in each participant's experiential presence in the world (Heron, 1992). The ground of all knowing is the tacit, often pre-verbal, experience of our own presence in the world, and our encounter with the presence of other. Feminist scholarship and practice has taught us that to inquire into women's experience from the dominant masculine perspective is to do violence to it, so research into women's experience of organization must start from women's experience (Marshall, 1995). We would extend this to argue that all research needs to be grounded in an in-depth, critical and practical experience of the situation to be understood and acted in. Sometimes, as we illustrate with Bravette's inquiry into bicultural competence below, it is not even possible to know what are the most appropriate questions to ask until after a period of in depth reflection on experience and an uncovering of what has been ignored or repressed (see also Douglas, 1999).

Of course, as soon as we begin to translate this experiential knowing into words we enter the world of language. But as Heron and Reason argue

Our work with co-operative inquiry, in mindfulness practices and ceremony, and our attempts at aware everyday living all convince us that experiential encounter with the presence of the world is the ground of our being and knowing. This encounter is prior to language and art—although it can be symbolized in language and art. Our experience is that our meeting with the elemental properties of the living world, or the I-Thou encounter with a living tree or person *cannot* be confused with our symbolic constructs... Our warrant, therefore, for the choice and assertion of a participatory worldview is fundamentally experiential (Heron & Reason, 1997:276).

One's sense of experiential presence can vary radically. When our attention is concentrated in thought, as readers' attention now very likely is, we can "awaken" each time we encounter the sensation of our own bodies. But for my thought and my body to meet, I cannot be *thinking* about my body, I need to awaken to my body as a sensual/sensuous presence. Can I continue reading while simultaneously sustaining an awareness of my sensual, emotional, and cognitive presence? The more one experiences this waking up phenomenon to one's body, or to the true otherness of another person, to the being of trees, rocks, and the embodied landscape, the more one experiences life as flowing both from intent outward to effects and from external phenomena inward towards a more and more inclusive awakening and inquiry. This can be a research conducted by each of us in the real time of our own lives—a waking up, where we move from an ego-encapsulated reality to being in an extended reality with a higher degree of self and other awareness—but it is a first- and second-person research/practice outside the realm of both positivist and interpretivist methodologies.

Empirical positivism treats reality as consisting of an "out there" territory that we conceive through our "in here" maps. In the empirical positivist version of reality, the territory is primary and the map is secondary. Indeed, in the most radical version behaviorism (Argyris, 1971; Skinner, 1953, 1971), maps are so dependent on the territory, that they do not deserve treatment as a distinct aspect of reality. The language turn reverses this relationship so that description is seen as constitutive of that described in some kind of reciprocal interaction between the two: our maps are treated as primary and the "out-there" territory as secondary.

In an action science, experiential encounter—tacit, pre-verbal, inchoate—is prior to both description and the object described. 'Reality' can be seen as approached and constructed through the interplay of different qualities, types or territories of knowing—'extended epistemologies'. In our own writing about action forms of inquiry over the years, we have separately developed different ways of

describing four ways of knowing (Reason, 1994a, see Table 1), or four territories of experience (Torbert, 1991, see Table 2). Other authors have provided different maps (Belenky, 1986; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Heron, 1992, 1996a; Park, 1999; Reason, 1994a & b; Shotter, 1993; Torbert, 1991; Wilber, 1998).

The notion of an extended epistemology provides insight into new questions of validity that occur after the action turn. Each aspect of an extended epistemology has its own internal criteria of validity. Some of these are familiar to positivist science: the coherence of propositional argument, the evidence of practical outcomes. Others break new ground: the extent of experiential encounter (Torbert, 1973), the congruence or mismatch between different dimensions of an extended epistemology, e.g. between one's "espoused (propositional) theory" and one's "theory-in-action" (actual pattern of practice) (Argyris & Schon, 1974). These issues are further explored by Bradbury and Reason (2000); the next section revisits the issue of validity.

-Table 1 about here -

- Table 2 about here -

What is most important about Tables 1 and 2 is simply the acknowledgment that there are multiple ways of knowing and multiple territories to be known, and that we can each further the development of our own research/practice (be it a form of social science, of business or political leadership, or an art or craft) with a commitment to engaging, interweaving, and seeking synchrony among more than one mode of knowing across more than one territory.

The second most important commonality to note about these two versions of an extended epistemology is that they both foreground *awareness* (experiential knowing or attention/vision) and *practice* (practical knowing or sensing/performing) as primary, irreducible qualities of reality, along with the two primary qualities recognized by empirical positivism and postmodern interpretivism: mapping (propositional knowing or strategizing in Tables 1 and 2) and the "out-there" territory (outside world in Table 2).

Normative theory about what act is timely in the present. In science after the action turn, there is an important place for theory, but theory that is not merely descriptive, consistent, and universalizable. In science after the action turn, theory is intended to guide inquiry and action in present time. Consequently, a good theory is *normative* (as well as descriptive), *analogical* (as well as inductive and deductive), *timely* (as well as universalizable), and *implementable* (as well as analytic). Good theory after the action turn also seeks surprise (as well as certainty) and conditions for mutual transformation (not conditions for unilateral control). For example, the two versions of an extended epistemology just discussed not only *describe* four types of knowing and four territories for knowing, but also *remind us that we can exercise our awareness now to improve our inquiry* into what is occurring (how to conduct this exercise and why one may wish to do so in more and more moments requires experimentation and support from elder practitioners).

Let us take a sentence or two to give the words *normative*, *analogical*, *timely*, and *implementable* some additional contextual meaning. We take action only in order to create a better state, so good action theory will offer a normative vision of a better state. Gergen (1994) speaks of "generative theory": ideas that inspire and offer new perspectives, that place experience in mythic context that tease the imagination, and so on. Indeed, the very word "action" refers not just to doing certain things to obtain specific results, but to doing things in a way that also questions assumptions and potentially reframes future activity (Arendt, 1959; Pitkin, 1972).

All action frames are both normative and analogical. When policy-makers in the 1960s said "Let's not have another Munich in Vietnam," or when an organizational leader says "That way of treating our new merger partner contradicts our vision of partnership," they are engaging in "analogical theorizing" (Torbert, 1987, 1999c), comparing this situation to another or comparing an abstract vision/principle to a specific act, as we all do implicitly when we try to make sense in the midst of action. Explicit analogical theorizing seeks to articulate a shareable frame for an action or group of actions, establishing its relationship to various short-term and long-term personal, interpersonal, social and ecological patterns or "wholes." Such theorizing occurs in practice and for practice.

Whereas inductive or deductive, descriptive, positivist theorizing seeks generalization, analogical theorizing seeks, not only the most elegant analogies in general, but also and in particular the most timely analogy for the moment of action. For example, Robert Quinn's work (Quinn, 1981, 1988; Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983) offers a normative, analogical theory and measurement process for managers and organizations, based on a Jungian typology, that can both describe where the person or organization is situated currently, but also points toward next steps for development. Another example of a normative, analogical theory and measurement process is developmental theory, which, we would suggest, is the most widely studied, contested, and empirically validated cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural analogical theory of personal, group, organizational, spiritual, and epistemological change. Developmental theory and the evidence supporting its propositions has recently been reformulated from the Buddhist/scientific perspective by Wilber (1980, 1995, 1998), from the Vedic/scientific perspective by Alexander (Alexander & Langer, 1990; Alexander, Rainforth & Gelderloos, 1991; Mason, Alexander et al, 1997), from the Christian/scientific perspective by Fowler (1981), from the psychological perspective by Kegan (1982, 1994) and Overton (1997), and from the organizational/political/action perspective by Torbert (1987, 1991; Fisher and Torbert, 1995). In particular, Torbert's 'developmental action inquiry' theory purports to explain (and offers qualitative and quantitative evidence that support the claims): what time it is now in a person's, project's, or organization's 'career'; what transformations occur when; how personal and organizational transformation either support or inhibit one another (Rooke & Torbert, 1998; Torbert & Fisher, 1992); and what future, normative states of more encompassing awareness, greater participative mutuality, and increasing capacity to celebrate and reconcile spiritual and material differences are possible.

In Mitroff's (1998a & b) formulation, a good theory must include implementation. We go further. A good theory will *begin* by pointing to the relation between theory and *all* the other primary constituents of a good life—meaningful purposes (visioning/framing), excellence of practices (quality of action/implementation), and fruitfulness of outcomes (Torbert, 1994a).

First-, second-, and third-person dimensions of inquiry

So far we have discussed the epistemological underpinnings of action research; we now turn to discuss the broad strategies of research practice that these imply. Both positivist and interpretivist research are forms of third-person research, separate from practice (even when they are conceived of as applicable to practice). The researcher is doing research on third-persons with the intent of writing a report for other third persons. We argue that a complete vision of a transformational social science that generates quantitative, qualitative, and action research, that in turn supports full human flourishing in community and in the more-than-human world, needs to encompass and integrate first-, second- and third-person research/practice concerns. The first-, second-, third-person distinction was first explicitly introduced in this context by Torbert (1998, 1999a, 1999b), having been foreshadowed by Marshall and Reason (1994) who wrote:

All good research is *for me*, *for us*, and *for them*: it speaks to three audiences.... It is *for them* to the extent that it produces some kind of generalizable ideas and outcomes... It is

for us to the extent that it responds to concerns for our praxis, is relevant and timely... [for] those who are struggling with problems in their field of action. It is *for me* to the extent that the process and outcomes respond directly to the individual researcher's being-in-the-world.

First-person research/practice - First person research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act awarely and choicefully, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. First-person inquiry takes us "upstream" toward the source of our attention (showing, for example, how our particular habits of thought sometimes facilitate and other times cut us off from ongoing experiential knowing). This upstream inquiry helps us clarify both "where we are coming from" and the purposes of our inquiry, for ourselves and for others. Reason and Marshall (1987) suggested that researchers should develop awareness of: 1) the existential, life issues they bring to research, the opportunities and challenges offered to them by their gender, class, age, race, employment status, and so on; 2) the psychodynamic issues they carry, often the residue of unresolved childhood grief, fear and anger which may colour the conduct of their inquiry (Heron, 1988); and 3) the archetypal patterns which manifest in their work (Hillman, 1975). Exploration of these issues contributes to what Reason has called *critical subjectivity*:

Critical subjectivity is a state of consciousness different from either the naive subjectivity of "primary process" awareness and the attempted objectivity of egoic "secondary process" awareness. Critical subjectivity means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience, that we accept our knowing is from a perspective; it also means that we are *aware of* that perspective, and of its bias, and we *articulate* it in our communications. Critical subjectivity involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing and thus is very close to what Bateson (1972b) describes as Learning III (Reason, 1994b:327).

Methodologies for first person inquiry "upstream" include autobiographical writing, psychotherapy, meditation, martial arts and other disciplines which develop mindfulness, awareness and presence in action (Houston, 1982), use of artwork (Booth, 1997), sensory awareness (Brooks, 1974), and many others.

First-person "downstream" research/practice can involve critical examination of day-to-day behaviour, drawing on qualities of mindfulness and self-awareness to notice critically the impact of one's actions in the wider world and the congruence or incongruence of one's behaviour with purposes or espoused theories (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Torbert, 1973). Attending to our actions, we can ask whether they are achieving intended outcomes (single-loop feedback); whether they are congruent with the strategy or espoused theory (double-loop feedback); and whether the outcomes are congruent with our purposes (triple-loop feedback).

This "downstream" form of first-person research/practice, while based in personal self-observation-in-action, can be enhanced by journal writing and by careful reflection on audio- and video-tapes of behaviour (Argyris, 1994; Harrison, 1995; Raine, 1998; Torbert, 1976, 1991). The aim is to cultivate moment to moment mindfulness:

... an attention that spans and integrates the four territories of human experience. This attention is what sees, embraces, and correct incongruities among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes (Torbert, 1991: 219).

Of course, at the outset persons engaging in intentional research/practice are not able to do this regularly. Indeed, all of us are running our work, our days and our loves to a greater or lesser extent in habitual, culturally inherited ways. As a person increasingly adopts intentional first-person research/practices, she or he is increasingly waking up to the possibility of integrating inquiry and

action in the present moment, no matter what that moment be. So while we reach for first-person inquiry "online" and moment-to-moment, we can support and develop this capacity by reflecting on action afterwards as well, engaging in systematic cycles of action and reflection, often with the support of peers in co-operative inquiry (Rudolph et al 2000).

Judi Marshall (1992) has written about her first-person research as *Researching Women in Management as a Way of Life*. She concludes that one of many reasons for taking biography seriously is that

my researching is also a way of life, I and 'it' have to continue to grow and develop, otherwise my life will become stuck; and I have to be able to apply what I take from my research as learning. Intellectual knowledge is insufficient on its own; it is best mirrored in action and being. My research is also my life. At their best, knowledge-making and personal development interweave, each sustaining and feeding the other (Marshall, 1992:289; see also Marshall, 1995).

She engages in systematic first-person inquiry into her conduct as one of the few women professors at the University of Bath, attending in detail to the way she presents herself; the way she raises issues in Senate and other University Committees; continually exploring issues about managing relationally (Fletcher, 1995) and drawing attention to issues which are often muted (Marshall, in press 1999).

Gloria Bravette's Ph.D. thesis (1997) provides an account of one woman's personal inquiry into her 'life-world' enabling her to engage in a self-conscious process of transformation from total identification with Anglo norms to a dialectical "bicultural competence." In the course of her research, Bravette engages with a whole range of ways of knowing—experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical. Experientially, she gradually confronts her introjection of the white racist perspective which encourages her to deny her 'blackness' in an attempt to be "one of us," while at the same time experiencing herself as inferior:

(I) did not have a sound identity or sense of self, the result of not being culturally grounded... This is despite the fact that I had been successfully recruited into white UK culture through educational socialization since the age of five. Living the contradictions of the culture as espoused, as a black person, had prevented that successful recruitment, however. What I have painfully come to realize is that culture is in fact group/race and history specific and that as an African (the correct label for me) I had been "culturally misoriented"... in that I had been educated into a western culture that was not my own ... (Bravette, 1997:46).

Presentationally, she tells the story of this personal inquiry through autobiographical writing and by continually challenging the (presumed white) reader to participate in her struggle: "*This is not a neutral document*" she tells us on page 1. Part Four of the thesis is titled "Writing as inquiry—facing up to the bonds that tie." Her choice of presentational form both confronts and draws the reader toward participative, empathic response to her experience.

Bravette also integrates propositional knowing in her work, exploring extensively the literatures on race and culture, on professional practice in education, and on action inquiry methodology. This propositional knowing is intimately bound up with her experience, and leads to her experiments in practical knowing. She develops and begins to put into practice a "vision" of a liberating pedagogy for her educational practice as a University teacher which includes being prepared to stop denying her blackness in the classroom. Her insights are also an integral part of her practice as a mother of three boys, and she provides accounts of her work to help them develop bi-cultural competence (e.g. they join in her study of African history, adopt African names, and study, analyze, and experiment with the difficult experience of being authentically black in [white] British schools).

The foregoing examples of first-person research/practice raise the question, how can we differentiate between better (more valid) and worse (less valid) work in this domain? And as our concern is with developing an action science, the primary questions about validity concern ways in which research/practitioners test the reach of their subjectivity in the midst of their research/practice. They can, for example, explore the degree to which they address Heron and Reason's four types of knowing in their research/practice; or the congruence between Torbert's four territories of experience at any given moment (Torbert, 1991, pp221-227). They can gather evidence of their first-person inquiry competence for their own and others scrutiny. Bravette, for example, based her early inquiry on cycles of action and reflection, carefully monitoring her expectations of her own and others behavior prior to meetings and reflecting on what happened afterward. As her inquiry skills developed she was increasingly able to monitor her experience and behaviour "on line" and use action inquiry to act with increasing purpose and choice.

Second-person research/practice - Second-person research/practice starts when we engage with others in a face-to-face group to enhance our respective first-person inquiries. One of the most clearly articulated approaches to second-person research/practice is co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1971, 1996a; Reason, forthcoming b). In a cooperative inquiry, all those involved in the research endeavour are both co-researchers, whose thinking and decision-making contributes to generating ideas, designing and managing the project, and drawing conclusions from the experience; and *also* co-subjects, participating in the activity which is being researched. A typical inquiry group will consist of between six and twenty people who work together as co-researchers and as co-subjects. As co-researchers they participate in the thinking that goes into the research—framing the questions to be explored, agreeing on the methods to be employed, and together making sense of their experiences. As co-subjects they participate in the action being studied. The co-researchers engage in cycles of action and reflection: in the action phases they experiment with new forms of personal or professional practice; in the reflection phase they reflect on their experience critically, learn from their successes and failures, and develop theoretical perspectives which inform their work in the next action phase. Co-operative inquiry groups thus integrate the four forms of knowing—experiential, presentational, propositional and practical—outlined above.

While co-operative inquiry is a clearly set out methodology, second-person research/practice is always present, albeit underdeveloped, in everyday life. Maybe the most fundamental form of second-person research/practice is friendship; certainly all forms of education, psychotherapy, consulting are at their best forms of second-person inquiry, albeit tacitly. Indeed, most forms of professional practice are at their best forms of mutual inquiry: for example, the doctor patient relationship, often seen as based primarily on medical expertise (and at its worst blatantly authoritarian), can be reframed as an inquiry to which both doctor and patient bring their own different knowledge, skills, and arenas of action (Canter, 1998). Thus a significant form of second person research/practice may be to make explicit and systematic these everyday, tacit forms.

Toulmin and Gustavsen (1996) argue that democratic dialogue is the basis of the quality of work life projects in Scandinavia, appealing to the institution of democracy as a "family of practices" which are well rooted in western tradition. Drawing on a tradition of emancipatory theory, practitioners of participatory research in communities—sometimes referred to the "southern tradition" of participatory action research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Hall, 1993; Selener, 1997; Park, 1999)—base their work in part on Paulo Freire's (1970) practice of dialogue as the basis of *conscientization*. "Participatory researchers engage in dialogue with community members to help people identify their own problems in order to solve them" (Selener, 1997:14; see also Tandon, 1981).

Hilary Bradbury's (1998) study of the Swedish Natural Step ended up having a significant influence on the movement's core self-concept and on its strategies, as a result of second-person research/practice during a day-long meeting to test the validity of her initial findings. The Swedish Natural Step is a major movement toward environmentally sustainable strategies and performance by Swedish companies, municipalities, and households. It develops consensus documents in different

industries and fields based on four simple system conditions for sustainability originally developed in a consensual process among leading Swedish scientists. Whereas the Natural Step leadership had always thought of its success as due to scientific authority of the content of the four system conditions, Bradbury hypothesized, in an extended "learning history" of the movement, that it was the dialogic, consensus-building social process that was at the deepest core of the Natural Step's success in recruiting attention, allegiance, and personal and organizational transformations toward the practice of sustainability. During a day-long feedback and critical discussion of her findings one participant said:

I realize that what is special about The Natural Step is the process [with which] they continually engage and transform business leaders. It's not so much the content of the teaching as I had thought; it's the process which is always ongoing (Bradbury, 1998:61)

Bradbury records that this comment struck a chord in each of those present as indicated by the degree of energy with which people began to develop the idea:

... and this focus defined the second half of the meeting... Participants agreed at the end of the meeting that it had been a powerful one, full of insights on the matter of process which had not, hitherto, received so much explicit attention (p.61-62).

In this new balance of understanding, the second-person, dialogic, consensus-seeking social process began to be seen as primary and the third-person systems conditions or organizational strategies that emerged from such a social process began to be seen as caused by it and therefore as secondary (though, of course, by no means unimportant or inconsequential). This new understanding in turn resulted in significant changes in future action, such as chartering international affiliates, not as for-profit consulting firms with proprietary rights to a specific technology of sustainability, but rather as not-for-profit communities of inquiry about how to build consensus about sustainability strategies in each new setting. Furthermore, Bradbury also publicized her initial "learning history" through a website that reached third-persons not included in the original interviews and attracted a worldwide dialogue and rewriting of the learning history.

Thus, Bradbury's extensive second- and third-person, dialogic testing of her findings not only focused and validated a primary finding of her research, but transformed the movement's future strategies through the very process (dialogic testing and consensus seeking) she was describing. This is a powerful form of validity testing, which can simultaneously validate past findings, illustrate validity through concurrent practice during the validity-testing event, and show the degree to which participants commit themselves to the validity of the finding through its influence on their future actions. Validity procedures in second-person research/practice have been explored in some detail elsewhere. Heron describes a set of procedures to enhance the validity of a co-operative inquiry process, arguing that these "seek to free the various forms of knowing involved from some of the distortions of uncritical subjectivity" (1996a:131-77). These include systematic research cycling, managing divergence and convergence within and between cycles; balancing reflection and action; challenging uncritical subjectivity and intersubjectivity; managing unaware projections and displaced anxiety; attending to the dynamic interplay of chaos and order; securing authentic collaboration. Reason and Goodwin (1998), drawing on the science of complexity to establish criteria of quality research, have argued that second-person inquiry can be seen as an emergent self-organizing process in which the inquiry group is an "excitable medium" (Goodwin, 1994) from which novel knowing can emerge.

Second-person research/practices are intimately connected with first-person research/practice. First-person inquiry is always best practiced in the company of peers—"friends prepared to act as enemies" as Torbert (1981) put it (although Marshall and Reason (1994) have argued it is also

important that friends are prepared to act as friends!). In the co-operative inquiry process, the group planning and reflection stages are clearly second-person research, whereas the action phase, in which group members return to their separate lives and practices, has many of the qualities of first-person research, albeit supported by the existence of the group. For example, in two co-operative inquiries with health practitioners, one exploring the theory and practice of holistic medicine (Reason, 1988), and a second with health visitors (Traylen, 1988) the practitioners took their experiments in new forms of attention and new forms of practice into their everyday work settings. Clearly, the ultimate validity and efficacy of second-person forms of research/practice depend upon the degree to which the co-researchers are observant, timely, and imaginative in their self-disclosure, confrontation, and support of one another (Heron, 1988, 1996a; Torbert, 1973, 1999d). Such actions both reflect and generate intersubjective awareness and compassion.

Third-person research/practice - Third-person research/practice aims to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (say, in a large, geographically dispersed corporation), have an impersonal quality. Third-person research/practice attempts to create conditions which awaken and support the inquiring qualities of first- and second-person research/practice in a wider community, thus empowering participants to create their own knowing-in-action in collaboration with others. In addition, third-person research/practice may aim to speak out to a yet wider audience to influence and transform popular opinion, organization strategy, government policy etc., but it does so in a specific way: through mutuality-enhancing exercises of power that invite third-persons into first-, second-, and third-person research/practice.

For example, Gustavsen has pointed out that experience of action experiments means that we know, collectively as a profession, how to go about building a small team as a learning community, for example in the form of a semi-autonomous work group. This form of small scale (in our terms, second-person) research/practice cannot be programmed, but can be described in principle. A major challenge is to extend these relatively small scale projects so that "rather than being defined exclusively as 'scientific happenings' they (are) also defined as 'political events' with links to a broader debate on industrial democracy" (Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996:11). To this end, Scandinavian researchers have turned their attention to the question of diffusion and have designed a strategy for action research that encompasses networks of organizations within a region of the country:

The aim was... to introduce a support programme of 'reorganizations for continuous improvement', positioned at the intermediate level of the region. In particular, the program's effect should have a broad front effect for companies and public institutions. In fact, the challenge was to apply action research to the largely unexplored level of the region.

