an activist's guide to research and advocacy

RASSP core manual
centre for civil society

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core manual

Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme

This manual is a collection of materials used throughout the programme and is read in conjunction with the RASSP workbook and other facilitation tools developed for this project, available on the CCS website.

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Centre For Civil Society
University of Natal King George V Ave Durban

Tel: +27 (0)31 260 3577 Fax: +27 (0)31 260 2502 Email: benjamins@nu.ac.za

CSRSC
Civil Society
Research & Support Collective

Education design, layout and facilitation by

civil society
research & support collective

Tel/fax: +27 (o) 31 764 1760
e-mail labrat@dbn.stormnet.co.za

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The Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme was launched by the Centre for Civil Society in 2002. It has been offered to almost every sector of civil society organisations. Activists came from all nine provinces where they were introduced to the skill of research and more fundamentally, the uses of research. Today, the Centre has 48 participants who qualified for research grants and are now out in the field doing their community based research that has a strong advocacy component to it so as to assist them in bringing their research alive. All of this would not have been possible were it not for the dedication and commitment of the following people :

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Dr. Ran Greenstein, Sociology, Wits University
Dr. Benjamin Roberts, Human Sciences Research Council
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Nkosinathi Ngcobo, HEARD

The Writing Team
Michael Koen, Civil Society Research and Support Collective
Fazel Khan, University of Durban Westville
Sultan Khan, University of Durban Westville
Thami Ngwenya, Centre for Public Participation

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All the participants, from the very first 200 to the 48 who have been selected to carry out their research projects.

preface

What is research? Is it just a skill you need to be a good academic? Can a community activist conduct research?

Often hidden in the massive buildings of universities with an air of austerity and mysticism, research has been kept in the hands of academics. Its distance from communities has resulted in it developing a mysteriousness and often mythical edge to it.

Yet everyday, each step of the way, we are engaging in acts of research. Sometimes we do it unconsciously and sometimes we do it with a genuine interest to know something. Research is an enquiry into something : some issue, incident, to prove a point, to shred a point to pieces, to build a case, and even to start a campaign.

Take for example the people in Wentworth, Durban. If you asked one person how they were feeling and they replied that they were not feeling too well because they were up coughing all night, you may not be too perturbed with that and you may easily dismiss that information as the person coming down with flu. Yet should your enquiring mind and health suspicion prompt you a bit further, you may start asking about ten people from the area how they are feeling. Should all ten of them answer that they are not feeling well because they have been coughing all night, your enquiring mind should have picked up that something is wrong. Further investigations would show that one of the big plants in the area had emitted large doses of pollution into the air during the course of the evening.

Research is an integral part of our lives. Through this field we are able to maintain a healthy suspicion of every written piece that crosses our paths. Our minds begin to actively question, actively and strategically plan our interactions, interventions, and programmes. It can even be used to strengthen our organisations and build capacity amongst our membership and constituencies. It's a phenomenally powerful tool and skill to have. No-one is able to ignore a piece of research. It has to be taken seriously.

It is also an ongoing process. Research should never be stagnant where it has the inability to change and move things. Hence it should be strongly located in community that is being researched so that the community, together with the researcher, can organically bring it to life so that things can change, people can be moved. In this way, you not only build yourself as a researcher but you also help build your community and strengthen your organisation.

Research linked with a strong advocacy plan is important for the building of a strong and vibrant civil society. The rightful place of civil society is to act as watchdog over the human, socio-economic and political rights of citizens in their communities. To assist a community activist in being a strategic watchdog, research has to be his/her key instrument.

In this manual, you will be introduced to research and how it forms part of our every day lives. You will learn how to access information and how to classify this information. You will also be introduced to the research process and be introduced to the different research tools that come from the quantitative and qualitative toolbox. You will learn how to read and analyse research reports, how to plan a research project, how to write up a research proposal as well as a budget and how to conduct a literature review. And finally, you will learn how to connect research to an advocacy plan.