Rather than applying a strategy by which individual... researchers worked on single projects, the... strategy involved a research team and a common infrastructure (Englestad, 1996:91).

The project used a variety of interventions in different organizations and linked these through "dialogue conferences" which engaged large numbers people in participative dialogue on developmental tasks. Contrary to modernist researchers who would analyze and present the results of such conferences, in Gustavsen's approach the conferences themselves *are* the first-, second-, and third-person research/practice: the knowing resides not in written reports but in the conference dialogue itself and the subsequent discussions and actions undertaken by the participants to bring about changes in regional educational/economic/community policies and practices.

The Urban Health Partnership, located at the King's Fund in London, has similarly used "future search" and similar conference designs (Weisbord & al., 1992; Weisbord & Janoff, 1995) in what

they call Working Whole Systems. They engage large numbers of people, drawn from different health care, social work and community organizations, in explorations to improve the care of elders in UK inner cities. These interventions require very careful planning and preparation: people from different levels and functions of different organizations need to be involved; the starting questions or 'systems issues' need to be appropriately framed; the venue needs to be one which will hold maybe 100 people, with round tables for small group dialogue and a roving microphone for informal reporting to the whole group; and the facilitators of the event need both to take the authority necessary to manage the structure and guide the discussion *and* enable participants to share their meanings and purposes so that structure and coherence also emerges (see also Bunker & Alban, 1997, and New Economics Foundation, 1998). This is third person research/practice in that it involves ever-wider groups of people: the King's Fund team works to establish an inter-organization planning group, which invites a larger and more inclusive group of people to a Whole System Event, whose effect ripples out to stimulate the self-organizing potential of the wider community and create both better understanding and change (Pratt, Gordon & Pampling, 1999).

There are numerous other examples of large-scale, third-person research/practice in Africa, Latin America, and Europe (e.g. Swantz, 1996; de Roux, 1991; Capewell, 1998, see also Newbury Leukaemia Study Group, 1998, and Granada Television, 1996; Chiu, 1998; see also Rotherham Health Authority, 1998). In the United States, the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force, composed of activists, regional academics, and community people, undertook participatory research in which local people were trained in research methods to establish the extent of absentee ownership of land and mineral rights because of the damage caused to local interests by strip mining (Horton, 1993:88).

In the course of third-person research/practice what look like traditional forms of data gathering may be used—interviews, questionnaires, quantitative methods, historical research, etc. However, they are not used unilaterally and extractively by an external researcher, but rather as part of a community endeavour. In third-person research/practice a central purpose is to feed back research results to the research participants, both as a validity test and in order to create conditions which support first- and second-person research/practice. Both the theory on which the design is based and the measuring instruments which the design supplies are meant to awaken the participants to effective first- and second-person research/practice, to empower them to produce the results they envision and to welcome inquiry that results in re-forming the original research/practice purpose, design, conduct, and results. Torbert (1991, ch. 5) details the characteristics of organizational designs that interweave first-, second-, and third-person research/practice and calls them "liberating disciplines". He illustrates the use of assessment questionnaires and psychometric measures in organizational settings of 100-400 participants, with feedback to the research participants, with the outcomes of validating the instruments in new ways while simultaneously encouraging transformation of individual participants, whole teams, or the overall organizational design, depending on the particular findings (Torbert, 1987, 1991, 1994b).

In one particular case, for example, thirty twelve-person work groups rated the efficacy of fifteen facilitators (working with two groups apiece) in mid-course and again at the conclusion. At mid-course, there was a strong statistically significant difference between the three facilitators who had been ranked highest and the three who had been ranked lowest in terms of how much learning work team members rated themselves as doing. Before revealing these research results (which can be seen as one form of third-person research/practice), the lead organizer asked the facilitators, as a part of their on-going collaborative reflective practice, to describe the common characteristics of their colleagues. The three with whom students perceived themselves as learning most were described as "warm, personal, and encouraging of identification." The three with whom students perceived themselves as learning least were characterized as "relatively distant, task-oriented, and encouraging of internalization." The staff did not characterize the first three as more competent and the second three as less competent (in fact, the aim was to help work team members to be more self-directed, not more identified with staff). When the findings from the work team members were revealed, the

staff group interpreted them as supporting Runkel, Harrison and Runkel's (1971) theory that students and workers expect to comply with external authority, and must go through a stage of identifying with an alternative, collaborative model of behavior before they internalize collaborative values in their own behavior. This collaborative reflection and sense-making (all aspects of second-person research/practice) invited experimental behavior from all staff members during the second half of the course (first-person research/practice). At the end of the course, work team members' ratings of their own learning rose to a statistically significant degree from the mid-course assessments, and there was no longer any significant difference between the scores of the two subgroups discussed at mid-course. We are not arguing that the third-person data at the end of the course prove that the second-person feedback and the first-person experimenting encouraged among the fifteen facilitators was the primary cause of the improved learning ratings (in fact, many different types of assessment data generated many different interventions throughout the course). Rather, we wish to illustrate how different our research/practice becomes when we seek to integrate first-, second-, and third-person forms of inquiry. This interweaving of first-, second-, and third-person research/practice shows us one of many ways that quantitative, qualitative, and action research can be integrated after the action turn.

We would also argue that the growing movement among academic writers to explore how to speak to and influence a wider, third-person audience through writing, lectures, TV, wider forms of public communication, quite different from orthodox forms of "writing up" research, can be seen as an active form of third person research/practice. How do we treat writing itself as action and ask what its effects are on the first- and second-person research/practice of third-persons (Denzin, 1997; Lather, 1995)? Judi Marshall's exploration of *Women Managers Moving On* (1995) is written in such a way as to continually invite the reader to ponder her or his own experiences and to create their own sensemaking of the stories told in the book. Lather's work with women with HIV/AIDS *Troubling the Angels* (Lather, Smithies, & Lather, 1997) is a graphic experiment in which her voice and the voices of the women she worked with and those close to them are placed on the page in a kind of ongoing conversation.

New types of validity-testing of texts are also being suggested. For example, Lather (1993) suggests that social scientists committed to conducting, reporting, and encouraging first-person research/practice develop *situated validity*, *rhizomatic validity*, *reflexive validity*, and *ironic validity*. Situated validity is raised when a text includes not just a disembodied voice, but an embodied, emotional, reflective voice. Rhizomatic validity is raised when a text presents multiple voices defining the situation differently. Reflexive validity is raised when a text attempts to challenge its own validity claims. Ironic validity is raised by inviting further interpretation by readers. These forms of validity can all be seen as relating to the degree of validity of the written social scientific journal article or book *as an action in relation to its readership*—the degree to which the text communicates: 1) the partially self-critical first-person voice that guides it (situated and reflexive validity); 2) the variety of second-person voices that inform the text and may contest the first-person voice (rhizomatic validity); and 3) the creative work of the third-person reader/interpreters of the text (ironic validity).

For example, Torbert (1991) begins with a highly confronting Foreword by Donald Schon (rhizomatic validity) and, after an initial section of theory and third-person data (including surveys and psychometric measures), includes a middle section in the author's first-person voice (situated validity), as well as excerpts in other first-person voices. In Fisher and Torbert (1995), spaces are repeatedly created within the text for the reader's own version of the issues discussed (ironic validity).

Note that at present these criteria of validity are stated in nominal terms (a text either does or doesn't address them). As examples of attempts to meet these criteria accumulate, we can expect ordinal

criteria of better and worse ways of meeting each validity challenge. Indeed, Behar (1997), Denzin (1997), and Van Maanen (1995b) begin to formulate ways of judging the efficacy of the use of first-person authorial voice and experience in studies.

This article remains almost entirely in a third-person voice, but the two different versions of extended epistemologies presented earlier and compared with one another provide a taste of rhizomatic validity. The short quotes from Bravette's dissertation offer hints of what situated validity sounds like. The notion of multiple social science paradigms (empirical positivism, postmodern interpretivism, and participative action inquiry) offers both contingent support for readers' current methodological preferences, while simultaneously inviting you to consider augmenting them through future personal experiments, thus promoting ironic validity in a mild way. And this paragraph embodies the rather limited reflexive validity of this piece.

Finally, third-person research/practice can be seen as part of an effort to create institutions and practices which, appropriately open to continuing inquiry and transformation, have *lasting* value. Can we create communities of inquiry within communities of practice which nurture and encourage a spirit of living inquiry and which have intergenerational value and endurance? We can point to age old traditions of first-, or second-, or third-person research/practice which, repeatedly re-enacted, provide disciplines, ceremonies, celebratory enactments which last from generation to generation. We can see elements of such a spirit of inquiry institutionalized in the constitutional practice of democracy, in the conduct of science to the extent that it is open to peer and public scrutiny, in Zen, Christian prayer and other wisdom traditions (Nielsen, 1996; Spretnak, 1991; Wilber, 1998). But, until now, most practices of inquiry focus *implicitly* on first-, second-, or third-person inquiry, rather than focusing *explicitly* on interweaving all three "persons" of inquiry, and interweaving action and inquiry as well.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize what we see as the benefits that flow from transformational action research and draw out what may not have been sufficiently explicit in the examples given above. We don't necessarily agree with Feyerabend (1975) that paradigms are incommensurable, but we do accept that since we are arguing for a complete reformulation of the practice of inquiry we are asking a lot of readers.

We wish to place the experience and practice of human persons—both individually and in relationship—inquiring into their everyday lives at the center of inquiry. In this view, a change in the quality of our attention in real time is the primary requirement for research and ongoing experimentation with one's own actions in real time is the primary means of conducting research. Theory-building and rigorous empirical validation are important features of research as well, but become misleading when engaged in apart from a concern for encouraging increasing synchrony among first-, second-, and third-person research/practice.

The primary purpose of research/practice is to enhance human flourishing. To do this it must generate valid information within action situations so that those involved can understand them more thoroughly and act in them more effectively. Research/practice is not only about collecting empirical information but about a whole range of information based on the experience of those involved—intuitive inquiry into values and purposes, conceptual inquiry into the frames and sense-making we as actors are bringing to the situation, and practical, sensuous inquiry into our actions as individuals and members of groups and communities.

Thus first-person research/practice, as exemplified by Bravette's inquiry, enables a person to critically explore their own purposes, framings, behaviors and effects and as an outcome of this inquiry to create their own living theories and to improve the quality of their practice. In this example not only is Bravette able to change how she construes her situation in ways that make

possible new ways of acting, but her inquiry speaks out to the UK African-Caribbean community by reformulating the theory of bicultural competence and demonstrating the possibility of different forms of action. Second-person research/practice, as exemplified by Bradbury's work with The Natural Step, helps the organization understand itself in a more realistic way, develops its capacity as a knowledge generating organization, and also speaks to a wider community by providing new ways of thinking about organizing for sustainability. Third-person research/practice, as exemplified by the work in Scandinavia and the work of the Urban Health Partnership shows us how we can not only theorize and research *about* large scale social change, but can begin to understand how to increase the action research capacity of whole organizations or regions. The outcomes reached for are both better social practice (e.g. how to care for elders) and an increase in the democratic involvement of citizens in making sense of their lives and contributing to their communities.

We wish, through our own practice in specific studies and through overview articles such as this one, to influence the tradition of academic inquiry and scholarship in the West to continue to develop and interweave its own forms of first-, second-, and third-person research/practice and thus help to cultivate a greater spirit of living inquiry—of critical subjectivity, of compassionate intersubjectivity, and of constructive objectivity—both in the academy and in our wider culture. We believe that a full-fledged social science after the action turn will not just describe an external reality, but will support personal, social, and epistemological inquiry and transformation. This belief raises far more questions than this article answers, and we hope that what we have written motivates readers to join us in pursuing those questions.

Table 1

Epistemology:

Four ways of knowing and critical subjectivity

A participative worldview sees reality as subjective-objective and involves an extended epistemology. As human persons we participate in and articulate our world in at least four interdependent ways: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. These four forms of knowing can be seen as aspects of human intelligence and ways through which we dance with the primal cosmos to co-create our reality (Heron, 1992).

Experiential knowing means direct encounter, face-to-face meeting: feeling and imaging the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. It is knowing through participative, empathic resonance with a being, so that as knower I feel both attuned with it and distinct from it. It is also the co-creative shaping of a world through mutual encounter. Experiential knowing thus articulates reality through inner resonance with what there is, and is the essential grounding of other forms of knowing.

Presentational knowing emerges from and is grounded on experiential knowing. It clothes our encounter with the world in the metaphors and analogies of aesthetic creation. Presentational knowing draws on expressive forms of imagery, using the symbols of graphic, plastic, musical, vocal and verbal art-forms, and is the way in which we first give form to our experience. These forms symbolize both our felt attunement with the world and the primary meaning which it holds for us.

Propositional knowing is knowing in conceptual terms; knowledge by description of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. This kind of knowing is expressed in

statements, theories, and formulae that come with the mastery of concepts and classes that language and number bestows. Propositions themselves are carried by presentational forms—the etymologies, the sounds, or the visual shapes of the spoken or written word or number—and are ultimately grounded in our experiential articulation of a world.

Practical knowing is knowing how to do something, demonstrated in a skill or competence. It presupposes a conceptual grasp of principles and standards of practice, presentational elegance, and experiential grounding in the spatio-temporal situation within which the action occurs. It fulfills the three prior forms of knowing, brings them to fruition in purposive deeds, and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment.

Table 2

Four Territories of Experience

Contrary to the map/territory distinction in positivism, inquiry after the action turn distinguishes among four territories of experience that our awareness, conversations, and organizational activities can attempt to attune to, embrace, and align (Torbert, 1983, 1991; Fisher & Torbert, 1995). These four territories can be named:

At the *personal* scale: In *conversational* moves: *Organizationally*:

1. intentional attending framing visioning
2. thinking (Positivism's 'map') advocating strategizing
3. sensing/acting/perceiving illustrating performing
4. outside (Positivism's 'territory') inquiring assessing

world

Only ongoing, real-time effort to attune to all four -- through intentionally attending to single-, double-, and triple-loop feedback, in first-, second-, and third-person research/practice -- reveals incongruities and develops commitment to transforming toward a more awakening, more effective alignment.

References

Abram, D.

1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: perception and language in a more than human world*.

New York: Pantheon.

Alexander, C. & Langer, E. (Eds.)

1990. Higher Stages of Human Development. NY: Oxford University Press.

Alexander, C., Rainforth, M. & Gelderloos, P.

1991. "Transcendental Meditation, self actualization, and psychological health: A conceptual overview and statistical meta-analysis". Journal of Social Behavior and Personality 6:189-247.

Arendt, H.

1959. The Human Condition Garden City NY: Doubleday Anchor.

Argyris, C.

1971. "Essay review of B. F. Skinner's Beyond Freedom and Dignity". Harvard Educational Review, 41: 550-567.

Argyris, C.

1980. Inner Contradictions of Rigorous Research New York: Academic Press.

Argyris, C. & Schon, D.

1974. Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Argyris, C. & Schon, D.

1978. Organizational Learning. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley.

Argyris, C., Putnam, R. & Smith, D.

1985. Action Science: Concepts, Methods, and Skills for Research and Intervention. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bakan, D.

1966. The Duality of Human Existence - Isolation and Communion in Western Man. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bateson, G.

1972a. Steps to an Ecology of Mind. San Francisco: Chandler.

Bateson, G.

1972b. "The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication." In Steps to an Ecology of Mind. San Francisco: Chandler.

Behar, R.

1996. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J.

1986. *Women's Ways of Knowing: the development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic Books.

Bernstein, R.

1988. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*. Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Booth, E.

1997. *The Everyday Work of Art*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

Bourdieu, P.

1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bradbury, H.

1998. "Learning with the Natural Step: Cooperative Ecological Inquiry Through Cases, Theory, and Practice for Sustainable Development". Chestnut Hill MA: Boston College Organizational Studies Doctoral Dissertation.

Bravette, G.

1997. "Toward Bicultural Competence: Researching for Personal and Professional Transformation". Bath, England: University of Bath School of Management Doctoral Dissertation.

Brooks, C. V. W.

1974. *Sensory Awareness: the rediscovery of experiencing*. Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson Publishers.

Bunker, B., & Alban, B.

1997. *Large Group Interventions: engaging the whole system for rapid change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C.

1966. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago: Rand-McNally.

Canter, R. J.

1998. "Clinical Decision Making in a Surgical Outpatients: relating the science of discovery with the science of implementation". Bath, England: University of Bath

School of Management Doctoral Dissertation

Capewell, E.

1998. "The development of a participatory action enquiry into the incidence of leukaemias and related cancers in Newbury". Unpublished Diploma in Action Research, University of Bath.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S.

1986. *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. Basingstoke: Falmer Press.

Chiu, L. F

1998. *Woman to Woman: promoting cervical screening amongst minority ethnic women in primary care*: Department of Health Promotion, Rotherham Health Authority.

Cooperrider, D., and Srivastva, S.

1987. "Appreciative inquiry in organizational life." In R. Woodman and W. Pasmore, *Research on Organizational Change and Development*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Cooperrider, D. L.

1998. "Capturing What Matters Most in the Practice of Appreciative Inquiry: a positive revolution in change." Paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, San Diego.

de Roux, G. I.

1991. "Together against the Computer: PAR and the struggle of Afro-Colombians for public services". In O. Fals-Borda & M. A. Rahman Eds., *Action and Knowledge: breaking the monopoly with Participatory action research*: 37-53. New York: Intermediate Technology Pubs/Apex Press.

Denzin, N. K.

1997. *Interpretive Ethnography: ethnographic practices for the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y.

1994. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dickens, L. N., & Watkins, K. E.

forthcoming 1999. "Action Research: Reinterpreting Lewin". *Management Learning Special Issue: The Action Dimension*.

Douglas, C.

1999. "From Surviving to Thriving; Black women managers in Britain". Bath, England: University

of Bath School of Management Doctoral Dissertation (unexamined as at 1/3/99). Englestad, P. H.

1996. "The Development Organization as Communicative Instrumentation; experiences from the Karlstad program". In S. Toulmin & B. Gustavsen (eds.), *Beyond Theory: changing organizations through participation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Evered, R. & Tannenbaum, B.

1992. "A dialogue on dialogue". *Journal of Management Inquiry* 1: 43-55.

Fals-Borda, O., & Rahman, M. A. (eds.).

1991. *Action and Knowledge: breaking the monopoly with participatory action research*. New York: Intermediate Technology Pubs/Apex Press.

Feyerabend, P.

1975. *Against Method: outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*. London: NLB.

Fisher, D. & Torbert, W. R.

1995 *Personal and Organizational Transformation: The true challenge of continual quality improvement*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Fletcher, J. K.

1998. "Relational Practice: a feminist reconstruction of work". *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 72: 163-186.

Ford, J. & Ford, L.

1995. "The role of conversations in producing intentional change in organizations". *Academy of Management Review* 20: 541-570.

Fowler, J.

1981. *Stages in Faith*. New York: Harper & Row.

Freire, P.

1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.

Gadamer, H.

1981. *Truth and Method*. New York: Continuum.

Gergen, K. J.

1985. "The social constructionist movement in modern psychology". *American Psychologist*, 40: 266-275.

Gergen, K. J.

1994. *Realities and Relationships: soundings in social construction*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Goodwin, B.

1994. *How the Leopard Changed its Spots: the evolution of complexity*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Granada Television.

1996. *World In Action: "Shadow of the Bomb"*.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S.

1994. "Competing paradigms in qualitative research". In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* pp. 105-117. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

Hall, B.

1993. "Participatory Research". *International Encyclopedia of Education*. London: Pergamon.

Harrison, R.

1995. *Consultant's Journey: a dance of work and spirit*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Heron, J.

1971. *Experience and Method: an inquiry into the concept of experiential research*. Human Potential Research Project, University of Surrey.

Heron, J.

1988. "Validity in co-operative inquiry". In P. Reason (ed.), *Human Inquiry in Action*; 40-59. London: Sage.

Heron, J.

1992. *Feeling and Personhood: psychology in another key*. London: Sage.

Heron, J.

1996a. *Co-operative Inquiry: research into the human condition*. London: Sage.

Heron, J.

1996b. "Quality as Primacy of the Practical". *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(3): 41-56.

Heron, J., & Reason, P.

1997. "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm". *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(3): 274-294.

Hillman, J.

1975. *Revisioning Psychology*. New York: Harper Collophon.

Horton, B. D.

1993. "The Appalachian Land Ownership Study: research and citizen action in Appalachia". In P. Park, M. Brydon-Miller, B. Hall, & T. Jackson Eds., *Voices of Change: Participatory research in the United States and Canada*. Westport, Conn: Bergin and Garvey.

Houston, J.

1982. *The Possible Human*. Los Angeles: J. P.Tarcher.

Kegan, R.

1980. *The Evolving Self*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R.

1994. In *Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Kline, M.

1980. *The Loss of Certainty*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lather, P. 1993. "Fertile Obsession: Validity after Poststructuralism." *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34: 673-693.

Lather, P.

1995. "The Validity of Angels: Interpretive and Textual Strategies in Researching the Lives of Women with HIV/AIDS". *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11: 41-68.

Lather, P., Smithies, C., & Lather, P. A.

1997. *Troubling the Angels : Women Living With Hiv/AIDS*: Westview Press.

Lincoln, Y. S.

1997. "The Sixth and Seventh Moments in Qualitative Research". *COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY* 20. Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, University of Bath.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G.

1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Macey, D.

1993. *The Lives of Michel Foucault* New York: Pantheon.

Macmurray, J.

1957a. *Persons in Relation*. London: Faber and Faber.

Macmurray, J.

1957b. *The Self as Agent*. London: Faber and Faber.

Marshall, J.

1984. *Women Managers: travelers in a male world*. Chichester: Wiley.

Marshall, J.

1992. "Researching women in management as a way of life". *Management Education and Development*, 23(3): 281-289.

Marshall, J.

1995. *Women Managers Moving On - Exploring Career and Life Choices*. London: International Thomson Publishing Europe.

Marshall, J.

In press 1999. "Living Life as Inquiry. Systematic Practice and Action Research" 12(2)

Marshall, J., & Reason, P.

1994. "Adult Learning in Collaborative Action Research: reflections on the supervision process". *Studies in Continuing Education: Research and Scholarship in Adult Education*, 15(2): 117-132.

Mason, L., Alexander, C., Travis, F., Marsh, G., Orme-Johnson, D. Gackenbach, J., Mason, D., Rainforth, M. & Walton, K.

1997. "Electrophysiological correlates of higher states of consciousness during sleep in long-term practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation program". *Sleep* 20: 102-110.

Mitroff, I.

1974. *The Subjective Side of Science: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Psychology of the Apollo Moon Scientists* Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Mitroff, I.

1998a. *Smart Thinking for Crazy Times: The art of solving the right problems*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Mitroff, I. I.

1998. "On the Fundamental Importance of Ethical Management: Why Management Is the Most Important of All Human Activities". *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 7(1): 68-79.

Morgan, G.

1983. *Beyond Method: Strategies for social research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

New Economics Foundation.

1998. *Participation Works: 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century*. London: New Economics Foundation.

Newbury Leukaemia Study Group.