Attached to this information manual is a workbook that will assist you in developing your skills. Working through the exercises will give you a good understanding on how to develop a research question by identifying the problem that exists, develop a research plan, decide on your methodology, choose a sample size, develop questionnaires, interview schedules, focus groups, then be able to collect the data, analyse it and write up a research report. Included you will also learn how to search for information, how to classify the information and construct a literature review. Once you have worked through this you will have a bird's eye view of the research process. You will also be shown how to link up your research with advocacy : so you will be introduced to the structures of government and where the access or points of intervention lies, how to put together a campaign, write a letter to the editor of a leading newspaper, a letter to a government official as well as how to analyse policy.

If you are able to put all of this together you would have developed yourself into a contemporary grass-roots activist that is able to change the way things exist in your community and in the world!

contents

chapter 1

introducing research

introduction

As workers and citizens we encounter research everyday and we have all taken part in research. For example, we have all taken part in the national census. Some of us have chaired meetings where we have asked people whether they agree to a motion by a show of hands. This is research. We all have different experiences of doing and being recipients of research. In addition we all have opinions of what research is, who owns it and how it should be done.

In this section we shall explore the relationship of research to:

- to knowledge in general
- to the systematic methods it uses to produce knowledge
- to the "fields" of its investigations
- to power in society
- to its claims of being a reliable and trustworthy effort.

We will do so because researchers claim that they increase and improve our knowledge and through their findings they provide a unique service to society's betterment.

Before exploring these themes though we feel that it is important to introduce you to four social researchers. They are Mr Dumisani Dube, Mr Mark Walters, Ms Geraldine Fraser and Mr Philemon Silva. Let us look at their work by taking each one of them by turn:

Dumi Dube is a fascinating young man. He grew up in KwaMashu and did not get a very good education. In fact it has been so bad that most of the doors of learning have been closed to him. He learnt his craft from his mother and his grandmother who taught him how to love and appreciate his culture. In turn, for the last eight years he has been walking up and down the province collecting izibongo poems about the kin, the clans and chiefdoms of this province. He has also gone about collecting no less than 176 praise-poems for indigenous plants, their medicinal, human and animal usage. He is now collecting stories and parables about health and food preparation. He is a walking and orating Zulu encyclopaedia. Whomever he meets he tells them what he knows and asks for their version of what he knows, and he allows his versions to grow and grow. He is not linked to any University but he has found a home now in the African Renaissance initiative in the Province.

Mark Walters is a sociologist. He walks the streets of Durban and interacts with the "down and outs" in the streets. He does not publish what he finds out because he is scared that the authorities will use the findings in order to get rid of them from the city centre. He follows them into their shelters, shares drinks and food with them, finds out about their stories, their backgrounds, their coping mechanisms. And he is concerned to prove for himself that the moral economy of the poor is an active element of street life. He only uses his material in his lectures to challenge students about the dignity of the people they look down-upon.

Here we have four people, doing different things, doing them in their own way but if we ask them what are they doing, they will reply: Research.

Geraldine Fraser is also a social scientist. After working on Police Transformation committees she decided to do her Doctoral thesis on how the police is changing in the new South Africa. To do so she has been allowed to study the highest-impact unit: the public order policing unit. But to do so she did not only have to interview them one-by-one but also to go out into the field with them: watch them operate, watch them control crowds, chase after criminals. At the end of all this high exposure she is supposed to analyse the transformation and its success.

Philemon Silva coordinates a team of 60 researchers who are running around the country interviewing nurses. The Democratic Nurses Association (DENOSA) requested him to conduct a survey to find out what the major problems its black and white members are confronting in the hospitals, in their profession and with each other. So more than a thousand nurses are being asked the same questions everywhere. Although DENOSA agreed that Silva can use his own independent skills to do the study, they expect a report that will help this new COSATU affiliate.

knowledge

So in which way are these four people contributing to our knowledge in general? Before we turn to their answers to such a question let us think together:

Dumi Dube's response would be as follows: the knowledge systems are out there, surviving as bits and pieces in the African communities of the province. Although each person he encounters knows a little piece, the person does not know all the pieces. As he is learning from others he is also sharing and teaching them what other people told him that they know. So what his contribution is, as he sees it, is to reclaim value for indigenous traditions before they get destroyed.

Walters is caught between the University where he teaches and the theories about people on the one hand and life on the streets on the other. His claim is that Sociology must not just theorise about people or what people are compelled to do but it should go out there and learn from the people. Especially from the people that a society downgrades and devalues. By learning from them you also know how a system operates and you can improve your understanding of power and society.