1998. <http://www.newbury.net/nlsg>.

Nielsen, R.

1996. *The Politics of Ethics: Methods for acting, learning, and sometimes fighting, with others in organizational life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nonaka, I. & Takeuchi, H.

1995. *The Knowledge-Creating Company*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Overton, W.

1997. Developmental psychology: philosophy, concepts, and methodology. In R. M. Lerner (ed.), *Theoretical Models of Human Development* (Volume 1 of W. Damon [Ed.-in-Chief] *Handbook of Child Psychology* [5th ed.]) New York: Wiley.)

Park, P.

Forthcoming 1999. "People, Knowledge, and Change in Participatory Research". *Management Learning*.

Pfeffer, J.

1993. "Barriers to the advancement of organizational science: paradigm development as a dependent variable". *Academy of Management Review* 18: 599-620.

Pitkin, H.

1972. *Wittgenstein and Justice*. Berkeley CA: The University of California Press.

Polanyi, M.

1958. *Personal Knowledge: towards a postcritical philosophy*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul.

Pratt, J., Gordon, P., Plamping, D.

1999. *Working Whole Systems*. London: King's Fund.

Quinn, R.

1981. A competing values approach to organizational effectiveness. *Public Productivity Review*. 5: 122-140.

Quinn, R.

1988 *Beyond Rational Management*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quinn, R. & Cameron, K.

1983. Organizational life cycles and shifting criteria of effectiveness: some preliminary evidence. *Management Science*. 29(1): 33-51.

Quinn, R. & Rohrbaugh, J.

1983. A spatial model of effectiveness criteria: toward a competing values approach to organizational analysis. *Management Science*. 29(3): 363-377.

Raine, N.

1998. *After Silence: rape and my journey back*. New York: Crown.

Reason, P.

1988. "Whole Person Medical Practice". In P. Reason (ed.), *Human Inquiry in Action*: 102-126. London: Sage.

Reason, P. (ed.).

1994a. *Participation in Human Inquiry*. London: Sage.

Reason, P.

1994b. "Three approaches to participative inquiry". In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*: 324-339. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Reason, P.

1996. "Reflections on the Purpose of Human Inquiry". *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(1):15-28.

Reason, P.

Forthcoming a. "Political, Epistemological, Ecological and Spiritual Dimensions of Participation". *Journal of Organizational Symbolism*.

Reason, P.

Forthcoming b. "Integrating Action and Reflection through Co-operative Inquiry". *Management Learning*.

Reason, P., & Goodwin, B.

1998. "Toward a Science of Qualities in Organizations: lessons from complexity theory and postmodern biology". Unpublished Paper, Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, University of Bath & Schumacher College, Totnes, Devon.

Reason, P. & Marshall, J.

1987. Research as personal process. In D. Boud & V. Griffin Eds., *Appreciating Adult Learning*. London: Kogan Page.

Rooke, D. & Torbert, W.

1998. "Organizational transformation as a function of CEOs' developmental stage". *Organization Development Journal* 16: 11-28.

Rotherham Health Authority.

1998. *Woman to Woman: cervical screening pack for minority women*. Rotherham, UK: Rotherham Health Authority.

Runkel, P, Harrison, R., & Runkel, M.

1971. *The Changing College Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Schwandt, T. A.

1994. "Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry". In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln Eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*: 118-137. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Selener, D.

1997. *Participatory Action Research and Social Change*. Cornell Participatory Action Research Network, Cornell University.

Senge, P.

1990. *The Fifth Discipline*. New York: Currency Doubleday.

Shotter, J.

1993. *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: social construction and knowing of the third kind*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Skinner, B.

1953. *Science and Human Behavior*. New York: Macmillan.

Skinner, B.

1971. *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. New York: Knopf.

Skolimowski, H.

1994. *The Participatory Mind*. London: Arkana.

Spretnak, C.

1991. *States of Grace: The recovery of meaning in the postmodern age*. New York: Harper Collins.

Susman, G. & Evered, R.

1978. An assessment of the scientific merits of action research. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 23: 582-603.

Swantz, M.-L.

1996. "A Personal Position Paper on Participatory Research: personal quest for living knowledge". *Qualitative Inquiry: Special Issue Quality in Human Inquiry*, 2(1): 120-136.

Tandon, R.

1981. "Dialogue as inquiry and intervention". In P. Reason & J. Rowan (eds.), *Human Inquiry, a sourcebook of new paradigm research*. Chichester: Wiley.

Torbert, W.

1973. *Learning from Experience: Toward Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Torbert, W.

1974. "Doing Rawls justice". *Harvard Educational Review* 44: 459-70.

Torbert, W.

1976. *Creating a Community of Inquiry*. London: Wiley.

Torbert, W.

1981. Why educational research is so uneducational: toward a new model of social science based on collaborative inquiry. In P. Reason and J. Rowan, *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*. London: Wiley.

Torbert, W.

1983. "Research Cultivating Executive Mind, Timely Action." *ReVision* 4: 1-23.

Torbert, W.

1987. *Managing the Corporate Dream: Restructuring for Long-term Success*. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin.

Torbert, W.

1989. "Leading organizational transformation". In R. Woodman & W. Pasmore Ed.s *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Vol. 3 Greenwich CT: JAI Press.

Torbert, W.

1991. *The Power of Balance: Transforming Self, Society, and Scientific Inquiry* Sage Publications: Newbury Park CA.

Torbert, W.

1993. Sources of Excellence: An Unorthodox Inquiry into Quality in Recent U.S. Presidencies, in Business Leadership, in Management Education, in Adam Smith's Ethics, and in Pythagorean Mathematics Cambridge MA: Edge\Work Press.

Torbert, W.

1994a. "The Good Life: good money, good work, good friends, good questions." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 3(1): 58-66.

Torbert, W.

1994b. "Cultivating post-formal development: higher stages and contrasting interventions." In M. Miller & S. Cook-Greuter (eds.) *Transcendence and Mature Thought in Adulthood*. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Torbert, W.

1998. "Developing Courage and Wisdom in Organizing and Sciencing." In S. Srivastva & D. Cooperrider (eds.), *Organizational Wisdom and Executive Courage*. San Francisco: The New Lexington Press.

Torbert, W.

1999a. "Creating a transformational social science: Integrating quantitative, qualitative, and action research". In F. Sherman & W. Torbert Ed.s *Transforming Social Inquiry, Transforming Social Action: Creating Communities of Practice at the University and in the Community*. Norwood MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Torbert, W.

1999 b. "The call to bridge knowledge and action: the response of the Boston College PhD Program in Organization Transformation". In F. Sherman & W. Torbert Ed.s *Transforming Social Inquiry, Transforming Social Action: Creating Communities of Practice at the University and in the Community*. Norwood MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Torbert, W.

1999c. "The distinctive questions Developmental Action Inquiry asks. Special issue of *Journal of Management Learning*". Originally presented at Academy of Management Symposium on The Action Dimension in Management: Different Approaches to Research, Teaching, and Development, Boston: August 1997.

Torbert, W.

1999d. "The challenge of creating a community of inquiry among scholar-consultants critiquing one another's theories-in-practice". In F. Sherman & W. Torbert (eds.), *Transforming Social Inquiry, Transforming Social Action: Creating Communities of Practice at the University and in the Community*. Norwood MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Toulmin, S., & Gustavsen, B.

1996. *Beyond Theory: changing organizations through participation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Traylen, H.

1988. "Confronting Hidden Agendas: Co-operative inquiry with health visitors." In P. Reason (ed), *Participation in Human Inquiry*: 59-81. London: Sage.

Van Maanen, J.

1995a. "Style as theory." *Organization Science* 6:133-143.

Van Maanen, J.

1995b. *Representation in Ethnography* Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Van Maanen, J.

1998. *Qualitative Studies of Organizations: The Administrative Science Quarterly series in organization theory and behavior*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Weisbord, M. R., & al.,

1992. *Discovering Common Ground—How Future Search Conferences Bring People Together to Achieve Breakthrough Innovation, Empowerment, Shared Vision, and Collaborative Action*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Weisbord, M. R., & Janoff, S.

1995. *Future Search: an action guide to finding common ground in organizations and communities*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Wilber, K.

1980. *The Atman Project: A transpersonal view of human development*. Wheaton IL: The Theosophical Publishing House.

Wilber, K.

1995. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*. Boston: Shambala.

Wilber, K.

1998. *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion*. New York: Random House.

Footnote

In writing of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and objectivity, we are not referring to "naïve", "given", or "received" notions of these words, but to the qualities that result from disciplined inquiry-in-action by each researcher. These qualities can initially be suggested by the phrases "critical subjectivity", "compassionate intersubjectivity", and "constructive objectivity". See later sections for further detail.

Handbook of Action Research

Participative Inquiry and Practice

edited by

PETER REASON AND HILARY BRADBURY

2001
WR ~~1~~ 77 OUT
(FOR Pres.)



SAGE Publications
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

25 Educational Action Research

KEN ZEICHNER

The difficult thing about doing action research is that you have to override most of what you've learned about research as an activity. In a traditional research culture you begin by framing a question, setting up a situation which might provide some information, collecting data which bears on the question, then writing up the results. Action research isn't like that at all. The research activity begins in the middle of whatever it is you're doing – something happens you didn't expect . . . and you begin wondering what's going on . . . The hardest part of beginning an action research project is developing the discipline to keep a written account of what's happening, particularly when you have no idea of what you're looking for. For unlike traditional research, action research begins not with a research question but with the muddle of daily work, with the moments that stand out from the general flow . . . (Newman, 1998: 2–3)

Last year I noticed that the children in my class were creating groups segregated by gender, and I wrote about it in my journal as I wrote about other issues and events. What I did not do last year was to start out by saying, 'I'm going to study gender issues in my classroom,' and to limit my observations and notes to that. (Streib, in Threalt et al., 1994: 237)

My question emerged out of what I understood to be problematic classroom dynamics that surfaced immediately at the beginning of the year. For one thing, eight boys . . . dominated the classroom especially during all class discussions. A second interesting pattern emerged. Whenever I asked the class to voluntarily form groups, line up, or make a circle, they did so in exactly the same fashion – sorting themselves neatly first by gender, then by ethnic and racial affiliation. My questions were: How can I increase participation in all class discussions by those less willing or able to share? How can I help the students in my classroom feel comfortable working with diverse groupings of classmates and ultimately overcome, at least part of the time, their desire to always be with their friends? (Coccarri, 1998: 2–3)

These excerpts from the action research reports of teachers in the USA illustrate some of the variety that exists in the ways that teachers¹ have conducted action research. In the first two cases, the teachers

began by keeping journals on many aspects of their practice and eventually, for the second teacher, the issue of gender segregation in small-group work emerged for further study. This teacher's documentation was broad-ranging, focusing on many issues simultaneously and the inquiry did not necessarily follow the action research spiral of plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). In the third case, the teacher began with a specific focus on two questions and the research proceeded, as do most studies in this school district-based programme, according to the action research spiral.

This chapter will examine some of the variety that has come to exist in educational action research in English-speaking countries. We will begin with an examination of the different traditions of action research that have exerted much influence on the emergence of educational action research in many different countries. Then, after a discussion of the different ways in which educational action research is conceptualized, organized, and supported in North America, we will examine educational action research both as a professional development activity and as a form of knowledge production.

Traditions of Action Research in Education

There are five major traditions of educational action research in English-speaking countries that have exerted influence, in conjunction with local factors, on the development of action research in the educational systems of many countries. First, there is the action research tradition in the USA that developed directly out of the work of Kurt Lewin and was brought into US schools by Stephen Corey and others at the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute at Columbia University. Secondly, there is the British teacher-as-researcher movement that evolved in the 1960s and 1970s out of the curriculum reform work of British teachers and the support provided by several academics like Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott. Thirdly, there is the Australian participatory action research movement, supported by the work of

Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart at Deakin University and other Australian academics, that was greatly influenced by educational action research in the UK but that also developed in response to indigenous factors within Australia. Fourthly, there is the contemporary teacher researcher movement in North America that has been developed since the 1980s primarily by teachers, often with the support of their university colleagues and subject matter associations. Finally, there is the recent growth of self-study research by college and university educators who inquire into their own practice as teachers and teacher educators. Educational action research has also been influenced by the tradition of participatory research which developed in Africa, Latin America and Asia with oppressed groups and later was adapted to community-wide research in North America. This explicitly political form of action research (see Fals Borda, Chapter 2 and Hall, Chapter 15) often includes attention to the education sphere, but usually goes beyond it.

The action research tradition in the USA

In the 1940s and 1950s Stephen Corey, head of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute for School Experimentation at Columbia University, and his colleagues drew directly upon the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin and brought action research into education. The Institute was formed in 1943 to improve the rate of curriculum change in schools and to reduce the gap between research knowledge and practice in classrooms (Olson, 1990). Corey (1953) believed that teachers would make better decisions in the classroom if they conducted research to determine the basis for their decisions.

Corey and his associates at the Institute worked co-operatively with teachers, principals and supervisors in school districts across the USA in the late 1940s and 1950s on a variety of group research efforts in what was referred to as the 'cooperative action research movement' (e.g., Cunningham and Miel, 1947; Foshay, Wann and Associates, 1954).

Like Lewin, Corey saw action research as a cyclical process with each cycle of research affecting subsequent ones. Corey (1953) outlined several distinct phases of the action research process: (1) the identification of a problem area; (2) the selection of a specific problem and formulation of a hypothesis or prediction that implies a specific goal and a procedure for reaching it; (3) the careful recording of actions and accumulation of evidence to determine if the goal has been achieved; (4) the inference from this evidence of generalizations regarding the relation between actions and the desired goal; and (5) the continuous retesting of these generalizations in action (pp. 40-1).

Corey's understanding of the action research process was generally similar to Lewin's in terms of

the focus on the research being conducted in a group and the emphasis on the recursive nature of the action research process where researchers need to allow their initial understandings of a problem to shift to remain relevant to changing situations. Corey's view of the action research process differed from Lewin's, however, because of his emphasis on hypothesis formulation and testing. For Corey's students and those who followed him on the faculty at the Institute, action research increasingly became a linear problem-solving process as opposed to the recursive cyclical process that it had been for Lewin and Corey (e.g., Taba and Noel, 1957). It also increasingly became identified as a form of inservice teacher education as opposed to a methodology for knowledge production in education (e.g., Shumsky, 1958).

Corey spent much effort in defending action research as a legitimate form of educational inquiry (e.g., Corey, 1949) against attacks from the mainstream academic research community, but he was largely unsuccessful in doing so. Action research was severely attacked by academic researchers (e.g., Hodgkinson, 1957) and largely disappeared from the USA education literature until the 1980s when a new North American teacher research movement appeared.

The teacher-as-researcher movement in the UK

Following the decline of action research in the USA by the early 1960s, the idea of action research in the field of education emerged in the UK in the context of school-based curriculum development in the 1960s. According to John Elliott (1991, 1997) who was one of the central players in this movement, both as a secondary school teacher and university academic, this teacher-led movement arose in response to large-scale student disaffection in British secondary schools. In Elliott's view, it was from the attempts by teachers in some innovative secondary modern schools to restructure and reconceptualize the humanities curriculum that the ideas of teacher-as-researcher, teaching as a reflexive practice, and teaching as a form of inquiry emerged.

Another influence on the development of educational action research in Britain during this period was the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations which had been set up in 1947 to develop further practices that psychologists had used during the Second World War to train officers and resettle prisoners. There were strong parallels between the work of this institute and the Research Center for Group Dynamics that Lewin had set up in the USA (Wallace, 1987). According to Bridget Somekh (February 1998, personal communication), two other influences on the development of the teacher-as-researcher movement in Britain were the Educational Priority Area Programme that involved teachers and

academics in collaborative research and the US social studies curriculum, 'Man: a Course of Study'.

The bottom-up curriculum reform work initiated by British teachers and later conceptualized and documented by academics like Lawrence Stenhouse, John Elliott, Jean Ruddick and others involved many different initiatives designed to make the curriculum more relevant to the lives of students, such as restructuring the content of the curriculum around life themes, transforming the instructional process from a transmission mode to a more interactive and discussion-based mode, using multiage grouping patterns, etc.

A number of major curriculum reform projects were initiated in the 1960s and 1970s by Stenhouse, Elliott and others, which employed and further developed the idea of action research as curriculum development. These included the 'Humanities Curriculum Project', which dealt with the teaching of controversial issues (Stenhouse, 1968), the 'Ford Teaching Project', which dealt with implementing an inquiry/discovery approach to teaching (Elliott, 1976/77) and the 'Teacher-Student Interaction and Quality of Learning Project' which focused on the problems of teaching for understanding within the context of a system of public examinations (Elliott and Ebutt, 1986).

All of these projects involved university academics working with teachers and represented a rejection of a standards or objectives-based approach to curriculum development in favour of one that is based on a pedagogically driven conception of curriculum change as a process dependent on teachers' capacities for reflection. According to this view, the act of curriculum theorizing is not so much the application in the classroom of theory learned in the university as it is the generation of theory from attempts to change curriculum practice in schools (Elliott, 1991; Stenhouse, 1976).

The efforts of John Elliott, Peter Holly, Bridget Somekh and many others in the UK led to the establishment of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), an international network that has sponsored conferences, published action research studies and discussions of action research methodology. This network was instrumental in establishing the journal *Educational Action Research* which is the major international journal for action research in education today.

Participatory action research in Australia

Grundy (1997) describes a number of political, social and economic conditions that fostered a receptivity within Australia to the idea of teachers as producers of educational knowledge. Among these were three projects in the 1970s funded by the Commonwealth Schools Commission, 'The Innovative Grants Project', 'The Language and Learning Project' and

the 'Curriculum Development Centre'. These projects, as well as changing conceptions of inservice teacher education at the state level, and the growth of action research in the education units of tertiary institutions, stimulated a lot of school-based curriculum development and evaluation, and teachers studying their own practices in Australian schools.

Australian educational action research developed with close ties to the British teacher-as-researcher movement because Stephen Kemmis, one of the leading proponents of educational action research in Australia, as well as other Australian academics, had spent time working with Elliott and his colleagues at the University of East Anglia. Grundy (1997) argues, though, that despite this link, the Australian movement developed its own practices and epistemology that distinguished it from the British movement.

Kemmis and his colleagues at Deakin University built on a strong movement among teachers for school-based curriculum development and for grass-roots involvement in policy-making (Grundy and Kemmis, 1988) and developed a view of 'emancipatory action research' based in critical theory (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) that challenged other models of action research as conservative and positivistic. The 'Deakin group', as well as other university academics across Australia (e.g., Tripp, 1990), articulated a methodology for educational action research in the form of an action research spiral (plan, act, observe and reflect) that was linked with an intent to promote greater equity and social justice in schools and the society (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). Although a number of projects of the critical emancipatory type are described in various publications (e.g., Kemmis and Grundy, 1997), there is some question as to the degree to which teachers throughout Australia who became engaged in action research took on the critical emancipatory purposes advocated by university academics (Grundy, 1982).

The North American teacher research movement

In the 1980s a new teacher research movement emerged in North America that was not derivative of the British teacher-as-researcher movement or a re-emergence of the co-operative action research movement of the 1950s. Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994) identify a number of influences on the development of this new emphasis on educational action research: (1) the growing acceptance of qualitative and case study research in education which more closely resembles the narrative forms of inquiry used by practitioners to communicate their knowledge; (2) the highly visible work of a number of teachers of writing like Nancy Atwell (1987), who conducted case studies of the teaching of writing; (3) the increased emphasis on action research in university teacher education programmes (e.g.,

Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993); and (4) the reflective practitioner movement in teaching and teacher education that recognized and valued the practical knowledge of teachers (e.g., Zeichner, 1994).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) also discuss other influences on teacher research in North America such as the National Writing Project, Breadloaf School of English, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Prospect School in Bennington Vermont and the North Dakota Study Group (e.g., Carini, 1975; Goswami and Stillman, 1987; Mohr and Maclean, 1987; Perrone, 1989).

This emerging teacher research movement followed a number of years of 'interactive research and development' and other forms of collaborative research in education involving university academics and teachers (e.g., Oja and Smulyan, 1989). These collaborative projects involved teachers in some aspects of the research process but were not owned and controlled by teachers. Currently, although some teachers engage in action research in the context of university courses, projects and degree programmes (e.g., Freedman et al., 1999; Gitlin et al., 1992) many others have formed teacher research communities that, although they may involve collaboration with academics, are controlled by teachers (e.g., Gallas, 1998a).

The tradition of self-study research

Although most of the action research conducted within all of the traditions discussed so far has involved elementary and secondary school staff in studying their practice, there has also been a growing tradition in which college and university faculty have conducted research on their own teaching within the academy. In the 1990s there has been a growing acceptance of action research as a method for self-study within colleges and universities, especially among teacher educators.

Recently there has been a tremendous growth in the publication of self-study research by teacher educators (e.g., Hamilton, 1998; Loughran and Russell, 1997; Russell and Korthagen, 1995) and calls for the academy to recognize the legitimacy of high-quality self-study research in tenure and promotion decisions (Adler, 1993). In 1992 a special interest group 'Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices' was formed in the American Educational Research Association and it has become one of the largest interest groups in the association.

The self-study research of college and university faculty has employed a variety of qualitative methodologies and has focused on a wide range of substantive issues. For example, some studies in this genre have employed narrative life history methods and describe the connections between teacher educators' life experiences and their current teaching

practices (e.g., Cole and Knowles, 1995; Zeichner, 1995). Some self-study research has involved inquiries about the use of particular strategies (e.g., Grimmer, 1997; Richert, 1991) or of the implementation of particular educational philosophies in teacher education programmes (e.g., Ahlquist, 1991; Macgillivray, 1997). Many recent studies focus on the struggles of teacher educators with issues of race, class, and gender (e.g., Ahlquist, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Martin, 1995).

Dimensions of Variation in Educational Action Research

Currently, there is a wide variety of approaches to conceptualizing, organizing and supporting educational action research. The dimensions along which action research in education have varied include the purposes and motivations of those who engage in the research, the conceptions of the action research process and the form and content of action research studies, the ways in which the findings of the research are represented by researchers to others, the relation of action research to externally produced research, the sponsorship and organizational location of the research, the structures in place to support the research, and the assumptions about knowledge and teacher learning that are reflected in particular research programmes. The following framework, based largely on educational action research as it exists today in North America, is presented as a starting-point for better understanding the varieties of educational action research throughout the world.

Noffke (1997) has outlined three different motivations that have existed for teachers who have conducted research about their own practices. First, there is the motivation to understand better and improve one's own teaching and/or the contexts in which that teaching is embedded. Here the main interest is in how the research can contribute to the betterment of one's own individual situation as a teacher and life in a classroom, school and community. Secondly, there is the motivation to produce knowledge that will be useful to others, either in the same setting or other settings. Here action researchers are interested in sharing their research with others through seminars, conference presentations and publications. Finally, consistent with the 'democratic impulse' that was originally associated with the emergence of action research in the US in the 1940s (Foshay, 1994), there is the motivation to contribute to greater equity and social justice in schooling and society. Here there is an explicit agenda by educational action researchers to work for social change by working on issues of equity within the classroom and beyond (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994).

A second dimension along which educational action research has varied is in terms of the sponsorship of the research. Here there have been many

ferent sponsors of research, including teachers themselves (e.g., Gallas, 1998a, 1998b), school districts and local professional development centres (e.g., Caro-Bruce and McRae, 1995; Richert, 1999), teacher unions (e.g., The British Columbia Teachers' Federation), colleges and universities, school/university partnerships (e.g., Troen, Kamii and Boles, 1999), professional subject matter associations (e.g., The National Council of Teachers of English), and local and national governments. Among the colleges and universities that have been involved in sponsoring educational action research are those that offer specific courses on action research, support action research masters theses and doctoral dissertations, and those like the University of California-Davis, that support educational action research on a broad scale for teachers in area school districts (Wagner, 1995).

Educational action researchers have conducted their inquiries under a variety of contextual arrangements. For example, they have conducted research alone, as part of small collaborative groups composed of peers, or in school faculty groups that involve everyone in a particular school (Calhoun, 1993). Most of the time educators voluntarily participate in conducting research, but in the case of some school-wide action research programmes, participation by all staff members is compulsory. When the research has been done in connection with a group, the groups have varied according to their size, the basis for their formation, and whether there is an external facilitator and/or university involvement. Some action research groups involve educators from the same team, department or school, and others mix together people from different schools. There have been a variety of external incentives provided to educators for participating in action research, including time away from their schools to think together with their colleagues, money, and university and professional advancement credits. Some action research programmes involve teachers for a year or less and others enable them to continue working on their research for several years.

Within the research programmes themselves, there is much variation in the form and content of action research studies. For example, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) have described four different forms of systematic and intentional inquiry by teachers in North America: (1) journals which provide analyses of classroom life over time; (2) oral inquiries which consist of teachers' oral examinations of their practice in a group setting; (3) studies which represent teachers' explorations of their work using data based on observations, interviews and document analysis; and (4) essays which represent extended interpretations and analyses of various aspects of schooling. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) argue that this broad view of practitioner inquiry in education accounts for some of the ways that educators inquire about their practice that do not fit with university models for

doing research or with standard conceptions of action research.

As was indicated by the three brief vignettes at the beginning of this chapter, some educational action research involves the investigation of specific research questions and follows some variation of the well-known action research spiral: plan, act, observe and reflect (e.g., Elliott, 1991; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McNiff, 1997). This is what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) refer to as 'studies'. Other educational action research is more holistic and focuses simultaneously on a variety of questions (e.g., Gallas, 1998b).

Educational action researchers have investigated a variety of questions and issues in their inquiries. The following framework generated from an analysis of action research studies in the Madison, Wisconsin school district, is illustrative of the nature and scope of the questions that are addressed in educational action research studies (Zeichner, 1999a). This framework shows that the action research of educational practitioners include studies that focus within the educators' immediate domain of the classroom, beyond the classroom but within the school, and on issues that extend beyond the school. In the Madison school district's classroom action research programme over 400 studies have been done by educators since 1990. These studies have investigated a variety of questions and issues designed to:

- 1 Improve practice – e.g., How can I hold better discussions in my classroom and have a more learner-centred class?
- 2 Better understand a particular aspect of practice – e.g., Do I conduct my classes in a manner where students feel free to express different opinions and even to disagree with me? How does my school's behaviour management system affect students from different ethnic groups?
- 3 Better understand one's practice in general – e.g., What is going on in my third period biology class?
- 4 Promote greater equity – e.g., How can I help the girls in my mathematics class feel more confident about their abilities in maths and to participate more in classroom activities?
- 5 Influence the social conditions of practice – e.g., How can I get the school district to reallocate funding to support teacher-initiated professional development work?

In addition to the different kinds of questions and issues investigated by educational action researchers, their studies also vary in the ways that they relate to externally generated knowledge, including academic educational research and studies done by other practitioners. Troen, Kamii and Boles (1997) describe three patterns that emerged when they examined teachers' research studies in their Brookline, Massachusetts teacher inquiry community. Some teachers used concepts, questions and ideas from external research as the starting-point for their

research. An example here would be a teacher who studies the ways in which multiple intelligence theory helps explain student learning within her classroom. Others consulted external research later on in the research process, but did not do so at the onset of the research. Finally, some researchers deliberately did not consult external research because they felt that it would not be helpful to do so.

Educational action research programmes also differ in terms of the structural conditions that are set up to support the work of researchers. These differences include the rituals and routines that are established in action research groups (e.g., what group facilitators do to help researchers think more deeply about their practice), the resources that are provided to researchers (e.g., materials to read, literature searches, publication support), the opportunities that are provided for researchers to interact with others about their work (e.g., local action research conferences), and the ways in which researchers are encouraged, supported or required to represent their research to others (e.g., as papers, on videos, through conference presentations).

Finally, one of the most significant dimensions along which educational action research varies is in terms of the philosophical orientations towards knowledge, teachers and their learning that are embedded in the structures, human interactions and organization of action research programmes. Some action research efforts, despite a rhetoric of teacher empowerment, replicate the hierarchical patterns of authority and dim view of teachers' capabilities that is characteristic of dominant forms of teacher professional development, while others display a deep respect for teachers and their knowledge and seek to break down authority patterns which limit teacher autonomy and control (Zeichner, 1999a).

Educational Action Research as Professional Development

Many educators who have engaged in action research have done so for reasons of professional development rather than out of a desire to publish or in other ways disseminate their findings to others. Over the years, many claims have been made about the benefits of teachers engaging in research about their own practices. For example, it has been asserted that doing self-study research helps teachers to become more flexible and open to new ideas (Oja and Smulyan, 1989), makes them more proactive in relation to external authority (Holly, 1990), boosts teachers' self-esteem and confidence levels (Dadds, 1995), narrows the gap between teachers' aspirations and realizations (Elliott, 1980), helps develop an attitude and skills of self-analysis which are applied to other situations (Day, 1984), changes patterns of interaction among teachers to more collegial interactions (Selener, 1997), alters teacher talk about

students from a focus on student problems to an emphasis on student resources and accomplishments, and leads to more learner-centred classrooms (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1992).

Despite the growing testimony in the literature about the positive outcomes associated with teachers doing action research, there are a number of problems with drawing conclusions from these statements alone about the value of action research as a professional development activity. First, many of the references in the literature to the value of action research are anecdotal in nature and are not the result of systematic and intentional explorations of educators' research experiences. Secondly, even if we accept the accuracy of the claims that have been made about the value of action research, we are often provided with little or no information about the specific characteristics of the research experience and/or research context that would enable us to explain the particular conditions responsible for the positive impact. Given the tremendous variety in the conceptualizations and arrangements for organizing and supporting educational action research described above, it is important to begin to identify the particular conditions of the action research experience that are associated with the kind of positive outcomes for teachers and their students that are so frequently cited in the literature.

There have been relatively few cases where the professional development process associated with educational action research has been systematically studied. In the few cases that do exist (Allen and Calhoun, 1998; Burgess-Macey and Rose, 1997; Calhoun and Allen, 1996; Dadds, 1995; Gallas, 1998a; Joyce et al., 1996; Richert, 1996, 1999; Troen, Kamii and Boles, 1997, 1999; Zeichner, Carobruce and Marion, 1998), researchers, often in collaboration with those doing the action research, collected data over time to examine the conditions under which the action research was organized and supported, and its impact on teachers, pupils and schools. In addition to analyses by others of teachers' action research experiences, some work has been done by Kemmler-Ernst in examining a wide variety of cases of teachers' self-reports of the learning that occurs while doing action research. Drawing on the published personal narratives of teacher researchers and their contributions to electronic mailing lists, Kemmler-Ernst (1998) discusses the ways in which action research may contribute to changes in teachers' thinking, practice and collegial relationships by examining the reports of teachers who participated in research through graduate university classes or organized teacher collaboratives and networks.

In an analysis of both systematic studies of the nature and impact of educational action research and Kemmler-Ernst's investigation of teachers' self-reports, Zeichner (1999a) concluded that under certain

conditions, action research seems to promote particular kinds of teacher and student learning that teachers find very valuable and transformative. Specifically, there seems to be evidence that under particular conditions, the experience of engaging in self-study research helps teachers to become more self-confident about their ability to promote student learning, to become more proactive in dealing with difficult issues that arise in their teaching, and to acquire habits and skills of inquiry that they use beyond the research experience. Zeichner (1999a) also cites evidence of links between conducting action research under these conditions and a movement towards more learner-centred instruction and improvements in student learning.

The particular conditions that appear to be related to these positive outcomes for teachers and students are:

- 1 The creation of a culture of inquiry that respects the voices of teachers and the knowledge that they bring to the research experience. This does not mean a romantization of teachers' voices and an uncritical acceptance of everything that emerges from their research because it is asserted by a teacher. It does mean, though, that teacher knowledge is taken as seriously as other forms of knowledge and is evaluated according to both moral and educational criteria (Zeichner and Noffke, in press). A balance is achieved between honouring teachers' voices and expertise and asking them to critique what they know (Gallas, 1998b).
- 2 There is an investment in the intellectual capital of teachers which results in teachers having control over most aspects of the research process, including whether to participate or not, the research focus and the methods of data collection and analysis.
- 3 There is intellectual challenge and stimulation in the work and teachers are helped to think more deeply about their practice rather than given 'solutions' for their problems.
- 4 The research takes place over a substantial period of time (at least a year) in a safe and supportive environment. Predictable rituals and routines are established in groups of teacher researchers that help build community.
- 5 Participation in the research is voluntary.

There are other aspects of the action research process (e.g., whether or not teachers are required to write a research report at the end of the experience) where the connection to the kind of teacher and student learning described above is less clear. At this point in time, given the limited study of educational action research as professional development, the conditions identified above represent only a place from which to begin more in-depth investigations.

Educational Action Research as Knowledge Production

Although most teachers who have done action research have been uninterested in sharing their inquiries with others beyond their local research communities, an increasing number of teachers have published their work and/or presented it at local, regional and national conferences. Also, as academics have become involved in doing self-study research, increased acceptance of this work has developed as part of the tenure and promotion process. Generally, there has been increased citation of action research studies in educational research publications and an explosion of courses in colleges and universities that deal with action research as a legitimate form of educational inquiry (see Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Zeichner and Noffke, in press). There has also been an increased presence of educational action research and writing about educational action research at academic professional conferences such as the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association (Zeichner, 1999b).

This increased acceptance of action research as a legitimate form of inquiry that can potentially inform practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and teacher educators has not been without controversy. For example, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) discuss two critiques of educational action research that question its existence as a legitimate form of educational inquiry and the value of the knowledge that it produces. Huberman (1996) has questioned the claim that action research is a distinctive form of educational inquiry that provides unique insights into schooling and has argued that it needs to be judged according to standards applied to traditional academic interpretative inquiry. Fenstermacher (1994) has questioned the idea that teachers can generate knowledge valuable to others through their self-study research and also argues that action research needs to be governed by epistemological standards that are applied to academic research. On the other hand, many have argued that educational action research is a distinctive form of educational inquiry that should be judged by its own set of standards (e.g., Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994). A literature has emerged in recent years that examines various aspects of the question of whether educational action research is a legitimate form of educational inquiry and if so, by which standards it should be judged (see Anderson and Herr, 1999; Whitehead, 1989; Zeichner and Noffke, in press). In many ways, these issues are just beginning to be debated and discussed in both academic and practitioner research communities.

Conclusion

Most of the literature discussed in this chapter has been written in English and was generated by academics in the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia. The discussion of educational action research traditions, dimensions of variation in conceptualizations and patterns for organizing action research programmes, and of literature on action research as professional development and knowledge production, has not included the growing literature on educational action research in other languages and in other parts of the world (e.g., Barabtarlo y Zedansky and Poschner, 1998; Hollingsworth, 1997; McTaggart, 1997; Walker, 1995). This chapter also has not included more than a few voices of teachers about the methodology of educational action research. Despite recent progress in the accessibility of educational action research studies, it still remains very difficult to access this work beyond, and even at the local level, and teachers have not been active participants in the public dialogue about action research as a research methodology in education. Ways must be found to make educational action research studies more easily available to others and to involve teachers actively in the important discussions about the role of action research in educational research, policy-making and teacher education. The conceptual frameworks and analyses presented in this chapter need to be examined and critiqued from a broader perspective that takes into account the work on action research that has been done in other parts of the world not included within the scope of this review.

Some of the most ambitious work in educational action research today is being done in developing countries in Latin America and Africa. For example, in Namibia, action research has been used since independence in 1990 as a major strategy in a comprehensive educational reform programme that has sought to transform teaching and teacher education from autocratic to more learner-centred forms (Dahlstrom, Swarts and Zeichner, 1999). Throughout Namibia, student teachers, teachers and teacher educators have been conducting action research that has focused on such things as increasing the participation of learners in the classroom, promoting greater understanding of content through more interactive teaching approaches, etc.

As action research has come to be used in education within developing countries, concern has arisen about the colonialist implications in the importation of action research models developed in the USA, the UK and Australia to the developing world, and arguments have been made about the importance of adapting external models and developing indigenous forms of educational action research that take into account the particular cultures and traditions in the contexts in which it is used (Zeichner and Dahlstrom, 1999). Although educa-

tional action research can potentially be a liberating and emancipatory force, there is also the danger that it can slip into becoming another form of oppression in the developing world.

Note

1 The term 'teacher' will be used to refer to secondary educators (e.g., classroom teachers, principals, counsellors) and the term 'academic' will be used to refer to faculty and staff in colleges and universities. The term 'educator' will be used to refer to both teachers and academics.

References

- Adler, S. (1993) 'Teacher education: research or reflective practice', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9 (20): 159-67.
- Ahlquist, R. (1991) 'Position and imposition: power relations in a multicultural foundations class', *Journal of Negro Education*, 60 (2): 158-69.
- Allen, L. and Calhoun, E. (1998) 'Schoolwide action research: findings from six years of study', *Kappan*, 79 (9): 706-10.
- Anderson, G. and Herr, K. (1999) 'The new paradigm wars: is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities?', *Educational Researcher*, 28 (5): 12-21.
- Anderson, G., Herr, K. and Nihlen, A. (1994) *Studying Your Own School: an Educator's Guide to Qualitative Practitioner Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Atwell, N. (1987) *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook/Heinemann.
- Barabtarlo y Zedansky, A. and Poschner, T. (1998) 'Participatory action research in teacher education: a methodology for studying the everyday reality of teaching in Latin America', in G. Anderson and M. Montero-Sieburth (eds), *Educational Qualitative Research in Latin America*. New York: Garland.
- Burgess-Macey, C. and Rose, J. (1997) 'Breaking through the barriers: professional development, action research, and the early years', *Educational Action Research*, 5 (1): 55-70.
- Calhoun, E. (1993) 'Action research: three approaches', *Educational Leadership*, 52 (2): 62-5.
- Calhoun, E. and Allen, L. (1996) 'The action research network: action research on action research', in B. Joyce and E. Calhoun (eds), *Learning Experiences in School Renewal: an Exploration of Five Successful Programs*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Center on Educational Management, University of Oregon. pp. 136-74.
- Carini, P. (1975) *Observation and Description: an Alternative Methodology for the Investigation of Human Phenomena*. Grand Forks, ND: University of North Dakota Press.
- Caro-Bruce, C. and McReadie, J. (1995) 'What happens when a school district supports action research?', in S. Noffke and R. Stevenson (eds), *Educational Action*

- Research*. New York: Teachers College Press. pp. 154-64.
- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge, and Action Research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Coccari, D. (1998) 'We want to work with our friends', in C. Caro-Bruce (ed.), *Assessment and Health and Wellness Classroom Action Research*. Madison, WI: Madison Metropolitan School District.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (1995) 'Uncertain allies: understanding the boundaries of race and teaching', *Harvard Educational Review*, 65 (4): 541-70.
- Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. (1992) 'Communities for teacher research: fringe or forefront?', *American Journal of Education*, 100 (3): 298-324.
- Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. (1993) *Inside-Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. (1999) 'The teacher research movement: a decade later', *Educational Researcher*, 28 (7): 15-25.
- Cole, A. and Knowles, G. (1995) 'Methods and issues in a life history approach to self-study', in T. Russell and F. Korthagen (eds), *Teachers Who Teach Teachers*. London: Falmer Press. pp. 130-51.
- Corey, S. (1949) 'Action research, fundamental research, and educational practices', *Teachers College Record*, 50: 509-14.
- Corey, S. (1953) *Action Research to Improve School Practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cunningham, R. and Miel, A. (1947) 'Frontiers of educational research in elementary school curriculum development', *Journal of Educational Research*, 40 (5): 365-72.
- Dadds, M. (1995) *Passionate Inquiry and School Development*. London: Falmer Press.
- Dahlstrom, L., Swarts, P. and Zeichner, K. (1999) 'Reconstructive education and the road to social justice: the case of post-colonial teacher education in Namibia', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 2 (3): 149-64.
- Day, C. (1984) 'Professional learning and researcher intervention: an action research perspective', in R. Halkes and J. Olson (eds), *Teacher Thinking*. Lisse: Swets & Zwartlinger.
- Elliott, J. (1976/77) 'Developing hypotheses about classrooms from teachers' practical constructs: an account of the Ford teaching project', *Interchange*, 7 (2): 2-22.
- Elliott, J. (1980) 'Implications of classroom research for professional development', in E. Hoyle and J. Megarry (eds), *Professional Development of Teachers*. London: Kogan Page.
- Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Elliott, J. (1997) 'School-based curriculum development and action research in the UK', in S. Hollingsworth (ed.), *International Action Research: a Casebook for Educational Reform*. London: Falmer Press. pp. 17-28.
- Elliott, J. and Ebutt, D. (eds) (1986) *Case Studies in Teaching for Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge Institute of Education.
- Fenstermacher, G. (1994) 'The knower and the known: the nature of knowledge in research on teaching', in L. Darling-Hammond (ed.), *Review of Research in Education* (vol. 20). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association. pp. 3-56.
- Foshay, A.W. (1994) 'Action research: an early history in the US', *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 9: 317-25.
- Foshay, A.W., Wann, K.D. and Associates (1954) *Children's Social Values: an Action Research Study*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Freedman, S., Simons, E., Kalnin, J., Casareno, A. and the M-class teams (1999) *Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gallas, K. (1998a) *Teacher Initiated Professional Development: the Lawrence School Teacher Study Groups*. Chicago, IL: The Spencer and MacArthur Foundations.
- Gallas, K. (1998b) *Sometimes I Can Be Anything: Power, Gender, and Identity in a Primary Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gitlin, A., Bringhurst, K., Burns, M., Cooley, V., Myers, B., Price, K., Russell, R. and Tiess, P. (1992) *Teachers' Voices for School Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Goswami, D. and Stillman, P. (eds) (1987) *Reclaiming the Classroom: Teacher Research as an Agency for Change*. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton Cook/Heinemann.
- Grimmett, P. (1997) 'Breaking the mold: transforming a didactic professor into a learner-focused teacher educator', in T. Carson and D. Sumara (eds), *Action Research as a Living Practice*. New York: Peter Lang. pp. 121-36.
- Grundy, S. (1982) 'Three modes of action research', *Curriculum Perspectives*, 2 (3): 23-34.
- Grundy, S. (1997) 'Participatory action research in Australia: the first wave, 1976-1986', in R. McTaggart (ed.), *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. pp. 125-49.
- Grundy, S. and Kemmis, S. (1988) 'Educational action research in Australia: the state of the art', in S. Kemmis and R. McTaggart (eds), *The Action Research Reader* (third edition). Geelong, Vic: Deakin University Press. pp. 321-35.
- Hamilton, M.L. (ed.) (1998) *Reconceptualizing Teaching Practice: Self-study in Teacher Education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Hodgkinson, H. (1957) 'Action research: a critique', *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 31 (4): 137-53.
- Hollingsworth, S. (ed.) (1997) *International Action Research: a Casebook for Educational Reform*. London: Falmer Press.
- Holly, M.L. (April, 1990) 'Teachers' theorizing: research and professional growth'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA.