Fraser would argue that to understand transformation and the transformation of power you have to study the organisations where power is concentrated and exercised: the police. And she would say because the police is an authoritarian organization with strict codes of discipline it can change police behaviour by demanding it of its rank and file. Policemen and women will obey and adjust their behaviour but their culture and belief-systems remain the same. In any crisis they will behave in the old ways despite appearances. So her contribution would be the insight that unless deep cultural transformations happen, changes in policing are mere decorations.

Silva would say that by interviewing so many nurses the organization will be able to identify the key problems that its members face: although democratic, seniority and rank among nurses are important; although non-racial, racial attitudes are hardened; although there to serve communities most would not administer abortions because they are against them; although community-conscious most are ready to emigrate; although unionized they would rather belong to a strong professional association. Although finally, most blame the ANC for the deterioration of hospital resources, they see no electoral alternative.

In short, each one claims to be providing us with more facts, more findings, more awareness or knowledge.

systematic methods

Each one of the researchers uses a different method. As you will see later some of these methods are termed *quantitative* and some *qualitative* methods. To be brief:

Dumi Dube is using a qualitative method of research. Steeped in what he already knows he greets a new person respectfully by providing his own isibongo. When he hears the other's he informs the other that he has heard that his kin or clan also use a different imagery to describe their line. Amused, the respondent justifies the difference by explaining how the lines were broken during Dingiswayo's times and so on. He then adds that if you were of this clan then you would have had the following plants around your homestead. Not us, the other would say, what my mother told me is this....and ...that. Dube is out to speak to as many people as possible just in case something is lost. But his method is qualitative, it is based on face-to-face communication and the importance of oral memory.

Walters is also using a qualitative method of research: talking, observing, joking commiserating. He is enabling the people to tell their story or what they want to say about their story. He lets them show him what is important in their daily life and he prompts them every now and again with someone else's story. He lets them describe the dangers, fears and challenges of the street. As long as they are poor and homeless in Durban, he speaks to them.
Fraser is combining qualitative with quantitative. She has done a survey of more than a hundred of them, asking them all the same questions so she can say 60% of those interviewed say "this" or "that". But she also uses qualitative methods- she is with them a lot of the time, she is observing their responses to situations, she asks them questions about themselves, their families, their fears, their hates and loves.

Finally, Silva's is quantitative. The survey with the same questions is administered to hundreds of people. He doesn't even have to ask the questions himself. He developed the questions, put them on paper and hired 60 students to go and get the answers. He also hired an experienced supervisor/quality controller.

relationship to the field

One of the most difficult aspects of this kind of work is its relationship to what researchers call the "field." The difficulty the researchers face arises for three reasons:

1. They are asking people to give their time and energy, their opinions and wisdom, for something whose implications they don't know.
2. The researcher comes into the field with his or her own values and biases.
3. People sometimes tell you what they think you want to know and not what they really believe.

Dumisani Dube's is the least complicated. The field is everywhere he goes and most people enjoy, if they have the time, learning and sharing aspects of deep culture. If they have the time, all is fine. Quickly Dumi is able to tell whether they are of Zulu-descent or not. Whether they remember anything or not. Whether they are "urban smarts" without any knowledge about indigenous forms or not. But his values and biases are obvious, he is driven by his devotion to these cultural forms and would be irritated by people who have lost their culture. Or as he admits about people who fabricate their pasts or knowledge. Of course, most Zulu people will tell him something, but he might miss what some of them really believe: in Christianity, in Communism, in xenophobia and so on.

Walters has more complications in the "rainbow poverty" of the Durban city. There black and white "down and outs" walk the streets. He doesn't have to tell them that he is white, that they can easily work out, but he has to tell them where he works and that he is doing research. Some will reject him out-of-hand. Some will think he is mad. That he dresses simply and shabbily is one thing, that he wants something from them, is quite another. Why does he want to know? Is he really to be trusted? What if he is an undercover cop? A Metro Cop? What should we tell this crazy guy? What is it to you wiseguy? Get lost. It is a difficult relationship whose trust is precious. He can't just buy them booze or bread otherwise other dependencies and conflicts develop.