- Huberman, M. (1996) 'Moving mainstream: taking a closer look at teacher research', *Language Arts*, 73: 124-40.
- Joyce, B., Calhoun, E., Carran, N., Simser, J., Rust, D. and Halliburton, C. (1996) 'The university town program: exploring governance structures', in B. Joyce and E. Calhoun (eds), *Learning Experiences in School Renewal: an Exploration of Five Successful Programs*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon. pp. 52-93.
- Kemmis, S. and Grundy, S. (1997) 'Educational action research in Australia: organizations and practice', in S. Hollingsworth (ed.), *International Action Research: a Casebook for Educational Reform*. London: Falmer Press. pp. 40-8.
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (1988) *The Action Research Planner* (third edition). Geelong, Vic: Deakin University Press.
- Kemmler-Ernst, A. (April, 1998) 'Collaborative inquiry as a catalyst for change'. Unpublished paper, Harvard University Graduate School of Education.
- Loughran, J. and Russell, T. (ed.) (1997) *Teaching about Teaching: Purpose, Passion, and Pedagogy in Teacher Education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Macgillivray, L. (1997) 'Do what I say, not what I do: an instructor rethinks her own teaching and research', *Curriculum Inquiry*, 27 (4): 469-88.
- Martin, R. (ed.) (1995) *Practicing What We Preach: Confronting Diversity in Teacher Education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McNiff, J. (1997) *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- McTaggart, R. (ed.) (1997) *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Mohr, M. and Maclean, M. (ed.) (1987) *Working Together: a Guide for Teacher Researchers*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Newman, J. (1998) *Tensions of Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noffke, S.E. (1997) 'Professional, personal and political dimensions of action research', in M. Apple (ed.), *Review of Research in Education*, 22: 305-43.
- Oja, S. and Smulyan, L. (1989) *Collaborative Action Research: a Developmental Approach*. London: Falmer Press.
- Olson, M.W. (1990) 'The teacher as researcher: a historical perspective', in M.W. Olson (ed.), *Opening the Door to Classroom Research*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. pp. 1-20.
- Perrone, V. (1989) *Working Papers: Reflections on Teachers, Schools, and Communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Richert, A. (1991) 'Case methods in teacher education: using cases to teach reflection', in B.R. Tabachnick and K. Zeichner (eds), *Issues and Practices in Inquiry-oriented Teacher Education*. London: Falmer Press. pp. 130-50.
- Richert, A. (1996) 'Teacher research on school change: what teachers learn and why that matters', in K. Kent (ed.), *Breaking New Ground: Teacher Action Research, a Wealth of New Learning*. Redwood City, CA: Bay Area IV Professional Development Consortium.
- Richert, A. (April, 1999) 'The learning teacher for the changing school: teacher research as a methodology of change'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal.
- Russell, T. and Korthagen, F. (ed.) (1995) *Teachers Who Teach Teachers: Reflections on Teacher Education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Selener, D. (1997) *Participatory Action Research and Social Change*. Quito, Ecuador: Global Action Publications.
- Shumsky, A. (1958) *The Action Research Way of Learning: an Approach to Inservice Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Stenhouse, L. (1968) 'The humanities curriculum project', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 23 (1): 26-33.
- Stenhouse, L. (1976) *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. London: Heinemann.
- Taba, H. and Noel, E. (1957) *Action Research: a Case Study*. Washington, DC: Association for Curriculum and Supervision.
- Threatt, S., Buchanan, J., Morgan, B., Streib, L., Sugarman, J., Swenson, J., Teel, K. and Tomlinson, J. (1994) 'Teachers' voices in the conversation about teacher research', in S. Hollingsworth and H. Sockett (eds), *Teacher Research and Educational Reform*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. pp. 223-33.
- Tripp, D. (1990) 'Socially critical action research', *Theory into Practice*, 29 (3): 158-66.
- Troen, V., Kamii, M. and Boles, K. (April, 1997) 'From carriers of culture to agents of change: teacher-initiated professional development in the learning/teaching collaborative inquiry seminars'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Troen, V., Kamii, M. and Boles, K. (April, 1999) 'Transformative professional development: teacher research, inquiry, and the culture of schools'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal.
- Wagner, J. (1995) 'Research universities, schools of education, and the schools: a case of implementing cooperative research and extension in education', *Educational Policy*, 9 (1): 24-53.
- Walker, M. (1995) 'Context, critique, and change: doing action research in South Africa', *Educational Action Research*, 3 (1): 9-27.
- Wallace, M. (1987) 'A historical review of action research: some implications for the education of teachers in their managerial role', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 13 (2): 97-115.
- Whitehead, J. (1989) 'Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind: how do I improve my practice?' *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19 (1): 41-52.
- Zeichner, K. (1994) 'Conceptions of reflective practice in teaching and teacher education', in G. Harvard and P. Hodkinson (eds), *Action and Reflection in Teacher Education*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Zeic
w
K
R
P
Zeic
L
C
Zeic
e

- Zeichner, K. (1995) 'Reflections of a teacher educator working for social change', in T. Russell and F. Korthagen (eds), *Teachers Who Teach Teachers: Reflections on Teacher Education*. London: Falmer Press. pp. 11-24.
- Zeichner, K. (1999a) *Action Research as Professional Development for P-12 Educators*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Zeichner, K. (1999b) 'The new scholarship in teacher education', *Educational Researcher* 28(9): 4-15.
- Zeichner, K., Caro-Bruce, C. and Marion, R. (1998) *The Nature and Impact of Action Research in One Urban School District*. Chicago, IL: Spencer & McArthur Foundations.
- Zeichner, K. and Dahlstrom, L. (eds) (1999) *Democratic Teacher Education Reform: the Case of Namibia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Zeichner, K. and Noffke, S. (in press) 'Practitioner research', in V. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (fourth edition). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

FOR EDUCATION

TOWARDS CRITICAL

EDUCATIONAL

INQUIRY

Wilfred Carr

1995

perspective of the dominant positivist research paradigm a little more than a set of practical problem solving techniques opened to action research?' Sanford summarized his assessing way:

I would say now that action-research never really got off never was widely influential . . . After World War II the science and practice was institutionalised and it has been since I would say that we have separated – and institutionalised of everything that – from the point of view of action research together.⁶

The cultural and intellectual context in which action research in Britain in the 1970s was, of course, very different from the predecessor. The positivist paradigm, which had dominated research in the 1940s and 1950s was widely rejected – both weaknesses and for its perceived irrelevance to the practical life. In education, the major response to positivism's theoretical resurgence of interest in the interpretive tradition of social responses to positivism's practical impotence was Lawrence's compelling image of the 'teacher-as-researcher' and the subsequent reformulated view of action research.⁷

The view of educational action research which emerged in the 1970s was thus significantly different from its American forerunner. It was sympathetic to 'naturalistic' and 'case study' methods, their emphasis on the perspectives of participants and socially, it endorsed humanistic values and construed teaching processes through which these values were to be realized. For in this way, British educational action research could be preoccupied with inquiry which enabled teachers to clarify and develop their thinking through systematic reflection on their classroom practice. Revised in this way, action research held out the promise that it would escape the positivist distortions that had thwarted action research. The key question is: has it succeeded?

When, in 1978, John Elliott published 'What is action research?' British educational research was still dominated by positivism. Between research and action, knowing and doing, theory and practice, conceptual distinctions still supported an institutionalized research which portrayed teachers as theoretically impoverished and which reserved the exclusive preserve of an academic elite. What description of action research so compelling was that it invited an ineradicably theoretical and defined research as a self-referential activity which teachers examined the theories implicit in their own practice? Described in this way, action research promised a reunification of theory and practice which would eliminate the segregation of teaching and research which had been created and sustained.

7 WHATEVER HAPPENED

TO ACTION RESEARCH?

The positive mind no longer asks why, ceases to speculate on the hidden nature of things. It asks how phenomena arise and what course they take, it collects facts and is ready to submit to facts, it subjects thinking to the continuous control of 'objective facts'.¹

The title of this chapter is also the title of a paper Nevitt Sanford presented to an audience of American social psychologists in 1970.² In his paper, Sanford described how the term 'action research' had first come to prominence in America through the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1940s and how it was taken up and developed by a large number of social scientists who recognized that social problems could only be adequately resolved if theory and practice (action and research) were developed together.³ In assessing the American experience of trying to put Lewin's ideas into effect, Sanford had to concede that, despite a good deal of activity, 'action research never really got off the ground'.⁴ The main reason for this, he argued, was that action research had allowed itself to become institutionalized in a way which virtually ensured that it could not meet the challenges to which it was initially a response (the conservatism and elitism of academia, the theoretical orientation of conventional social research, the increasing technologization of social life). Indeed, Sanford argued, the institutionalization of action research meant that Lewin's original idea had to be modified so that it could be accommodated within the social science establishment – an establishment which, as Sanford noted, 'was part of the

One action researcher who has tried to develop this kind of self-understanding is Richard Winter. In two books – *Action Research and the Nature of Social*

Winter's strategy for uncovering these conditions is to apply mental principles: that the relationship between 'action' and 'grasped *dialectically*'; and that action research can only offer a grasp to positivism by more fully acknowledging the importance of its own mode of inquiry. Sustained by these two principles, Winter offers a form of action research understood primarily as a reflexive process of critique: a process which does not eschew 'theory' or 'practice' but which preserves the dialectical unity of their understanding them as mutually constitutive elements in a developing and integrated whole. Thus, for Winter, action research inquiry which seeks to reveal to teachers the transient and contextual nature of their practice in a way which makes it amenable to critical reflection in order to do this, he argues that action research must endorse a methodology which treats rationality as critical and dialectical. Informing this epistemology, action research would be primarily concerned with teachers to reflect critically on the contradictions between their ideas and beliefs and the institutionalized practices through which these ideas and beliefs are expressed. Thus Winter concludes:

What a reflexive action-research would offer ... is not
would propose, rather, to subject the theories of commu-
professional expertise to a critical analysis of their located
practice whose intelligibility they serve. Action research
move 'beyond' theories ... which prescribe and justify
basis for action towards a reflexive awareness of the dial
sustain their mutuality while transforming both.¹⁷

Action Research and the Nature of Social Inquiry is a fine book that Winter found it necessary to couch his argument in a dense prose and so run the risk of producing just that kind

some action researchers would no doubt dismiss as prime examples of the kind of sterile 'academic' theorizing which has little to do with the practical conduct of their work.

Many of these questions stem from the fact that action research is faced with a danger which, if Thomas Kuhn is to be believed, threatens all attempts to popularize a radically new research paradigm. For such a paradigm to advance, its advocates are forced to justify its claims to superiority by using the language and evaluative standards which some pre-existing paradigm has already supplied. As it becomes more widely established, there is, therefore, always the risk that the original aspirations of the new paradigm will be dissipated and its original meaning surreptitiously reinterpreted so as to accommodate more continuities with its predecessor than it was initially prepared to admit. It goes without saying that, when this happens, the price paid for the successful advancement of the new paradigm will have been to reduce it from a full-blown alternative view of the nature of 'research' to a set of ideas and methods which can be accommodated within the broad requirements of the very paradigm it had originally promised to eliminate and replace.

Does this kind of scenario offer any useful warnings about the way in which educational action research has developed? Despite its theoretical claim to offer a radical alternative to positivist research, does action research, in practice, display a tendency to relapse into old positivist ways? The suspicion that it does is hardly dispelled by the numerous portrayals of action research as a form of conventional research suitable for ordinary teachers. And it is positively reinforced by numerous examples of action research literature which display more than a modicum of positivist thought. But is it true that action research is in danger of becoming little more than a sophisticated form of positivism?

A necessary prerequisite to any proper discussion of this question is to recognize that action research still lacks an adequate analysis of its own relationship to positivism, and hence that this relationship is still ambiguous and confused. Some of these confusions stem from the fact that the term 'positivism' now frequently functions as little more than a derogatory label or a term of abuse. But most of them stem from a general failure to appreciate that many of the dangers currently threatening the future of action research can only be understood by understanding some of the key episodes in the history of positivist thought.

One such episode concerns the origins of positivism. What we now refer to as 'positivist' doctrines have their roots in an all-pervading intellectual and moral outlook which began to dominate Western thought in the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ One of the prominent characteristics of this outlook was a deep-seated aversion to philosophical thinking and a firm insistence that only neutral 'experience' could provide an acceptable foundation for valid knowledge. It is thus unsurprising to find that, throughout its long history, the common aim of various positivist movements – whether in history, morality,

its success in excluding all those forms of social and education which refuse to confine themselves to experience 'as it is', that experience is always conditioned by philosophical or historical understanding. It is thus no accident that modern pedagogies offer an escape from troublesome philosophical questions to an indifference to major social, political and moral concerns, an accident that positivist research flourishes in those cultures of sophistry and history as academic pastimes that can easily be ignored.

A second salient feature of positivism's history concerns its cultural role. What is particularly important to note is how far from the social context in which it has its origins to our own culture, 'positivism' has been transformed from a critically and culturally subversive set of radical arguments into a uncritically and culturally supported set of common-sense assumptions with aspects of social life. Ironically, the intricate theoretical and nineteenth-century positivist, on the grounds that they offer a standing of how ideology was to be expunged from social life, serve a central ideological role in maintaining dominant forms of ideology. It is for this reason that positivist principles that are consistently refuted at the level of philosophical theory continue to have a pervasive influence on contemporary educational policy and practice, an important way of understanding the ideological role now played by positivism is to note the extent to which educational theorists, researchers and practitioners – irrespective of their self-consciously progressive positions or educational ideals – now talk, think and act in accordance with some certain positivist assumptions to be true.

Thus, once positivism is considered historically, it becomes clear that it cannot be eliminated or dismissed in the easy way that some action researchers seem to suggest. Action research is not just a theory of knowledge but as a theory of social life and hence in the discourse, organization and practice of education. Positivism's central assumptions – about theory and practice, objectivity, facts and values – are not just to be described but are grounded in everyday language and practices which are implicit in the institutionalized social relationships governing education and educational research. Action research about positivist research usually do so as members of institutions to perpetuate it. And action researchers who complain about constraints on their work often fail to notice that these constraints are much a legacy of positivism as is the inherited theoretical and methodological educational research.

displaying an open hostility to philosophical theories, but in the less obvious sense of conforming to the positivist axiom that 'research' is a systematic and methodical process for acquiring positive knowledge rather than a dialogical and reflective process of democratic discussion and philosophical critique. The modern separation of 'philosophical critique' from 'methodical inquiry' (and the subsequent deformation of both) is one of positivism's most enduring ideological achievements. It is strengthened, rather than challenged, by the way in which action research presents itself as a method which is largely devoid of philosophical assumptions and interpretations. It is further reinforced by the willingness of action researchers to give due recognition to those methodological strategies (the systematic collection and analysis of data etc.) which were initially designed to insulate inquiry from philosophical intrusion.¹⁹ It is scarcely surprising therefore that many action researchers' interpretation of 'research' is that which positivism has vindicated, and that their view of 'positivism' is that vindicated by research so understood. The mistake underlying these mutually confirming interpretations is, of course, that of supposing that there can be a philosophically uncontested, ahistorical concept of 'research' – an illusion which an understanding of the history of positivism would immediately dispel. While it lacks this kind of historical understanding, action research will continue to run the risk of confusing the concept of research as such with the concept of research as interpreted in positivist terms.

Some of the other positivist tendencies displayed by contemporary action research can be rapidly stated. Much of what now passes for action research embraces an asocial view of 'action', clings to a rationalistic notion of 'theory', employs a narrow view of the role of 'criticism' and pays lip service to the importance of the concept of 'self-reflection' without adequately appreciating its profound importance for the question of what action research is and what it is not. In theory, action research is only intelligible as an attempt to revive those forms of democratic dialogue and reflective theorizing which, under the impact of positivism, have been rendered marginal. But, in practice, action research increasingly conveys an image of itself as a research method which is favourable to the ideas of methodological sophistication and technical proficiency but which remains unable to provide the idea of critical self-reflection with any genuine practical expression. Because of this discrepancy between its own theoretically conceived guiding ideals and its socially embedded institutionalized practice, action research may be falling victim to the very theory-practice dualism it initially aspired to overcome. This should serve to remind us of one more feature of positivism's history.

The positivist movement began by proclaiming a way of relating theory to practice that would free us from all those authoritative forms of 'academic' theorizing which were unconstrained by the real world of 'experience'. In this sense, positivism was, in its own terms, nothing other than a nineteenth-century precursor of modern action research. Both were driven by a desire to

promise remained unrealized, so its association with the idea of freedom and practical progress have now given way to a intellectual constraint and practical control. It goes without saying that high-minded and enlightened positivists of the nineteenth century the slightest degree recommend that their ideas and theories become these associations. Rather is it the case that this is what has become when elaborated in terms of the dominant values, which constitute twentieth-century human culture.

Whatever happened to action research? What I have tried to argue is that British action research is to avoid the fate of its American counterpart. It has to concede that the present condition of educational research is to be misunderstood if we look for explanations of this condition in research's own internal history. But once we are prepared to acknowledge the history of educational action research in a much longer intellectual inquiry, and once we are prepared to admit that intellectual inquiry cannot be abstracted from social and cultural context, then we shall begin to understand why action research in the twentieth-century re-enactment of nineteenth-century

A - R. F. M. U.
TO RESEARCH
DUALISM

Action research for professional development
Concise advice for new action researchers

Jean McNiff

First and Second Editions © Jean McNiff 1995, 1997

Third edition © Jean McNiff 2002

Contents

Introduction to the third edition

Introduction to the first edition

What is action research?

Who does action research?

Where did action research come from?

Action research and professional learning

How do I do action research?

What is the focus of action research?

Action planning

The action plan in detail

Criteria

Critical friends and validation groups

Action research and professional development

Why do action research?

Action research for a good social order

Whole organisation development

Supporting professional development

Accreditation

Introduction to the third edition

The text presented here originally took the form of a small booklet. The First Edition was published in 1995, and since then the booklet has travelled far, appearing in professional education courses in universities, schools and workplaces around the world.

I am placing the work here in celebration of two special events. The first event is that I have (finally!) succeeded in establishing a web site. The second event is that this year marks the twenty-first anniversary of my learning partnership with Jack Whitehead.

This text is as much Jack's as mine. For the last 21 years, Jack has been a major influence in my life of education. During that time our ideas have developed through our own caring, creatively critical conversations. While some specific ideas that appear in this text belong to one or other of us (for example, Jack's action plans, his ideas about the living 'I', about experiencing oneself as a living contradiction, and about the nature of living educational theories; and Jean's ideas about the generative transformational nature of the evolutionary processes of human enquiry), many of the ideas have been developed collaboratively. It is a remarkable partnership, especially in light of the fact that we don't see each other that often, given that Jack lives and works in Bath, and Jean commutes from her home in Dorset to work in Ireland. When we do see each other, therefore, it is an all the more intensely rich experience, for we have much to catch up on and new ideas to talk through.

Both Jack and I are passionately interested in issues concerning knowledge, especially the forms of knowledge and knowledge creation that action research embodies. I have learnt from Jack the power of sharing ideas to generate new ones, and how we need to use our technologies to make those ideas freely accessible to all. Because of this commitment to sharing ideas, this text is no longer available as a commercial publication, but is here, free, to use as you wish.

We invite you to become part of our educative conversations. You can do this by accessing www.actionresearch.net, or www.jeanmcniff.com.

You might know people whose language is other than English. If they wish to translate this text into their languages, they should feel free to do so. Please also let me have a copy of the translation for this web site, so that others can benefit too.

If you care to give feedback to this text, please do so, and I will explore ways of amending the text accordingly, and also creating a forum for our discussions.

Here's to the next twenty-one years of learning!

Jean McNiff

Introduction to the first edition (slightly amended)

Action research is becoming increasingly known as an approach that encourages practitioners to be in control of their own lives and contexts. It began in the USA, came to prominence in the UK in the 1970s, and by the 1980s it was making a significant impact in many professional contexts, particularly in teacher professional education. Now its influence is world wide, and has spread to virtually all areas where personal and professional learning is undertaken.

This text aims to provide some general answers for the many people who ask, 'What exactly is action research?' A number of excellent books are available to give more detailed responses, and you can find some of them in the 'bibliographies' section of this web site. Here I am hoping to give a brief gloss about what action research is, and how helpful it can be in our hopes to improve the quality of life through learning.

You should know that there are different approaches to action research, as is true of scientific enquiry in general. Hot debates and often real disagreements take place, about the nature and focus of action research, how it is done, who does it, why, and what the outcomes might be. Yet there would seem to be general agreement among the community of action researchers, at least in theory, that action research is based on certain principles

– the need for justice and democracy, the right of all people to speak and be heard, the right of each individual to show how and why they have given extra attention to their learning in order to improve their work, the deep need to experience truth and beauty in our personal and professional lives.

This booklet offers one particular approach to action research. This approach has been developed by Jack Whitehead and others working in and with the University of Bath, UK (see www.actionresearch.net). I am not claiming that this is the only way, nor necessarily the best way, but it seems to me the most appropriate way available at the moment to address the principles outlined above.

One of the values I hold is the right of each one of us to experience freedom with justice. Therefore I do encourage you to read other work and other opinions, so that you can make up your own mind about what is most appealing to you and most appropriate for your own situation. Finding out what is available before deciding on any one option is responsible practice.

In the meantime, do be aware that this guide offers a limited but useful overview of what action research is, how to do it, and what its use value might be for your life.

I hope you will be inspired to find out more about action research and do it yourself.

Jean McNiff

Action Research for Professional Development

What is action research?

Action Research for Professional Development

What is action research?

Action research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be called a form of self-reflective practice.

The idea of self reflection is central. In traditional forms of research – empirical research – researchers do research on other people. In action research, researchers do research on themselves. Empirical researchers enquire into other people's lives. Action researchers enquire into their own. Action research is an enquiry conducted by the self into the self. You, a practitioner, think about your own life and work, and this involves you asking yourself why you do the things that you do, and why you are the way that you are. When you produce your research report, it shows how you have carried out a systematic investigation into your own behaviour, and the reasons for that behaviour. The report shows the process you have gone through in order to achieve a better understanding of yourself, so that you can continue developing yourself and your work.

Action research is open ended. It does not begin with a fixed hypothesis. It begins with an idea that you develop. The research process is the developmental process of following through the idea, seeing how it goes, and continually checking whether it is in line with what you wish to happen. Seen in this way, action research is a form of self evaluation. It is used widely in professional contexts such as appraisal, mentoring and self assessment.

A useful way to think about action research is that it is a strategy to help you live in a way that you feel is a good way. It helps you live out the things you believe in, and it enables you to give good reasons every step of the way.

Who does action research?

You do. *I* do. Potentially, *we all* do.

Think about any event when you had no idea how to do something, yet you found out through tackling it in a systematic way. For example, how many tries did it take before you stopped falling off your bike and actually rode it? You probably did not stop after each fall and rationalise why you were falling off. The chances are you just tried out new strategies until you were successful.

This is the basic action principle underpinning action research. It involves identifying a problematic issue, imagining a possible solution, trying it out, evaluating it (did it work?), and changing practice in the light of the evaluation. This is what many people do in numerous life situations.

The process described so far is a basic problem solving process. To turn it into an action research process you would need to say why you wanted to investigate an issue (this can be anything, such as riding your bike, or developing good communication practices throughout your organisation), and gather data to show the process. You would then turn the data into evidence in terms of whether you felt you were living in the direction of what you hoped to achieve in the first place. You would express your hopes not as abstract objectives, but as goals that are in line with your values.

Most of us do a kind of informal action research in many aspects of our lives, though we probably don't call what we do action research. Informal action research is undertaken in many workplace contexts as part of on-the-job professional learning. When we put a discipline or structure on our everyday learning from experience, and make it clear to other people how we know what we are doing, we can say that we are doing action

research. Many workplaces now encourage practitioners to undertake formal action enquiries as part of their professional learning, often leading to accreditation.

Where did action research come from?

Action research began in the USA during the 1940s through the work of Kurt Lewin, a social scientist. It actually began in other places as well, but Lewin's work is generally taken as the starting point. It was popular in the USA for a time, but then went into decline because of cultural, political and economic changes.

It emerged in the 1970s in Britain through several influences. One major influence was the work of Lawrence Stenhouse who directed the Humanities Curriculum Project. He believed that the curriculum ought to be organised in schools so that it was meaningful and relevant to students' experience, and they should be encouraged to take on the responsibility of their own learning. He also promoted the idea of 'teacher as researcher'.

Action research was developed mainly by academics in higher education, who saw it as a useful way of working in professional education, particularly teacher education. They began studying and clarifying the steps involved, and also the principles underpinning action research, such as the need for democratic practices, care and respect for the individual, and the need for disciplined enquiry. Action research is today prominent not only in teacher professional education but also in management education and organisation studies, social and health care work, and other professional contexts.

Over the years, various models and different interpretations of action research have developed. Some people prioritise technical aspects, believing that it is important to get the method right. Other people are also interested in the values that inform action research, such as a belief that people should be in control of their work and the way they conduct that work, and how the research can lead to a living out of those values. Most people recognise the educational base of action research. These different perspectives

generate lively debates. There is no one 'correct' way; you must decide what is right for you, and develop your own views. To do that, however, you need to do some action research; the 'meaning' it has for you emerges as you do the research and explain what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Action research and professional learning

Action research is used in many professional learning contexts, both formally and informally. Action enquiries begin with the question, 'How do I improve my work?' This perspective is quite different from traditional views of professional education, which often take the form of training. In traditional forms, the usual procedure is that an acknowledged expert offers advice to professionals (who are then usually positioned as trainees). More enlightened forms of professional learning programmes work on the assumption that professionals already have a good deal of professional knowledge, and are highly capable of learning for themselves. What they need in their professional learning is an appropriate form of support to help them celebrate what they already know, and also generate new knowledge. New knowledge can most effectively be generated through dialogue with others who are equally interested in the process of learning. The dialogue is always a dialogue of equals. No one tells another what to do in action enquiries; we all share and value one another's learning.

The question 'How do I improve my work?' contains a social intent. The intention is that one person improves their work for their own benefit and the benefit of others. If you can improve what you are doing (at least improve your understanding of what you are doing), there is a good chance you will influence the situation you are working in. Your increased awareness and your readiness to be self critical will probably have an influence on the people you are working with. You are aiming to influence them for the better. There is nothing sinister in the idea of influence, and everything to celebrate; most ideas that people have were influenced by someone else, somewhere else in time and space. This is

the way that knowledge evolves, a process of learning from others and reworking existing knowledge in new ways.