Fraser's too is a difficult relationship: who sent her? Is she working for the Top Brass? Is she here to tell us how stupid we are? Not only is she suspect of all kinds of alterior motives but she is also a woman. Will the men speak freely to her? Who gave her permission to be here in the first place- must be the government. She is spying on us. She is one of those liberals. Look at her finger-nails. Look at her clothes. She talks funny too.

Like Dumisani above, Silva has it easier: the General Secretary of the Association will phone the Branches, the Branches will phone their members and the members would be made available. His researchers have an organizational mandate to irritate the nurses with their questions. If they have a problem, they must talk to their structures. Many of them will be suspicious of the research but they will be faced with young people who are just doing their job. Still, most nurses might not tell the people what they really believe in.

The relationship to the field brings with it the relationship between Research and Power.

power

This is an obvious and therefore usually ignored theme:

What if Dube was working for a pharmaceutical company which was interested in appropriating indigenous knowledge? What if Dube's knowledge was written down and disseminated? And then what if it was seized by commercial interests?

What if Walters was working for the Development Department that had unbeknown to him the plan to get rid of the "down and outs" from Durban?

What if Fraser was working with the National Intelligence Agency?

What if the objective of Silva's research was to create divisions and splits in the Association?

The personal rewards to the researchers are obvious: the esteem that Dube enjoys will increase; the ability of Walters to be a more effective teacher will increase; the PhD will give Fraser a better academic and social standing; Silva will increase his reputation. But what is the benefit of all this for those who make up the stories or the numbers in the study? Will the people who are being researched be empowered by the research?

relationship to reliability

In the final instance researchers claim that to the best of their ability they provide a systematic investigation that asks us to act in certain ways. As such it"s claim is to be trusted, reliable, valid.

How do we make up our minds about a piece of research? Let us imagine that the four pieces above

- make some contribution to general knowledge
- make us are satisfied that they have used sensible methods
- have negotiated an honest interaction with their field
- are not to disadvantage anybody

We can still ask are we satisfied that they are valid and reliable pieces of work? As you learn about quantitative and qualitative methods in the lectures that follow, remember that Dube, Walters, Fraser and Silva are claiming to be helping us to understand and explain our world in better ways.

different types of research

policy research

There is no doubt that power-based confrontations and negotiations have created the possibility for the new society. They can also determine whether, for example, there will be Provinces in the country and decide on their relative powers. Once it is decided that there will be provinces, a decision is needed on how many. Teams of experts and representatives get together, researchers are hired and they propose a number of options: is it going to be 5 or 9? Power and influence decides on 9.

Then, the country needs to define what the provincial powers will be. Immediately after that, the country needs to know how the state will share its resources between the provinces (distributional policy). Again, experts and researchers are mobilised to recommend scenarios. In the end, it is decided that the fairest and most democratic policy will be one that gives the provinces sums that are proportional to their population. This means that, despite the fact that Gauteng contributes more to the country's economy and to the state, it will only receive according to its population statistics. To do that, you have to know reliably how many people are in each province. Statistics South Africa has to find out through a Census. More research is needed.

Then, the country needs to establish the separation of powers between national, provincial and local authorities. Then it needs to establish a unified state administration. Then it establishes principles of governance. Then each institution needs to develop its own policies. Finally, as laws are voted in, policy work follows. The volume of policy research increases and increases.

The **first** important point is that policy work is defined by three, let us call them, "power arrangements".

The first is a *historical* balance of powers: this is embodied in the country's Constitution. At a certain moment in time, all the conflicting parties compromise on a document that defines the character of the society. Although the Constitution can be changed, it needs such an overwhelming majority in parliament that it is very difficult to change.

Policy Research is vital for a society's organisational life and has been central to South Africa's developing democracy. In fact, the transition from Apartheid with its racial forms of domination to a new dispensation has increased the volume of policy development and research to unimaginable levels.

The second is a *fundamental* balance of powers: this is embodied in a country's laws. Such laws have to conform with the Constitution but they can be created and changed in the country's parliament. They are contested by parties and by civil society, but once they are "passed" they fundamentally define the parameters of action in a country.

The third is an *implementation*-based balance of powers: this is embodied in policies that translate the above into consistent and applicable operational principles or plans.