The methodology of action research means that you have to evaluate what you are doing. You need to check constantly that what you are doing really is working. Are you really influencing your situation or are you fooling yourself? This awareness of the need for self evaluation shows your willingness to accept responsibility for your own thinking and action. Accountability is part of good professional practice. You are always aware that you have to give good service, to attend to the needs of others in the way that is best for them, and to show that you have responsible attitudes and behaviour. In doing action research you are giving an account of yourself. You are showing that you are a responsible person and can justify what you are doing with good reason. Action research helps you to formalise your learning and give a clear and justified account of your work, not on a one-off basis, but as a continuing regular feature of your practice.

Professional assessment and appraisal

Ongoing assessment is an increasingly regular feature of professional working arrangements. The idea of incremental learning is also increasingly accepted, when people build on previous learning, developing and transforming past practice in new contexts. It is anticipated that people can transfer their skills and knowledge to work requiring a higher level of expertise. Formative (ongoing) assessment monitors this kind of professional incrementalism, and allows practitioners to evaluate and modify their actions as appropriate.

Appraisal is also part of professional development programmes, and action research offers a new focus that enables people to celebrate their learning together. Social relationships tend to change. Traditionally, appraisal has been seen as the responsibility of a manager who is authorised to make judgements about the professionalism and competence of staff. Action research is a form of personal self evaluation, and also creates contexts for critical conversations in which all participants can learn as equals. Action enquiries begin with an individual's question, 'How do I improve my work?'.

When the enquiry is shared with others, and they wish to become involved – possibly by critiquing, or by deciding to do something similar, or by offering ideas for new enquiries – then the question changes to ‘How do we improve our work?’. Appraisal and professional assessment become a context for collaborative learning in the workplace.

How do I do action research?

The basic steps of an action research process constitute an action plan:

- We review our current practice,
- identify an aspect that we want to investigate,
- imagine a way forward,
- try it out, and
- take stock of what happens.
- We modify what we are doing in the light of what we have found, and continue working in this new way (try another option if the new way of working is not right)
- monitor what we do,
- review and evaluate the modified action,
- and so on ...

(see also McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996, and forthcoming)

Two processes are at work: your systematic actions as you work your way through these steps, and your learning. Your actions embody your learning, and your learning is informed by your reflections on your actions. Therefore, when you come to write your report or make your research public in other ways, you should aim to show not only the actions of your research, but also the learning involved. Some researchers focus only on the actions and procedures, and this can weaken the authenticity of the research.

A number of models are available in the literature. Most of them regard practice as non-linear, appreciating that people are unpredictable, and that their actions often do not follow a straightforward trajectory. The action plan above shows action reflection as a cycle of

identify an area of practice to be investigated;
imagine a solution;
implement the solution;
evaluate the solution;
change practice in light of the evaluation ...

This action research cycle can now turn into new action research cycles, as new areas of investigation emerge. It is possible to imagine a series of cycles to show the processes of developing practice. The processes can be shown as a spiral of cycles, where one issue forms the basis of another and, as one question is addressed, the answer to it generates new questions.

Remember that things do not often proceed in a neat, linear fashion. Most people experience research as a zig-zag process of continual review and re-adjustment. Research reports should communicate the seeming incoherence of the process in a coherent way.

The generative transformational nature of evolutionary processes

My own view is that we live in a deeply unified universe, where all things are connected, often in very distant ways, but their effects are evident in the lives of everyone – the ‘butterfly effect’, where the beat of a butterfly’s wing locally can have repercussions in far-flung global terms. For me, all open-ended systems have the potential to transform themselves into richer versions of themselves. Humans and human interactions, by the fact that they are living, are open systems. I like the following diagram, to show the process of development as an expanding spiral. This diagram captures (I hope) the

dynamic movement of consciousness, practice, dialogue, social formations. It is bounded only by mortality. The model is frequently adopted (and adapted) in the literature.

(diagram coming soon)

What is the focus of action research?

Different researchers concentrate on different aspects of action research. Some are interested in procedures. As long as the action steps are right, they feel, this is good action research. The quality of action research is judged rather as ballroom dancing or ice skating: specific steps are executed in a specific sequence with anticipated outcomes. Other researchers feel that a focus on method is not enough. They believe that action research can help us make sense of our lives. We need to move beyond the surface structure of method (although this is still important), and look at the deep underlying structure of our values and intentions in living our lives.

Values into practice

Every one of us lives according to values. There are no overarching structures of values to tell us which values to hold; each one of us makes our own choices. Some people believe in the rights of individuals; others do not see individuals as having rights. Business tends to work on a different set of values than health care. It is not unusual for values systems to be in conflict, and this is when problems can arise. People often are not able to resolve the situation and live together with their different values.

Action research begins with values. As a self reflective practitioner you need to be aware of what drives your life and work, so you can be clear about what you are doing and why you are doing it. You might need to spend time clarifying for yourself the kinds of values and commitments you hold. This would be a firm starting point for your action enquiry.

Sometimes we say we believe in something, but are unable to live according to what we believe, for a variety of reasons. Here we would experience ourselves, in Jack Whitehead's words, as 'living contradictions'. A point of entry for action research would be to find ways of overcoming the contradiction so that we might live more fully in the direction of our values.

Action planning

A number of action plans are available in the literature. The action plan that has grown in popularity around the world is the one developed by Jack Whitehead. The aim is to encourage you, a practitioner, to ask critical questions about your own practice, and find the answers for yourself. No one else can give you answers. Other people can comment and advise, but only you can say what is right for you and your situation. It could be that there are no answers to your particular issue, but the process of asking questions is as important as finding answers.

Here is a modified version of Jack's action plan. On the next page, the plan is explained in greater detail.

- What issue am I interested in researching?
- Why do I want to research this issue?
- What kind of evidence can I gather to show why I am interested in this issue?
- What can I do? What will I do?
- What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am having an influence?
- How can I explain that influence?
- How can I ensure that any judgements I might make are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How will I change my practice in the light of my evaluation?

There is always a dilemma between suggesting action plans and avoiding making them appear as prescriptive. In action research, everyone takes responsibility for their own practice and for asking their own questions. You do need to ensure, however, that your research is reasonably systematic and rigorous. In doing your research you are aiming to make a claim that you have improved practice, so you do need to produce validated evidence to support that claim.

The action plan in detail

In deciding to do action research, you are showing your intent to learn more about a particular issue within a particular situation. Your research is a conduit for your learning. It can take the following form:

What issue are you interested in researching?

Ask yourself, 'What is especially high in my mind at the moment?' The research issue you identify could be wide in range and scope, such as the state of the economy or the working ethos of your organisation. It could also be narrowly focused on one small area, such as how you can maintain your diary systematically. Often what might appear as a small issue turns out to be symptomatic of much wider ones.

Some researchers present the idea of a research issue as a problem. Action research is not only problem solving, though it contains elements of problem solving. It does mean problematising issues and engaging with them; questioning what is happening, and asking how it might be improved. This then involves asking questions about the conditions that are allowing the situation to be as it is, and finding ways of changing the conditions. The main point is to identify an area you wish to investigate, and be reasonably clear about why you wish to get involved.

It is important, in your first action enquiries, to be reasonably sure that you can do something about the issue you have identified. You should be practical and ask, 'Can I

actually do something about this issue? Can I influence the situation, or is it outside my scope?' If it really is outside your scope you should be realistic and leave it. Having said that, do not give up altogether. Aim to address one small aspect of your work. While it might be true that you cannot change the world, you can certainly change your bit of it; and if everyone changed a small bit at a time, a lot of change could happen quickly.

Once you have identified a research issue, you should formulate a research question. This can be stated in terms of

How do I ...?'

For example,

- How do I improve my relationships with my colleagues?
- How do I help John overcome his fear of flying?
- How do I manage my work schedule more efficiently?

The main ideas are:

- I am asking a real question about something that is important to me, and I am hoping to find ways of engaging with it;
- I am a real person;
- I am trying to improve something; this might be my own understanding, or it might be an aspect of the social situation I am in (remember: improvement does not mean perfection. Any improvement is still improvement, no matter how small).

Why are you interested?

You need to be reasonably clear why you want to get involved. The reasons for our actions are often rooted in our values base, that is, the things we believe in and that drive our lives. If you believe that all people have equal rights, you will try to ensure that your

workplace is a place in which everyone does have equal rights, and you will organise your own work so that everyone has the opportunity to exercise their rights. The trouble is, we often work in situations where it is not possible to live in a way that is congruent with what we believe in. You might believe in equal rights for all, but your workplace could well be a place where the rights of some people are denied. As your research progresses you might find that you are the one who is denying equal rights to others. You should expect surprises like this.

Action research is a way of working that helps us to identify the values that are important for our lives and to live in the direction of those values, that is, take them as the organising principles of our lives. It is unlikely that we will ever get to a situation where our work and situations are entirely congruent with our values. But we are not aiming for 'end products'; we are aiming to find right ways of living.

What kind of evidence can you gather to show why you are interested?

If you are in a situation where things are not as you would wish them to be, how can you show that situation so that other people can relate to what you are experiencing? How can you show what the situation was like, which made you resolve to do something about it?

You need to gather data about the situation, and you can use a variety of methods for this – journals, diaries, notes, audio and videotape recordings, surveys, attitude scales, pictures, and so on. You can use different data gathering methods at different times if you wish. You will compare this first set of data with later sets of data, to see whether there is any change and whether you can say that you have influenced the situation. Aim to gather as much data as you feel is right; most people gather too much to begin with.

You need to begin identifying working criteria to help you make judgements about whether the situation might be improving. These criteria would be linked with your values. If you believe that all people should be treated fairly, a criterion will be whether you can show that people are being treated fairly. The criteria you identify might change

as the research project develops. Your data will turn into evidence when you can show that it meets your nominated criteria.

What can you do about the situation? How do you act in order to influence it in an educative way?

You need to imagine ways in which you might begin taking action. You might want at this stage to consult with others about how you could move forward. These others could be your critical friend or your validation group. A validation group is a group of people you invite to look at your research from time to time, and offer critical feedback. The decisions you come to about what action to take will be your own decisions; you take responsibility for what you do. You need to consider your options carefully and decide what you can reasonably expect to achieve, given the time, energy and other resources you have.

Having decided on a possible strategy, you now need to try it out. It might work and it might not. If it does, you will probably want to continue developing it. If it does not, you will probably abandon it, or part of it, and try something else.

What kind of evidence can you gather to show your educative influence?

This is your second set of data, which will also turn into evidence by meeting your nominated criteria. You can use the same, or different, data-gathering methods that you used before. Perhaps you used surveys and interviews to gather your first set of data; now you might want to use audio and video tape recordings which will capture not only people's words but also their expressions and body language. You should try to show, through this set of data, whether there is an improvement in the situation, even though that improvement might be very small. You might also be able to show a development in your own thinking and learning. This is an integral part of the action research process.

How do you explain your educative influence?

Remember that the focus of the enquiry is you. You are always in company with others, so what you do is bound to have an influence on them. How can you show that your influence was as you wished it to be? To gauge your impact on them, you need to get their reactions to how they perceive their relationship with you.

Remember that you are not trying to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship between you and other people's actions. You are not saying, 'I brought about improvement' or 'I made that happen'. You are saying, 'I can show that certain changes took place as I changed my practice, particularly in myself, and different relationships evolved.' You are aiming to show a development of influence, an unfolding of new understandings and actions from people working together in new ways, and their influence on one another, that is, how they learn with and from one another.

How do you ensure that any judgements you make are reasonably fair and accurate?

If you say, 'I think that such and such happened', you can expect someone to say, 'Prove it.' The answer is that you can't. You can't prove anything. The word 'prove' does not exist in action research. You can however produce reasonable evidence to suggest that what you feel happened really did happen, and you are not just making it up.

In saying that you believe you have influenced your situation for good, you are making a claim to knowledge. You are also producing evidence to back up the claim. Now you need other people critically to consider your claim and agree that you have good reason for making your claim. They might agree that you are justified in making your claim, and their agreement would be validation of your claim. They might suggest that you need to look at the research again and gather further data, perhaps, or tighten up the link between your data and your criteria. Once you have other people's validation you can say in all honesty, 'I am claiming that I have influenced this situation because I started looking at ways in which I could improve what I am doing, and I now have the endorsement of other people to show that what I say I am doing constitutes a fair and accurate claim.'

How do you modify your practice in the light of your evaluation?

You will probably carry on working in this new way because it seems to be better than the way you were working before. It is more in line with the way you wish things to be. You are living in the direction of your values (though you might still have far to go).

This does not mean closure. Although you have addressed one issue, others might have emerged which now need attention. Perhaps in addressing one issue, you have unearthed other issues that you had not expected. There is no end, and that is the nature of developmental practices, and part of the joy of doing action research. It resists closure. Each ending is a new beginning. Each event carries its own potentials for new creative forms.

This is what makes action research a powerful methodology for personal and social renewal. You are thinking and searching all the time. You are never complacent or content to leave problematic situations as they are, because you refuse to become complacent or lazy. As long as you remain aware, alert, constantly open to new beginnings, you will continue growing into all the persons you are capable of becoming.

Criteria

There are two sets of criteria you need to give attention to. The first is in relation to your research; the second is in relation to your research report.

Criteria for action research projects

When we wish to make judgements about something to establish its value, we set criteria to help us make those judgements. Criteria are the standards we use to make judgements.

Criteria can be set and expressed through words (verbally) as well as through actions (non-verbally). In most professional contexts, criteria take a traditional verbal form. A

checklist might be drawn up which specifies the criteria: 'The person can do such and such'. These criteria are often communicated in terms of behaviours: 'The person can perform a certain task'. Qualifying as a good manager or teacher, therefore, means that you perform appropriately, and a written record is kept of achieved skills and behaviours.

In action research, criteria are set in terms of the values that inform practice. The values might be expressed verbally – 'I believe in fairness in the workplace' – but they are expressed and enacted physically, for example, when you demonstrate or experience fairness. It is important to recognise that the meanings of these embodied values become clear as they emerge during your research. Often at the start of a project they are not immediately clear. You need to think about what is important for your practice and what drives it. The things you believe are important (your values) become your criteria. In the process of clarifying the meanings of your embodied values, as they emerge in practice, you transform your values into your criteria (or standards). You can share these living standards with others, and use them to test the validity of your claims to have influenced the learning of others in an educational way. They are 'living' because they can change during your enquiry (See Part One of Moira Laidlaw's Ph.D. thesis on her search for her educational standards of judgement at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/moira.shtml>).

To show that you are living in the direction of your values, you need to search your data archive, and produce pieces of data that meet the criteria. When the data match the criteria, those pieces of data become evidence. You use this evidence when you produce your research account and make a claim that you have improved your learning about your situation, and possibly also improved the situation. You make your criteria clear, so that people can see that you are grounding your claim in evidence and it is not only your opinion. You can then say that your practice is evidence based. The evidence you produce is in terms of how you make judgements about the value of your work.

Criteria for judging the quality of research reports

Action research is part of a transition from 'traditional scholarship' to what is called 'new scholarship'. Traditional forms are still dominant, so action research reports still tend to

be judged by traditional criteria. Most of these criteria are technical: for example, does the research show a systematic process of data gathering, analysis and interpretation.

However, while technical criteria are important, they are now complemented by qualitative, experiential ones, such as whether people can relate to and learn from your report. Other criteria can be negotiated. These might include considerations of the kind:

- Do you show that you are trying to live in terms of what you believe in?
- Do you show that you can hold yourself accountable for your claims to knowledge?
- Do you show how you have changed your own thinking and practice, and how this has possibly influenced others educationally?

These kinds of criteria enable you to make professional judgements about whether the quality of your understanding, productive work and relationships has been improved.

Critical friends and validation groups

So that your judgement of your work is not held to be only your opinion, you need to make the work available to the critical scrutiny of others, such as your critical friend and your validation group.

Critical friends

Your critical friend (also called a 'critical colleague' or 'learning partner') is someone whose opinion you value and who is able to critique your work and help you see it in a new light. Critique is essential for helping us to evaluate the quality of the research. You would ask one or two people to be critical friends from the start of the project.

Your validation group

You would also convene a validation group of 4–10 people. Your critical friend might or might not be a member of the group. They would be drawn from your professional circle, and would agree to meet with you periodically to listen to your progress reports and to scrutinise your data. Although they might not be entirely familiar with your research, they would be able to make professional judgements about the validity of your report, and would offer critical feedback. You should listen carefully to their advice, though you are not compelled to act on it.

Who sets the criteria?

The issue of who sets the criteria is contested. In most professional contexts, criteria are set by ‘experts’, and practitioners are expected to perform appropriately. In action research, practitioners take responsibility for their own work and negotiate their own criteria. This can lead to conflict, when practitioners might challenge the right of others to control their work, and when struggles take place for the right to be acknowledged as one-who-knows. Action research does empower practitioners; but you need to be aware of the potential fall-out when you claim that you, too, are a legitimate knower.

Action research and professional development

Improving the work you do is about learning to do things in new ways. It is a process of professional learning. This is true whether you are just beginning your career or whether you are in full swing. Learning is for life, not just for college.

Many professional learning programmes work from the point of view of the person who is conducting them (‘delivering’ them in much contemporary language). The emphasis is often on teaching or training, not so much on learning. The assumption is that the trainer knows the answers and passes them on to you, and then supervises you to make sure you are applying them correctly. This delivery model is widespread and often unquestioned.

When action research informs professional development programmes, they work from the point of view of the person who is learning. It is assumed that you already know a great deal. Perhaps your knowledge is intuitive or only roughly worked out, but you still have the answers in yourself, ready for the right stimulus to set them off. You don't need a trainer so much as a supporter, or critical friend, who will listen to your ideas, challenge them, and help you to find alternatives. This kind of facilitative model means that the supporter is also learning; they are not expected to have answers to your workplace-based questions. They actively learn with and from you; it is a dialogue of equals. Of course, being an effective supporter means developing a high level of interpersonal skills, sensitivity and wisdom. Developing these skills is a research process. Your supporter is asking questions such as, 'How do I help you to learn and find out your own answers?' You have formed a community of critically questioning, caring colleagues.

Doing action research helps you to grow professionally, to show how you are extending your own professional knowledge. It does this in many ways, including the following:

- Doing your research helps you to examine your own practice and see whether it lives up to your own expectations of yourself in your work. If you say you hold certain values, how can you show that you are living in their direction?
- By showing other people what you are doing, you can establish a systematic evaluation procedure. If you are a manager, you are showing how you are supporting the learning of those in your organisation, and you can say why you think this is happening. You can produce clear evidence to show progress. You can let the voices of others come through to explain how their learning has improved because of your intervention. If they say that you don't seem to be helping them, you can try to change the situation so that you are.
- You can identify the criteria, or standards, that you and others are using to judge the quality of what you are doing. You identify how you understand your

professionalism, in negotiation with others, and you show how you are trying to live in this way.

You should always try to maintain your professional learning. Too often people assume that once they have achieved qualified status, they don't need to learn any more. How do you understand professional learning? Are you in a stable place, where you believe you have learnt all there is to know? Are you going to learn for the next six months, and then take a rest? Or are you going to regard learning as a lifelong process that is as natural as breathing? It is your choice.

Why do action research?

Sometimes people criticise action research as idle self-contemplation. This is not so. People do action research as a way of helping them understand how they can influence social change. This commitment is contained in Marx's idea that it is not enough only to understand the world; the intent is to change it for the better.

Action research questions take the form, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' This question has an underlying intent to help other people, on the following principles:

- You decide to investigate what you are doing with a view to improving it.
- This will help you to understand the situation more fully.
- Your developed understanding will help you to evaluate your work and change it as necessary.
- Your way of working might influence others; how can show this?
- You do this by checking your perceptions of what is happening against theirs.
- You change your way of working in light of their perceptions. You negotiate this with them.
- Your collective agreement about these things helps you all to understand the situation better.

- You learn from colleagues, and they learn from you. They decide to try things out for themselves.
- They invite you to become their critical friend, and help them evaluate their work.
- Collectively you are now a community of enquirers. You have changed your social situation, and this is bound to have consequences for wider social contexts.
- Your individual 'I-enquiry' has turned into a collective 'we-enquiry'. You have moved from 'I' to 'we'.

It is not just that you as an individual are investigating your work. You are aware of the reasons underpinning your work, and how it might impact on others. Action research contains a deep commitment by responsible practitioners to hold themselves accountable for their own ways of living and working. You cannot accept responsibility for anyone else (apart from contexts of pathology, or contexts involving babies and young children). You must, however, accept responsibility for yourself. Unless you are prepared to be accountable for yourself, you cannot expect other people to do the same.

The need for case study evidence

It is not enough just to talk about these things. We need to show how we are practising what we preach, otherwise the ideas remain in the imagination and do not move into reality. One of the strengths of action research is that it begins in practice, and people generate their own theories out of their practice. Action researchers are real people in real situations.

There is an overwhelming need for the production of case stories to show how researchers improved their own learning and situations for the benefit of themselves and others. Bodies of case study evidence are growing in books and on web sites (see www.actionresearch.net). The more case studies that appear, the more powerful the body of knowledge becomes. These bodies of knowledge present undeniable evidence that action research constitutes a form of learning that has profound implications for the future of society.

Action research for a good social order

Seen in this way, action research is something people do in order to improve the quality of life for themselves and for others. It is a way of working that begins with individuals asking themselves, 'How do I improve what I am doing for your sake?' The intention is that one person becomes self-evaluative in order to work better for others with whom they are in company.

This applies not only to the individual action researcher, but to all. We move away from the delivery model of 'I tell you what to do'. No one person tells another what to do. It is a two-way, reciprocal partnership. Everyone (not only one individual) needs to ask, 'How do I improve what I am doing for your sake?' Each one has to accept the responsibility of their own actions and lives. Each person aims to be a better individual so that, collectively, they can contribute to the formation of a better society.

People often point out the hard political realities of living and working within social and professional contexts. The realities are that particular ways have become established, and these ways are protected by people who are happy with the status quo. These ways of working become established structures, and individuals are often deliberately silenced, and sometimes vanish, within these structures. Some people say it is not possible to change established ways. Action researchers would respond that this is not so. First, we have to believe that it is possible to change things, otherwise we might as well give up right now on every effort and programme to improve the quality of life – medical research, world adventure and exploration ... If we live in hope, at least we have some idea of what we can achieve. If we do not, we can be sure of a zero outcome. Action research is one way to influence social change. If everyone did a bit extra for someone else, the world would instantly be a happier and more productive place for all.

Whole organisation development

Given these ideas of how individuals can work together to create their own societies, it is not difficult to imagine how whole organisation development may be encouraged. Each individual undertakes their personal enquiry into an aspect of their own practice, and then shares that enquiry with others, and together they form research collectives. These collectives can systematically evaluate the practice of one individual, or they might ask their own collective questions about how they can improve their understanding and circumstances. Much social and community development happens along these lines.

Managing organisational change

The concept of collective involvement can be particularly challenging for people positioned as managers, for they may need to develop new ways of thinking and working, as well as new self perceptions, that might be at odds with traditional views. Managers might need to change their ideas about what they are managing and how they are doing so. In traditional models, managers manage other people. How they do that is a matter of personal style. In action research ways, managers arrange for the conditions of learning to be right. They arrange for organisational structures, processes and resources to encourage individual learning to take place. When individual learning in organisational contexts becomes collective learning, this can then be called organisational learning.

How managers do this is important. Traditionally managers were expected to be aloof from the workforce, and direct operations from a distance. They arranged for other people to learn. In action research, managers also become learners, learning with the people they support, though the focus of their enquiries shows their concern to fulfil their different responsibilities. Unless managers are willing to acknowledge themselves as learners, they might be denying the very principles they say they are espousing. This can be threatening for many managers, because it involves destabilisation, risk and personal courage, but it can also be liberating and exciting. Whether or not you wish to engage is your choice.

Supporting professional development

Traditional professional development programmes tend to operate from a subject base. The aim is to help practitioners to improve subject knowledge and expertise. They also operate from an advisory base. Support is offered by a subject adviser. The model underpinning this model is a model of teaching (often instruction).

Support for professional development through action research builds on a model of learning, where practitioners are challenged and helped to find new ways of doing things. The emphasis is on practice rather than subject knowledge. The route is personal enquiry (What do I do?) rather than others' advice (What do you think I should do?). In traditional ways, an adviser advises practitioners; practitioners implement the advice; the adviser evaluates outcomes. In action research approaches, the practitioner talks through ideas with a listening supporter; the practitioner acts; the practitioner evaluates outcomes in company with the adviser and others.

Relationships

This model has profound implications for professional relationships. In traditional ways, a power relationship often exists between adviser and practitioner. This relationship is often subtle, but the effects can be obvious, from practitioners' lack of confidence to deskilling. Nor is the situation educational for the supporter, who is expected to have all the answers.

In action research approaches there is a genuine sense of partnership, where practitioner and supporter recognise that there might be a difference in responsibilities and professional expertise, but no difference in value. They are equal as practitioners. Both are there to improve their work by acting as challenging and supportively critical colleagues, each for the other. This is a creative dialogue of equals in which both are trying to find the best way forward for themselves and each other.

Accreditation

Practitioners have the right to have their work formally recognised, if they wish. This often takes the form of professional certificates and awards.

Most award-bearing courses internationally recognise the validity of action research approaches, which embody professional wisdom as well as technical know-that and practical know-how. Personal enquiry and forms of self study are acknowledged as equally valuable forms of research as traditional empirical investigations. Some organisations are developing programmes of personal reflective practice as frameworks for organisational learning.

This reconceptualisation of what constitutes valid educational theory and research, with its emphasis on the person-centred, open-ended nature of living systems, is accompanied by a growing awareness of the need for increased access to opportunity for all.

Professional development programmes increasingly take the form of distance learning, modularisation, flexible learning, personal self study, all addressing the needs of the learner within particular contexts. New technologies are contributing to new ways of learning, with the development of e-colleges and e-learning processes. These developments are new, and appropriate ways have to be developed for sustaining educative conversations using multimedia technologies (for important innovative work, see <http://www.compapp.dcu.ie/~mfarren/> and <http://www.living-action-research.net>).

There are significant opportunities for action researchers to have their professional learning accredited through award-bearing courses. These awards can be Masters and Doctoral degrees. The influence of action research around the world is significant. There is a real awareness that if governments wish their citizens to become productive and adaptive workforces in the 21st Century, professional learning has to be given the highest priority, and supported by democratic structures that value individual learning as the basis for collective practices.

End note

Dear friend,

I hope you like what you have read so far. If you have any suggestions about how the text might be improved, do contact me by e-mail on 1006642.1700@compuserve.com

Also, if you have ideas for further pages, please let me know. I already have some in process, but perhaps what appears here is sufficient for just now.

Thanks for your reading, thanks for your company.

Best wishes,

Jean McNiff

HANDBOOK OF ACTION RESEARCH,

Return to Papers by Peter Reason

P. REASON & H
BRADBURY (EDS.)
SAGE, LONDON

CHAPTER 16

THE PRACTICE OF CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY: RESEARCH WITH

[I]

RATHER THAN ON PEOPLE

John Heron and Peter Reason

Co-operative inquiry is a way of working with other people who have similar concerns and interests to yourself, in order to:

- Understand your world, make sense of your life and develop new and creative ways of looking at things.
- Learn how to act to change things you may want to change and find out how to do things better

[ii]

Research is usually thought of as something done by people in universities and research institutes. There is a researcher who has all the ideas, and who then studies other people by observing them, asking them questions, or by designing experiments. The trouble with this kind of way of doing research is that there is often very little connection between the researcher's thinking and the concerns and experiences of the people who are actually involved. People are treated as passive subjects rather than as active agents. We believe that good research is research conducted with people rather than on people. We believe that ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own ideas and can work together in a co-operative inquiry group to see if these ideas make sense of their world and work in practice.

A second problem with traditional research is that the kind of thinking done by researchers is often theoretical rather than practical. It doesn't help people find how to act to change things in their lives. We believe that the outcome of good research is not just books and academic papers, but is also the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them. Of course, it is concerned too with revisioning our understanding of our world, as well as transforming practice within it.

So in traditional research on people, the roles of researcher and subject are mutually exclusive: the researcher only contributes the thinking that goes into the project, and the subjects only contribute the action to be studied. In co-operative inquiry these exclusive roles are replaced by a co-operative relationship, so that all those involved work together as co-researchers and as co-subjects. Everyone is involved in the design and management of the inquiry; everyone gets into the experience and action that is being explored; everyone is involved in making sense and drawing conclusions; thus everyone involved can take initiative and exert influence on the process. This, as we have said, is not research on people or about people, but research with people. We summarize the defining features of co-operative inquiry—on which we elaborate as the chapter proceeds—as follows: All the active subjects are fully involved as co-researchers in all research decisions - about both content and method - taken in the reflection phases.

- There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other
- There is explicit attention, through agreed procedures, to the validity of the inquiry and its findings. The primary procedure is to use inquiry cycles, moving several times between reflection and action.
- There is a radical epistemology for a wide-ranging inquiry method that integrates experiential knowing through meeting and encounter, presentational knowing through the use of aesthetic, expressive forms, propositional knowing through words and concepts, and practical knowing—how in the exercise of diverse skills—intrapsychic, interpersonal, political, transpersonal and so on. These forms of knowing are brought to bear upon each other, through the use of inquiry cycles, to enhance their mutual congruence, both within each inquirer and the inquiry group as a whole.

- There are, as well as validity procedures, a range of special skills suited to such all-purpose experiential inquiry. They include fine-tuned discrimination in perceiving, in acting and in remembering both of these; bracketing off and reframing launching concepts; and emotional competence, including the ability to manage effectively anxiety stirred up by the inquiry process.
- The inquiry method can be both informative about, and transformative, of any aspect of the human condition that is accessible to a transparent body-mind, that is, one that has an open, unbound awareness.
- Primacy is given to transformative inquiries that involve action, where people change their way of being and doing and relating in their world—in the direction of greater flourishing. This is on the grounds that practical knowing-how consummates the other three forms of knowing—propositional, presentational and experiential—on which it is grounded.
- The full range of human capacities and sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry.

A co-operative inquiry cycles through four phases of reflection and action. In Phase 1, a group of co-researchers come together to explore an agreed area of human activity. They may be professionals who wish to inquire into a particular area of practice; couples or families who wish to explore new styles of life; people who wish to practise in depth transformations of being; members of an organization who want to research restructuring it; ill people who want to assess the impact of particular healing practices; and so on. In the first part of Phase 1, they agree on the focus of their inquiry, and develop together a set of questions or propositions they wish to investigate. Then they plan a method for exploring this focal idea in action, through practical experience. Finally, in Phase 1, they devise and agree a set of procedures for gathering and recording data from this experience: diaries, self-assessment rating scales, audio or video recordings, feedback from colleagues or clients, etc.

For example, a group of health visitors in south west England were invited by one of their colleagues to form an inquiry group to explore the sources of stress in their work (Traylen, 1994). After some resistance to the idea that they could be ‘researchers’, the group decided to explore the stress that comes from the ‘hidden agendas’ in their work—the suspicions they had about problems such as depression, child abuse, and drug taking in the families they visit which are unexpressed and unexplored.

In Phase 2 the co-researchers now also become co-subjects: they engage in the actions they have agreed; and observe and record the process and outcomes of their own and each other's action and experience. They may at first simply watch what it is that happens to them so they develop a better understanding of their experience; later they may start trying out new forms of action. In particular, they are careful to notice the subtleties of experience, to hold lightly the conceptual frame from which they started so that they are able to see how practice does and does not conform to their original ideas.

The health visitors first explored among themselves their feelings about their 'hidden agendas' and how they were managing them at that time. They then decided to experiment with confronting them. Through role play, they practised the skills they thought they would need, and then agreed to try raising their concerns directly with their client families.

Phase 3 is in some ways the touchstone of the inquiry method. It is a stage in which the co-subjects become full immersed in and engaged with their action and experience. They may develop a degree of openness to what is going on so free of preconceptions that they see it in a new way. They may deepen into the experience so that superficial understandings are elaborated and developed. Or their experience may lead them away from the original ideas into new fields, unpredicted action and creative insights. It is also possible that they may get so involved in what they are doing that they lose the awareness that they are part of an inquiry group: there may be a practical crisis, they may become enthralled, they may simply forget. It is this deep experiential engagement, which informs any practical skills or new understandings which grow out of the inquiry, that makes co-operative inquiry so very different from conventional research.

The health visitors' experience of trying out new ways of working with clients was both terrifying and liberating in ways none of them had expected. On the one hand they felt they were really doing their job; on the other hand they were concerned about the depth of the problems they would uncover and whether they had adequate skills to cope with them. In particular, the woman who had initiated the project in particular was anxious and had disturbing dreams. The group members found they had to keep in good contact with each other to provide support and reassurance as they tried out new behaviours.

In Phase 4, after an agreed period in Phases 2 and 3, the co-researchers re-assemble to

share—in both presentational and propositional forms—their practical and experiential data, and to consider their original ideas in the light of it. As a result they may develop or reframe these ideas; or reject them and pose new questions. They may choose, for the next cycle of action, to focus on the same or on different aspects of the overall inquiry. The group may also choose to amend or develop its inquiry procedures—forms of action, ways of gathering data—in the light of experience.

The health visitors came back together and shared their experience, helping each other understand what had taken place and developing their strategies and skills at confronting hidden agendas. After several cycles they reflected on what they had learned and wrote a report which they circulated to their managers and colleagues.

So the cycle between reflection and action is repeated several times. Six to ten cycles may take place over a short workshop, or may extend over a year or more, depending on the kind of questions that are being explored. These cycles ideally balance divergence over several aspects of the inquiry topic, with convergence on specific aspects, so that there is a refined grasp of both the whole and its parts. Experiential competencies are realized; presentational insights gained; ideas and discoveries tentatively reached in early phases can be checked and developed; skills are acquired and monitored; investigation of one aspect of the inquiry can be related to exploration of other parts; the group itself becomes more cohesive and self-critical, more skilled in its work.

Repeat cycling enhances the validity of the findings. Additional validity procedures are used during the inquiry: some of these counter consensus collusion and manage distress; others monitor authentic collaboration, the balance between reflection and action, and between chaos and order. We discuss these below.

Some examples of co-operative inquiry groups

Accounts of co-operative inquiry practices can be found in this Handbook by Mark Baldwin, Penny Barrett, and Marcia Hills (Chapters 26, 27 and 33), as well as in John Heron's account of transpersonal inquiry (Chapter 32). Here we sketch some other examples to show the potential breadth of the approach.

A group of general medical practitioners formed a co-operative inquiry group to develop the theory and practice of holistic medicine (Heron and Reason, 1985; Reason, 1988c). They built a

simple model of holistic practice, and experimented with it in practice, exploring a range of intervention skills, power sharing with patients, concern for the spiritual dimensions of doctoring, as well as attention to their own needs as medical practitioners. Each reflection phase took place over a long week-end, after six weeks of holistic practice, the whole inquiry lasting some eight months. The experience of this inquiry contributed to the formation of the British Holistic Medical Association. The study was taken forward when a group of general and complementary medical practitioners worked together in a further inquiry group to explore how they might effectively work in an interdisciplinary fashion (Reason, 1991; Reason et al 1992).

A group of co-counsellors met to refine, through aware practice together over several week-ends, a description of the experiences and practices of the self-directed client (Heron and Reason, 1981). Another group met for five hours once a week to reflect together on effective skills, practised during the week in their daily lives, for handling irrational responses to life-situations arising from past trauma and conditioning (Heron and Reason, 1982).

A group of obese and post-obese women explored their experience together, looking in particular at how they were stereotyped in society, and how it was difficult for them to obtain appropriate attention from doctors and other medical people (Cox, 1996). We think there is great potential for inquiries in which groups of people with a particular physical or medical condition work together to take charge of how their condition is defined and treated. For example, an inquiry is being initiated with people with diabetes to explore their relationship to the services designed to support them.

Two black social work teachers established inquiry groups of black social work students, practitioners and managers to explore their experience. They looked at relationships between black people at work, particularly the experience of black managers and subordinates working together; and how a creative black culture could be generated (Aymer, in preparation; Bryan, in preparation)

Other groups have formed to explore questions of gender, in particular the experience of women and men at work. One inquiry looked at how black women might learn to thrive, as well as survive in British organizations (Douglas, 1999). A woman management undergraduate student used co-operative inquiry in her coursework to explore the experience of young women managers in primarily male organizations (Onyett, 1996), stimulating a continued co-operative inquiry at the

University of Bath (McArdle, in preparation). Another inquiry has recently been started to explore questions of masculinity and leadership within the policeforce (Mead, in preparation).

Different forms of co-operative inquiry

Some groups are convened by one or two initiating researchers, familiar with the method, who choose an inquiry topic, invite others who are interested to join, and initiate these co-opted members into the inquiry procedures. Others are bootstrap groups, who learn of the method through the literature, and engage in a peer initiation process.

Some initiating researchers may be internal to the inquiry topic, that is, they are fully engaged with the field of study. As a black woman living and working in UK organizations, Carlis Douglas is clearly fully engaged with the inquiry topic; and in an inquiry by youth workers into how people learn the initiator was herself a youth worker (DeVenney-Tiernan et al, 1994);

In other cases, initiating researchers are external to the particular culture or practice that is research focus of the group, and so cannot be full co-subjects. There are, however, certain to be important areas of overlapping interest and practice, which enable them, to a greater or lesser degree, to be analogous or partial co-subjects. So the initiating researchers of the holistic medicine inquiry were not doctors, but they were both at the time practitioners in psychotherapy, and became analogous co-subjects, in the action phases, in this form of practice (Heron and Reason, 1985; Reason, 1988c). The initiators of an inquiry into an organizational culture were not members of the culture, but were academics with a lot of experience in the field, and were partial co-subjects as participant, ethnographic visitors to the culture (Marshall and McLean, 1988).

Many inquiries focus on practice within a given social role. A same role inquiry is one in which co-inquirers all have the same role, such as doctor or health visitor, and are researching aspects of their practice within that role. In a reciprocal role inquiry, the co-inquirers are two or more people who interact intensively within a role of equal status, such as spouse, partner, friend, colleague, and inquire into that interaction. Peer relationships of this kind can readily be turned into ongoing co-operative inquiries, thus entirely closing the gap between research and everyday life.

A counterpartal role inquiry is one in which the co-inquirers include, for example, both doctors and patients, or health visitors and some members of the families they visit, and the inquiry

cycle between and integrate four forms of knowing—experiential, presentational, propositional and practical (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2001).

Action Science and Action Inquiry. These related disciplines offer methods for inquiring into and developing congruence between our purposes, our theories and frames, our behaviour, and our impact in the world - to put it colloquially, they ask us 'do we 'walk our talk'?''. These practices can be applied at individual, small group, and organizational level. Their overall aim is to bring inquiry and action together in more and more moments of everyday life, to see inquiry as a 'way of life' (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Friedman, 2001; Marshall, 2001; Torbert, 2001).

Learning History is a process of recording the lived experience of those in an action research or learning situation. Researchers work collaboratively with those involved to agree the scope and focus of the history, identify key questions, gather information through an iterative reflective interview process, distil this information into a form which the organization or community can 'hear' and facilitate dialogue with organization members to explore the accuracy, implications and practical outcomes that the work suggests (Roth & Kleiner, 1998).

Appreciative inquiry. Practitioners of appreciative inquiry argue the extent that action research maintains a problem-oriented view of the world diminishes peoples' capacity to produce innovative theory capable of inspiring the imagination, commitment, and passionate dialogue required for the consensual re-ordering of social conduct. Devoting attention to what is positive about organizations and communities, enables us to understand what gives them life and how we might sustain and enhance that life-giving potential. Appreciative inquiry begins with the 'unconditional positive question' that guides inquiry agendas and focuses attention toward the most life-giving, life-sustaining aspects of organizational existence (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001).

Whole systems inquiry. Large group interventions or processes are events designed to engage representatives of an entire system, whether it be an organization or a community, in thinking through and planning change (for descriptions see Bunker & Alban, 1997). What distinguishes them is that the process is managed to allow all

participants an opportunity to engage actively in the planning (Martin, 2001). Rather than aim at a single outcome, in dialogue conference design (Gustavsen, 2001) and whole system designs (Pratt, Gordon, & Plamping, 1999) the role of the researchers is to create the conditions for democratic dialogue among participants.

Participative action research. Usually used to refer to action research strategies emerging from the liberationist ideas of Paulo Freire (1970) and others in countries of the political 'South', participatory action research (PAR) is explicitly political, aiming to restore to oppressed peoples the ability to create knowledge and practice in their own interests and as such has a double objective. One aim is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people, another, to empower people at a deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge so they "see through" the ways in which the establishment monopolizes the production and use of knowledge for the benefit of its members. PAR practitioners emphasize emergent processes of collaboration and dialogue that empower, motivate, increase self-esteem, and develop community solidarity (see for example Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Selener, 1997).

Art, storytelling and theatre as action research. Action research is increasingly linking with contemporary movements in a range of artistic practices in the community. Practices drawn from community art, theatre and storytelling offer starting places for inquiry based in presentational ways of knowing (Hawkins, 1988; Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001).

Public Conversations. The aim of the public conversations movement is to foster a more inclusive, empathic and collaborative society by promoting constructive conversations and relationships among those who have differing values, world views, and positions about divisive public issues. This might include activists in adversarial relationships who are interested in talking with each other directly, rather than through the media, in ways that reduce stereotyping and defensiveness; groups and networks who seek to more effectively collaborate despite differences of identity or perspective; civic leaders, political officials, and educators who seek to build community and enhance democracy.

(See <http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.asp?catid=54>)

Strategies of action research

Action research has encompassed the individual, the small group, and wider organization and social entities. At an individual level it has addressed issues of personal and professional change, of 'living life as inquiry' (Marshall, 1999, 2001, 2002); and questions such as 'how can I improve my practice?' (Whitehead, 1989, 2000). Within small groups, action research has allowed people come together to address a common problem: to redesign work practices (Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996b); to explore issues of race and gender in organizations (Douglas, 2002); to pioneer professional change (Charles & Glennie, 2002; Reason, 1988); and so on. At the wider social and organizational levels action researchers have explored a variety of large group processes as vehicles for action research (Martin, 2001), and at the time of writing there is lively debate amongst action research practitioners as to how action research can go beyond the singular and local to influence societal discourses and address issues of policy formation at regional and national level (Gustavsen, 2001, 2003). Torbert refers to these three strategies when he asks:

...how may we intentionally enhance the effectiveness of our actions and the destructiveness of our inquiry (destroying illusory assumptions, dangerous strategies and self-defeating tactics)? How may we do so individually, in our face to face groups and in the larger organizations and collectivities to which we belong? How may we do so in the very midst of real-time actions of our every day lives – here and now? To what degree need such inquiry be explicit to ourselves and to others at each moment? (Torbert, 2001:250)

We have found it helpful to refer to these three broad strategies as first-, second-, and third-person inquiry practices, and to see these as mutually interpenetrating. Both action research and organization development involve an interplay between 'me' (my own experience and behaviour), 'us' (our immediate peers) and 'them' (the wider organization) and encourage attention to be paid simultaneously to all three perspectives. We shall explore in some more detail what we mean by each of these strategies, and then move on to illustrate them in practice.

First-person research practice

First-person action research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act awarely and choicefully, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:xxv-xxvi)

Early work on first-person inquiry can be found in Argyris and Schön's now classic *Theory in Practice: Increasing professional effectiveness* (1974) and Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). Much of this work centres around the distinction between espoused theories and theories in use—between what people say they do and what they actually do. Argyris called this work 'action science' (Argyris et al., 1985).

The goal of action science inquiry is to help practitioners discover the tacit choices they have made about their perceptions of reality, about their goals and about their strategies for achieving them... [B]y gaining access to these choices, people can achieve greater control over their own fate... If people can find the sources of ineffectiveness in their own reasoning and behaviour, or their own causal responsibility, they then possess some leverage for producing change. Data are collected first and foremost for the purpose of helping people understand and solve practice problems of concern to them. (Friedman, 2001:160)

Torbert distinguishes what he calls 'action inquiry' from Argyris' 'action science' by seeking congruence not just between espoused theories and behaviour but between four 'territories' of attention. He argues that any acting system, including an individual inquirer, requires valid knowledge of its purposes, thinking, behaviour, and the outside world. While this may seem obvious, in practice this requires a significant developmental effort. Our attention doesn't register a great deal of what occurs; we are rarely aware of our own behaviour and others reactions as we act; what we know about the outside world is ordinarily about the past and is rarely tested in the present (Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2000; Torbert, 2004). Essential to the notion of action inquiry is 'collaboration': in acting more awarely and inquiringly we

seek to increase *mutuality between persons*, to develop communities of inquiry within communities of practice.

Torbert draws on developmental theory to articulate parallel stages of personal and organizational development. An individual's frames of perception and action are relatively narrow in early stages of development, focussed on social membership and technical competence. Similarly the early life of organizations is often focussed on survival and efficiency, only later and rarely emphasizing processes of learning and development. However, in later stages both individual and organization become more concerned with the learning process itself - the way perceptions and practices are articulated and revised in interactions; and how more people can be engaged in mutual learning and inquiry. These later stages can be called 'post-conventional' in that the intellectual and emotional processes they represent are infrequently found among those who have not undergone some form intentional personal development, which might include spiritual practice, meditation, martial arts, and the process of action inquiry itself. Torbert argues that late stage organizations are unlikely to arise without late stage leadership.

Judi Marshall has contributed to inquiry as an everyday practice in a series of papers (Marshall, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004) which have led her from articulating research as personal process through research as political process to inquiry as life process. The idea of *Living Life as Inquiry* is that very little in life is fixed, finished, clear-cut, and the inquiring practitioner is living continually in process: adjusting, seeing what emerges, bringing things into question. This means attending to 'inner' and 'outer' arcs of attention' which on the one hand seek 'to notice myself perceiving, making meaning, framing issues, choosing how to speak out and so on' and on the other to one's own and others' behaviour and the organizational context in which this takes place (Marshall, 2001:431).

It is one thing to write about first-person inquiry and quite another to engage with it. It can be transformational to the point of being deeply disturbing. When Carlis Douglas explored how she, as a Black woman, could not only survive but thrive in British organizations, she "uncovered ways in which my survival strategies colluded in maintaining my oppression rather than in negotiating my liberation" and in

consequence “experienced feelings of vulnerability and of being de-skilled” (Douglas, 2002:252).