Policies and plans are contested, defined and re-defined but once in place, they allow organisations (the largest of which is the government) to implement what they are supposed to do in a consistent way. These policies can be developed unilaterally by the powers vested in government or through processes of consultation.

The **second** point is that we can distinguish policies in terms of their "scope": some policies are, let us call them, "fundamental" some are "streamlining", some are "corrective" and some are "redressive".

Fundamental – these are policies that define the operations of an entire sector of activity following the passing of a law. For example, our Health policy prioritises preventative health care. Through that government, health professionals, health-based organisations and service providers are enabled to act in a consistent way.

Streamlining – these are policies that are developed to create an efficient delivery process so that everyone knows what to do and knows when to do it.

Corrective – these are policies trying to correct a problem that has arisen. Such problems are either unforeseen, or the streamlining is not working, or the system fails to do what it is supposed to do. For example, the treatment of HIV positive mothers to stop transmission to infants was "outside" the immediate actions of the streamlining processes. Now it seems that a corrective policy that affects the fundamental policy and the streamlining policies will need to be developed.

Redressive – these may have to be developed if the corrective policies are in crucial conflict with the fundamental one. So a new fundamental policy needs to be developed. For example, the Basic Income Grant or a National Income Grant is being vigorously debated. If it is seen as a necessary redressive measure, it will affect and re-define GEAR (the Macro-Economic Policy), the policies of the Dept of Labour and the Social Welfare policies of the country. If this can't be done and there is overwhelming political support for it, then a new law has to be passed that creates an enabling environment for new fundamental and streamlining policies.

The **third** point is that policy development is central to organisational life in all societies. It is important therefore to spend a few minutes re-visiting some of our prior understandings of organisations.

At the most general level, organisations are created to coordinate human effort to achieve certain goals. Through our work we encounter hundreds of organisations – they are everywhere. We can distinguish between them: some are "formal" and some are "informal".

Formal organisations have constitutions, clear rules, office-bearers, bank accounts members and/or clients. Informal ones rely on face-to-face communication, support systems, unwritten rules, and presuppose solidarity between their members. We can also distinguish between them by looking at their hierarchies: some are bureaucratic; some are democratic.

The largest organisation in any society is the institution of the state or government. Like all organisations, governments coordinate the efforts of thousands of officials to achieve the goals defined by the constitution and the laws of a country. What we need to focus on is a simple assertion: policies or policy-work allow organisations to act in a consistent manner.

Without a formulated policy or a "policy-framework" officials, office-bearers cannot apply themselves in any systematic way. So a lot of effort and a many resources are expended in the development of policy. So we have returned to where we started from: the relationship between organisations and policy work.

There is a need for consistent and some would add, fair, policies to achieve certain goals. Policies are developed through consultations with stake-holders, through discussions and debate or through contestation. Invariably, some research will be involved. At a certain point, a policy-framework is approved or endorsed. Then, it would be "actioned" or "implemented" and officials, after some training or instruction will be able to carry it out.

New policies create a lot of noise around them. We might be interviewed as individuals or we might be consulted as stakeholders. If we have our say and the results are contrary to what we want or need, we will protest, shout and moan. Nevertheless, without clear policy guidelines or frameworks organisations cannot achieve their goals.

advocacy and social research

In all societies having equal rights does not mean that people have equal capacities or power.

Power is not something you can put in your pocket – it involves relationships between people and access to resources. At its broadest level, social scientists agree that it involves the ability or capacity to get others to do what you want them to do whether they like it or not. If a group, a collective or an organisation is able to do that, we can say that it exercises power over others. Such power relations define relationships between men and women, elders and youngsters; owners of the means of production or livelihoods and non-owners, owners and controllers of the means of communication.

Therefore all societies have inherent power tensions that generate conflict; some of them are impossible to resolve within a social system and some are, but each society moves through forms of conflict and consensus.

At the moment, the South African Constitution enables any two people to form a voluntary association to pursue their common aims and objectives within the boundaries of the law. This is available to the powerful and those whose capacities to exercise power are limited. Any and every voluntary association is involved in advocacy work of some sort.

Such advocacy work intensifies if it is located within a social movement. Social movements are defined as "sustained upsurges of people challenging the social order and/or the class structure of a society". Phrased differently, social movements challenge power configurations. Community movements are similar to social movements but they emerge out of a community. Its roots are strongly entrenched in the community it organises in.