The practice of first-person inquiry is an ongoing life-practice which can take place at the very moment of acting (on-line reflection) or at later point (off-line reflection). Reflecting on-line is very challenging for most people as it demands a multi-levelled attention whilst acting: attending to what you are doing/how you are being, noticing what you believe is this is enabling/constraining in the situation, deliberately making changes to your behaviour to shift this, attending to how this shift feels and so on. Reflecting off-line or ‘after the event’, puts time and space between our action and our reflection on it. Tracking these reflections and the learning that comes from them in a journal is a popular method, as is arranging regular conversations with a trusted friend or colleague. This is distinct from engaging others in inquiry. Kate describes it thus: ‘Sometimes I need to hear my own voice articulate what I am thinking about – the act of speaking is one which helps me to do my figuring out. [With others I] talk myself through’ (McArdle, 2004:57). Some people use quite structured approaches such as the ‘learning pathways grid’ (see Rudolph, Taylor, & Foldy, 2001) to encourage rigour and avoid the trap of ‘not noticing what I am not noticing’ which we might easily fall into when inquiring alone. Others find less conventional methods more useful, seeing activities such as running as part of their reflective practice (McArdle, 2004; Roberts, 2003).

At the first-person level the sense that is made, both on- and off-line, is only ‘my’ sense. This obviously shifts at the second-person level where we make our ‘sense’ evident to others and invite mutuality in deciding ‘what is going on’ and how we might change it for the better. Whatever the approach, the point is that some kind of more-or-less systematic process is adopted – it is this that makes the practice a discipline, rather than just an anecdotal account of ‘what I remember’. And in addition, these practices are intended to be challenging, and their usefulness is dependant upon our willingness to confront ourselves and to experiment with changed behaviour as a result. What might begin as some gentle observational notes should, over time, become an in-depth exploration of ‘what is really going on?’

So what does this look like in practice?

Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen are Danish OD consultants who see their work as training members of organizations to enter into dialogue on topics in which they are deeply engaged, so they can arrive at practical solutions that will receive general support. They describe (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, in press 2004) how through reflective practice they saw that in spite of their espoused values of practising democracy and dialogue with participants, their theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1996) revealed how they behaved in such a way as to maintain unilateral power. They develop the concept of 'self-referentiality': interpreting others' behaviour through one's own frames of reference:

Self-referentiality means that you take your own actions and reactions for granted. You do not question your observations, bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts, intuition, and communication. They pass unattended and are not submitted to the scrutiny... (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2004:372).

They arrived at these insights first through watching videotapes of conversations. They had already seen how rare dialogue was between managers, who regularly interpreted the perspective of their colleagues and employees within their own perspective without checking this. However, they also realized that this was often true of themselves:

A closer look at video clips of our own inquiry practice in feedback conversations revealed that we, too, acted self-referentially in spite of our espoused value of practising dialogic research... (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2004:377)

They saw in these videotapes how they interpreted non-verbal cues through their own framing rather than exploring with the managers how they themselves experienced them; they saw how their ostensibly 'open' questions were actually biased, often in quite subtle ways; and how this established themselves in superior position, as 'uppers' devaluing others' experience as 'lowers' (Chambers, 1997). They experienced this self-questioning as a vulnerable process.

Transcending self-referentiality is not only a question of changing one's own behaviour, it is also about questioning a tendency to impose one's own regime of truth on others (Foucault, 2000) rather than treating others as co-participants in a learning process. As a result of these insights they continued to explore and challenge this tendency among themselves through continued off-line review, collegial feedback and education in psychodynamic psychotherapy provides an understanding of transference and counter-transference when working with participants.

Second-person research practice

Second-person action research/ practice addresses our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern – for example in the service of improving our personal and professional practice both individually and separately. Second person inquiry starts with interpersonal dialogue and includes the development of communities of inquiry and learning organizations. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:xxvi)

Second-person research/ practice starts when we engage with others in a face-to-face group. One of the most clearly articulated approaches to second-person research/ practice is co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996; Reason, 2003a) which we have outlined above: a typical inquiry group will consist of between six and fifteen people who work together as co-researchers and as co-subjects.

While co-operative inquiry is a clearly set out methodology, second-person research/ practice is always present, albeit underdeveloped, in everyday life. In organizations, activities to develop effective teamwork, mentoring, and other forms of person to person and small group engagement are at their best forms of second-person inquiry, albeit tacitly. Indeed, most forms of professional practice are at their best forms of mutual inquiry. For example the appraisal interview, which can be experienced as an exercise of power and defence, can be reframed as an inquiry to which both manager and managed bring their own different knowledge, skills, and perspective to the improvement of performance. Thus a significant form of second

person research/practice may be to make explicit and systematic these everyday, tacit forms.

The shift from first- into second-person space involves a sense of 'going public' with one's inquiry, of joining with others who have similar concerns/questions and engaging with them in exploration of these. It is important to reiterate here that the 'shift into' second-person inquiry is not a 'shift away' from first-person inquiry. As discussed earlier, each generates and is sustained by the other and working to figure out a balance of attention between the two is one of the many challenges for the action researcher. Indeed, as in Geoff Mead's (2002) example that we use here, the inquiry opens a second-person space which allows participants to attend to first-person practices.

Geoff Mead was at the time of inquiry a senior police officer in Hertfordshire Constabulary in the UK. Among his concerns was leadership in the police force at a time when police services through the country were being accused of insensitivity, machismo, and 'institutional racism'. He started from the premise that "Improving the quality of leadership is a crucial issue for the police service. Learning about theories of leadership is not enough. What really matters is for each of us to understand and improve our own unique practice as leaders." (Mead, 2002:191). To explore this issue he initiated and ran an eighteen month long co-operative inquiry entitled 'Developing Ourselves as Leaders', which was included in his doctoral research (Mead, 2001).

Initiating a co-operative inquiry is itself a delicate process (McArdle, 2002). After exploring the idea with senior colleagues and getting the formal endorsement of the Chief Constable, Geoff initiated a series of briefing meetings:

... designed to help people make a positive decision to opt in to the action inquiry or to decide, without any stigma, that it was not for them. The underlying principle was that of voluntary, informed self-selection... I talked about the possibility of transformative learning and asked people to decide if they wanted to take part using their head (Do you have enough information? Does it make sense for you to do it?), heart (Are you

intrigued, curious, drawn? Does it feel right for you to do it?), and will (Are you able and willing to meet the commitment? Do you really want to do it?). (Mead, 2002:196)

From these meetings an inquiry group was established which engaged in cycles of action and reflection over several months. Sometimes all members focus on the same issue, but often the inquiry is conducted as variations on a common theme:

...each member of the [group] formulated his or her own individual inquiry question under the umbrella: "How can I improve the way I exercise leadership in the Hertfordshire Constabulary?" The focus on our own practice informed each subsequent cycle of action and reflection...

We found that the simple act of sharing our stories, telling each other how we had been getting on with our inquiries, was enormously powerful – both to deepen the relationships between us and as a way of holding ourselves and each other to account... We learned to trust the process of... inquiry and that, in an organisational setting at least, it needs to be sustained by careful cultivation and lots of energy. (Mead, 2002:200)

The outcomes of the inquiry were varied. The following might be taken as typical

A colleague in the group was exploring his style as a leader and a manager espousing a clear position of valuing other people and wanting to empower his staff. He was confronted quite suddenly one day by feedback from his boss: rather than opening up and giving his staff space in which to work as he wished, they were concerned about the controlling influence he was retaining inappropriately.

When he talked about this in the group I could see that the work we had done together enabled him to hold the challenge and work with it. Instead of being either resistant to it or panicked by it, he took this as an

opportunity to really reflect, and with the group form an action plan as to how he would actually begin to try to shift his behaviour, so that it was in accordance with his values. He began to learn how 'let go the reins' and arranged to get systematic feedback from this person about how he was doing.

Geoff also reflects on the difficulty of accounting for these kinds of changes:

Sometimes these stories which have such enormous import to us in our lives, as reported feel quite small. And I am also conscious that in the telling and the retelling of the story so much of the richness of that encounter, that learning, is inevitably dissipated. But part of the huge pleasure and privilege of working in an inquiry group in this way is that we do come together and share these problems and issues, these moments together. And then we move out again. We constantly converge and diverge, and at these points of convergence we can take sustenance and then take that energy out into the wider world.

(transcribed and adapted from Mead, in Marshall & Reason, 2003)

The role of co-operative inquiry in organization development has enormous potential which has been applied with medical practitioners (Reason, 1999), to explore ecologically sustainable practice in a construction company (Ballard, in press 2005); inter-organizational collaboration (Mullett, Jung, & Hills, 2004); organizational culture (Marshall & McLean, 1988); gender and race in organizations (Aymer, in preparation 2005; Bryan, 2000; Douglas, 1999, 2002); and leadership in communities (Ospina et al., 2003).

Third-person research practice

How can we move beyond the relatively contained and small scale practices of first- and second-person action research to stimulate inquiry in whole organizations and in the wider society? The current debate in action research circles (Fricke, 2003; Greenwood, 2002; Gustavsen, 2003) suggests that while we

have learned a lot about how to create inquiry at a personal, small group and to some extent at an organizational level, we have been less successful in addressing large scale issues of institutional change, and scarcely touched the global issues of poverty, violence, and environmental degradation which are arguably the most pressing.

It is suggested by some that there is therefore an urgent need to develop strategies for developing larger scale in action research. To do this we may start from two perspectives: first considering ways to 'scale up' small scale inquiry at an organizational level; and then to ask whether action research can contribute at the level of social movement to address major issues of our time.

How, then might we 'scale up' first- and second-person research practices? How can we build from the relative intensity of the co-operative inquiry group to engage large groups and whole systems in inquiry? Often, the move from an intimate inquiry group to larger participation is difficult. However, Kate McArdle's inquiry with young women was more successful in stimulating wider debate by inviting others into an inquiring space.

Kate initiated a co-operative inquiry within a multi-national organisation in the UK as part of her PhD Research (McArdle, 2002, 2004), and as part of the organization development toward more effective management of diversity. The inquiry call invited young women from the organisation to form a co-operative inquiry group through which they would deepen their understanding of their experience of the organisation and enable themselves to act in more effective ways. The eventual inquiry group 'YoWiM' (Young Women in Management) consisted of 7 women who worked together in month-long cycles for 15 months. The group met together every four weeks on-site at the host organisation, sharing their stories and ideas from the action phase. In doing so, they opened space for new conversations about their experience - conversations which ranged from concerns about self-presentation, how they were addressed, the absence of female role models, and bullying - all of this being underpinned with issues around voice and voicing.

From the very earliest days of the inquiry group, participants discussed their desire to include, in some way, a wider group of women in the process. There was a strong sense that this would validate their involvement in the inquiry group in the eyes of a larger membership of the organisation – rather than just key sponsors – and that the involvement of more women from a more diverse ‘slice’ of the organisation (older, younger, more senior, more junior) would enable the inquiry group members to ‘check out’ their own experiences in the light of new stories these women would bring. Furthermore, working the (by this stage familiar) co-operative inquiry method with a new group of people who had not encountered it before offered the group the possibility of trying out new ways of being with ‘others’ – a further validity check on their developing facilitative skills.

The YoWiM group conceived, designed and conducted the half-day event, with Kate, who had initiated and actively facilitated the YoWiM co-operative inquiry, almost entirely as an observer. The preceding ten months of developing first- and second-person inquiry skills together in the intimate YoWiM inquiry group ultimately enabled the YoWiM women to facilitate and hold an inquiring space for over 50 women from their organisation with confidence. Translating their own processes of inquiry into the larger third-person space – a (much bigger) circle of chairs, structures to enable work in smaller, safer sub-groups, setting expectations that participants would really listen to each other and would endeavour to hear each other as equals, stating that experience is real and that stories told from it are therefore ‘true’, encouragement to offer opening comments and challenges, rather than judgemental closing ones – shifted the pattern of interactions and the types of stories that were possible to tell. The YoWiM women facilitated the deepening of engagement with the themes that emerged throughout the session – with Kate carefully intervening at times when they became drawn into non-inquiring behaviours, or hooked into other normative agendas.

The key point with this inquiry is how the development of first- and second-person inquiry skills over the preceding year enabled the YoWiM women to create and hold an inquiring space for others in which normative patterns of behaviour can be

named, inquired into and resisted – alongside the emergence of behaviours that enable flourishing and an inquiring stance to become a reality.

An entirely different model of third-person inquiry comes from the Scandinavian experience under the leadership of Bjørn Gustavsen. Gustavsen suggests we need to extend beyond the relatively small scale of individual action research 'cases' so that "rather than being defined exclusively as 'scientific happenings' they (are) also defined as 'political events'" (Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996b:11). More recently he deepens this argument, stating that action research will be of limited influence if we think only in terms of single cases, and that we need to think of creating social movements by adopting a 'distributive' approach - generating efforts of some substantial size and focussing research effort into developing and sustaining the network rather than on individual interventions. (Gustavsen, 2003).

If we use action research in a distributive way to create social movements it becomes more important to create many events of low intensity and diffuse boundaries than fewer events that correspond to the classical notion of a "case". Instead of using much resources in a single spot to pursue things into a continuously higher degree of detail in this spot, resources are spread over a much larger terrain to intervene in as many places in the overall movement as possible. (Gustavsen, 2003:96-7)

Gustavsen employs the 'dialogue conference' (Gustavsen, 2001) which, akin to the range of large scale and 'whole system' conference designs – future search, the appreciative inquiry summit, open space, whole systems events, and so on (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Pratt et al., 1999; Weisbord & Janoff, 1995) – broadens the 'community of inquiry' definition - creating a forum for debate based on principles of participatory democracy, but without the intensity, intimacy and duration of second person inquiry designs.

Using the dialogue conference approach (Gustavsen, 2001), Marianne Ekman Philips (2004) reports such a 'distributive' intervention in the Swedish Health Service, focussing on dialogue generation between as many actors as possible. Participants represented the main professional groups, including nurses, doctors, assistant

nurses, occupational therapists and home-service assistants. The main purpose was to expose the participants to each other, across professional as well as organisational boundaries to explore the potential for learning from one another.

As an action research strategy, the health care programme can be seen as an effort to promote organisation development in as wide a range of workplaces as possible through the organisation of an external support structure. This support structure relied, furthermore, mainly on actors from the health services themselves and on activities unfolding between them. The main task of research was to help develop the support structure, not to intervene deeply in processes at the level of specific organisations. The main reason for this kind of strategy is the need to reach broadly out into working life to be able to give changes a critical mass and sustainability. (Philips, 2004:362)

Summary

After taking a look at some illustrated accounts of first-, second- and third-person research practice, what are the themes that we can see and how might they be useful for the OD practitioner?

The accounts emphasise that action research is not a methodology, but an approach that shapes methodological practices. As such it is full of choices: rather than thinking in terms of 'getting it right or wrong', action researchers must endeavour to make appropriate choices in different situations. We would argue that a key dimension of quality is to be aware of the choices, consider them well, and to make those choices clear, transparent, articulate, to your selves, to your inquiry partners, and, when you start writing and presenting, to the wider world (Reason, 2003b).

Action Research and organization development are close cousins. We argue that in remembering the way OD is in many ways born of action research we can emphasize OD not only as a process of organizational improvement but also as a process of mutual and liberating inquiry.

References

- Argyris, C., Putnam, R. W., & Smith, M. C. (1985). *Action Science: Concepts, methods, and skills for research and intervention*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1974). *Theory in Practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1996). *Organizational Learning II*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Aymer, C. (in preparation 2005). *Black Cultural Renewal*. Unpublished PhD, University of Bath.
- Ballard, D. (in press 2005). Using learning processes to promote change for sustainable development. *Action Research*, 3(2).
- Bell, E. E. (2001). Infusing Race into the Discourse of Action Research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 48-58). London: Sage Publications.
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1964). *The Managerial Grid*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Co.
- Bryan, A. (2000). *Exploring the Experiences of Black Professional in Welfare Agencies and Black Students in Social Work Education*. Unpublished PhD, University of Bath, Bath.
- Bunker, B., & Alban, B. (1997). *Large Group Interventions: Engaging the whole system for rapid change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the first last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Charles, M., & Glennie, S. (2002). Co-operative Inquiry: Changing Interprofessional Practice. *Systemic practice and Action Research*, 15(3), 207-221.
- Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2004). *Doing Action Research in your own Organization* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Douglas, C. (1999). *From Surviving to Thriving; Black women managers in Britain*. Unpublished PhD, University of Bath, Bath.
- Douglas, C. (2002). Using Co-operative Inquiry with Black Women Managers: Exploring possibilities for moving from surviving to thriving. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 15(3), 249-262.
- Fals Borda, O., & Rahman, M. A. (Eds.). (1991). *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action research*. New York: Intermediate Technology Publications/Apex Press.
- Fisher, D., Rooke, D., & Torbert, W. R. (2000). *Personal and Organizational Transformations Through Action Inquiry*. Boston: Edge\Work Press.
- Foucault, M. (2000). *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, v.3. New York: The New Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Fricke, W. (2003). Discussion Forum. *Concepts and Transformation*, 8(3), 217-218;255-302.
- Friedman, V. J. (2001). Action Science: Creating communities of inquiry in communities of practice. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 159-170). London: Sage Publications.
- Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An Invitation to Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Greenwood, D. J. (2002). Action Research: Unfulfilled promises and unmet challenges. *Concepts and Transformation*, 7(2), 117-139.
- Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (1998). *Introduction to Action Research: Social research for social change*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Gustavsen, B. (2001). Theory and Practice: The mediating discourse. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 17-26). London: Sage Publications.
- Gustavsen, B. (2003). Action Research and the Problem of the Single Case. *Concepts and Transformation*, 8(1), 93-99.
- Hawkins, P. (1988). A Phenomenological Psychodrama Workshop. In P. Reason (Ed.), *Human Inquiry in Action*. London: Sage Publications.
- Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the human condition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Heron, J., & Reason, P. (2001). The Practice of Co-operative Inquiry: Research with rather than on people. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 179-188). London: Sage Publications.
- Kristiansen, M., & Bloch-Poulsen, J. (2004). Self-referentiality as a Power Mechanism: Towards dialogic action research. *Action Research*, 2(4), 371-388.
- Kristiansen, M., & Bloch-Poulsen, J. (in press 2004). Self-referentiality as a Power Mechanism: Towards dialogic action research. *Action Research*, 2(4).
- Ludema, J. D., Cooperrider, D. L., & Barrett, F. J. (2001). Appreciative Inquiry: The power of the unconditional positive question. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 189-199). London: Sage Publications.
- Marshall, J. (1999). Living Life as Inquiry. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 12(2), 155-171.
- Marshall, J. (2001). Self-Reflective Inquiry Practices. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 433-439). London: Sage Publications.
- Marshall, J. (2002). *Living Systemic Thinking: Exploring quality in first person research*. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Meeting, Symposium 'Quality in First Person Inquiry'. Denver, CO. Under review for Action Research.
- Marshall, J. (2004). Living Systemic Thinking: Exploring quality in first person research. *Action Research*, 2(3), 309-329.
- Marshall, J., & McLean, A. (1988). Reflection in Action: Exploring Organizational Culture. In P. Reason (Ed.), *Human Inquiry in Action* (pp. 199-220). London: Sage Publications.
- Marshall, J., & Reason, P. (2003). Introduction to Action Research [CD]. Bath: Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, School of Management, University of Bath.
- Martin, A. W. (2001). Large-group Processes as Action Research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- McArdle, K. L. (2002). Establishing a Co-operative Inquiry Group: The perspective of a 'first-time' inquirer. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 15(3), 177-189.
- McArdle, K. L. (2004). *In-powering Spaces: A co-operative inquiry with young women in management*. Unpublished PhD, University of Bath, Bath.
- Mead, G. (2001). *Unlatching the gate: Realising my scholarship of living inquiry*. Unpublished PhD, University of Bath, Bath.
- Mead, G. (2002). Developing Ourselves as Leaders: How can we inquiry collaboratively in a hierarchical organization? *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 15(3), 191-206.
- Mieniczakowski, J., & Morgan, S. (2001). Ethnodrama: Constructing Participatory, Experiential and Compelling Action Research through Performance. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (pp. 219-227). London: Sage Publications.
- Mullett, J., Jung, K., & Hills, M. (2004). Being, Becoming and Belonging: Getting to ambassadorship, a new metaphor for living and collaborating in the community. *Action Research*, 2(2), 145-165.

- Ospina, S., Dodge, J., Godsoe, B., Minieri, J., Reza, S., & Schall, E. (2003). From Consent to Mutual Inquiry: Balancing democracy and authority in action research. *Action Research*, 2(1), 45-66.
- Paine, T. (1791). *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and other political writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Pasmore, W. A. (2001). Action Research in the Workplace: The Socio-technical perspective. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 38-47). London: Sage Publications.
- Philips, M. E. (2004). Action Research and Development Coalitions in Health Care. *Action Research*, 2(4).
- Pratt, J., Gordon, P., & Plamping, D. (1999). *Working Whole Systems: Putting theory into practice in organizations*. London: King's Fund.
- Reason, P. (1988). Whole Person Medical Practice. In P. Reason (Ed.), *Human Inquiry in Action* (pp. 102-126). London: Sage Publications.
- Reason, P. (1999). General Medical and Complementary Practitioners Working Together: The epistemological demands of collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 35(1), 71-86.
- Reason, P. (2003a). Doing Co-operative Inquiry. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Reason, P. (2003b). *Keynote address: Choice and Quality in Action Research Practice*. Paper presented at the Action Learning Action Research & Process Management 6th World Congress & Participatory Action Research 10th World Congress, Pretoria.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Preface. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. xxiii-xxxi). London: Sage Publications.
- Roberts, P. (2003). *Emerging Selves in Practice: How do I and others create my practice and how does my practice shape me and influence others?* Unpublished PhD, University of Bath, Bath.
- Roth, G. L., & Kleiner, A. (1998). Developing Organizational Memory through Learning Histories. *Organizational Dynamics*, 27(2), 43-61.
- Rudolph, J. W., Taylor, S. S., & Foldy, E. G. (2001). Collaborative off-line reflection: A way to develop skill in action science and action inquiry. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (pp. 405-412). London: Sage Publications.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Selener, D. (1997). *Participatory Action Research and Social Change*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Participatory Action Research Network, Cornell University.
- Shotter, J. (1993). *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social construction and knowing of the third kind*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Torbert, W. R. (2001). The Practice of Action Inquiry. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 250-260). London: Sage Publications.
- Torbert, W. R. (2004). *Action Inquiry: The secret of timely and transforming leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Toulmin, S., & Gustavsen, B. (1996a). *Beyond Theory: changing organizations through participation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Toulmin, S., & Gustavsen, B. (Eds.). (1996b). *Beyond Theory: Changing organizations through participation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Trist, E., & Bamforth, K. (1951). Some social and psychological consequences of the longwall method of coal-getting. *Human Relations*, 4, 3-38.
- Weisbord, M. R., & Janoff, S. (1995). *Future Search: an action guide to finding common ground in organizations and communities*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Whitehead, J. (1989). Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the Kind: How can I improve my practice? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1), 41-52.

Whitehead, J. (2000). How Do I Improve My Practice? Creating and legitimating an epistemology of practice. *Reflective Practice*, 1(1), 91-104.