Political scientists distinguish, for example, between transformative, reformative, identity or redemptive movements. So for example, a communist movement in a capitalist society would be of a transformative nature. A movement that challenges the social order for more access to resources would be a reformative one. An identity movement would be fighting for special group rights that recognise its constituency's difference. A redemptive movement would be one that demands withdrawal from the social order in order to create its own moral society. Sociologists are concerned with how these movements are organised. Economists are concerned with the economic and social resources such movements deploy in their "sustained upsurges". Social movements, as the central carriers of change and new values, are some of the most researched components of human life.

One of the most fascinating movements in the last twenty years has been the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India and its sister organisation the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) in South Africa. It is a movement fighting for access for informal sector women to the economic life of a country. It is an organisation and a network; it mobilises resources and creates alternative systems of participation; it is a local movement that is globally linked through networking. It is criticised by the left as being too "reformist" and by the right as being "subversive" (usually regarding the gender relations in society). It works in alliance with other NGOs, CBOs and research consultants.

The reason why this example was chosen is that it combines three features that advocacy work is all about: conflict processes, encroaching processes, creative processes.

Conflict Processes: organisations in civil society are active agencies in pursuing their goals. They are involved in a range of activities from protests to demonstrations, from campaigns to education programmes. They become involved in processes of consultation, lobbying, defending, challenging or popularising.

Encroaching Processes: movements especially among the poor and powerless are also involved in "persistent and pervasive" politics of encroachment. They gain access to resources, spaces and facilities. For example, in the case of SEWU, the Municipality shifts its policy so that, instead of chasing women traders off the street, it offers them pavement and stall access. This "encroachment" creates its own dynamics.

Creative processes: movements create alternative institutions and systems as well: new productive networks, centres, care-facilities, advice nodes, transportation systems, cultural institutions and alternative economic processes. The list is long and growing as the state withdraws from areas of social life, leaving civil society to fend for itself.

The same set of processes can be used to describe the work and strategies of Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa. Most advocacy groups recommend six steps in the work of achieving their goals.

We can see from this step-by-step interpretation of advocacy work that research may occur at various steps. Also, that other people's research and policy documents based on other people's research enter the process.

1. **Problem identification**

- They agree that there is a problem.
- They ask themselves what the cause or causes are that create the situations behind the problem?
- Could the situation be changed through advocacy work? If yes, then they proceed with the following.

2. **Gathering information**

- They gather as much information about the situation and its causes as they can. Such a gathering-process might involve research.
- They identify possible solutions. This might involve research on options.
- They develop an idea about favourable or negative opportunities.
- They develop a clear idea of sources of support.

3. **Taking an action-based decision**

- They agree to act.

4. **Planning**

- They create a clear plan of action that involves a variety of processes as outlined above: demonstrating, popularising, campaigns, policy intervention.

5. **Taking action**

- This also involves the definition of action-based roles.

6. **Evaluation – which leads to new problem identification**

- This involves a thorough review of the outcomes of the action.
- It reviews and researches the intended and unintended consequences of the action.
- It identifies new problems.

To return to our theme – the steps outlined above are best suited for what we have described as "conflict processes". We need to explore how the relationship between research and action differs in "encroaching" and "creative" processes.

Firstly, there might be confusion about the distinction between the two. There shouldn't be. Movements, organisations and initiatives come to win access to existing resources. As we mentioned above, informal traders might win the right to utilise pavements and get the city to provide toilets and stalls. They do not get a new city built for them. They gain a new dispensation. But this immediately changes their operations because they have to operate from a new platform – a platform that is part of their existence. Their advocacy has to change to include this new platform. They would ask for storage space and night-shelters. The authorities might resist. The informal traders will not throw away their gains because of that – their survival depends on them – but they will lobby, argue and confront to encroach some more.

Secondly, creative processes involve the creation of an alternative system or institution that does not exist. This would involve creating, sustaining, expanding, sourcing and resourcing something that is viable: a cooperative, a crèche, a cultural centre, an alternative education system and so on. If we take these two kinds of processes, it is easy to see how research deployed for their achievement might be different: knowing reliably that 33% of our women members are HIV positive is not the same as building and creating a new health-care facility.

In conclusion, let us return to our theme of advocacy. Let us use a more refined definition of "power". Power is a concept that allows us to understand that one group or collective within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out its will and its goals despite resistance. Power is therefore an aspect of all relationships in society.

All organisations in society are means through which social power is marshalled to achieve certain goals. In a society that enables free and voluntary association, we are faced with competing, contending and conflicting goals and processes. Therefore advocacy work flows out of this contestation.In this context, researchers and social scientists claim that without them it would be difficult to "know what you want" or "want what you know". They claim that research, due to its systematic, methodical and methodological rigour, is an indispensable element of social and organisational life. Furthermore, researchers want to claim that their work should be independent of power interests if it is to be reliable. Advocacy groups and organisations criticise researchers all the time, saying that research should be linked to their needs, it should be linked to their aspirations, it should be relevant.

participatory action research

Participatory action research (PAR) emerged in the 1970s in Latin America and other developing countries as a new way of approaching and doing social research. It developed as a response to a perceived crisis that the knowledge that academics were trying to produce through their research did not have an influence on social practice and the struggle for social justice. Therefore, the focus shifted to the design of research methodologies with strong political goals and commitments in the form of liberating and empowering the people that are researched. In achieving this, the many theoretical and practical traditions influencing fields such as agriculture, social work, education, health, housing and community development were examined and combined under the banner of participatory action research. Today, PAR has become one of the most common approaches to research that have a participatory dimension. It is widely applied to interventions aimed at grassroots interventions, especially in poor, rural locations. It is intended to make development more responsive to the needs and views of the beneficiaries.

Characteristics of PAR

The central ideas behind the participatory action approach are participatory involvement, action and change, reciprocal encounters and dialogue. There is also a strong emphasis on the *political* dimension of social sciences research, especially with regard to the power sharing between the researcher and the researched, identifying with the poor and the oppressed, and acknowledging the political and ideological results of research. These traits will now be discussed in more detail.

Perhaps the most important feature of this new paradigm is that it involves *participation* or collaboration between the people being studied and the researcher. Participation in this case refers to a situation where the research subjects are actively involved in all aspects of the research process. Amongst other things, they help decide the purpose of the research, set the agendas, plan the design of the project, participate in the data gathering and analysis, generate problem solutions and an action agenda, and control the use of outcomes. There are different degrees of participation, ranging from extreme of 'participant control', where participants are entirely in charge of the whole research process, to lesser forms of participation such as 'consultation' and 'partnership' between the researcher and the researched. The degree of participation that is possible is determined by various different factors, including those that are specific to the setting being researched (e.g. the willingness to collaborate with outsiders) as well as those relating to the background context of the project (e.g. time and resource constraints). However, PAR has an expectation that the researcher will attempt to do whatever possible to promote participation during the research process.

The emphasis of PAR on participation and involvement/collaboration has an influence on the roles of and relationship between the researcher and the people being researched. Since the researcher's primary responsibility is to initiate and facilitate change that empowers those being researched during the research process, she or he is considered a "*change agent*". Also, since the people being studied are to be highly involved in the research process, they are no longer seen as objects of research but rather as co-researchers or research *"participants*". Therefore, in trying to democratise the research process by reducing the distinction between the change agent and participants, PAR involves changing the subject-object relationship characteristic of quantitative research in a new subject-subject relationship. There is power sharing in which all the participants in the process become equals who learn and teach together during their many encounters or meetings.

Because of its concern with participation, participatory action research tends to place special value on *local or traditional knowledge*, which can be understood to mean the common sense, wisdom and expertise of the participants. This is in contrast to the significance placed upon the technical expertise and knowledge of the researcher in conventional quantitative research. The reason for doing this is that it allows for the inclusion and more faithful representation of the participants' situation and context. Another characteristic of PAR is that, given its close relationship to action research, it is designed to lead to practical, social actions and change. It is concerned with the question of what the benefit of the research is for the participants, the underlying assumption being that the existing situation needs to change. As a result, PAR is often aimed at finding solutions to practical or concrete problems. PAR is not an end in itself (research for research's sake), but is instead a means towards action that aims at planning, implementing and monitoring change. *Knowledge is produced for action* and not for research. The action involved should always be aimed at serving the interests of the participants.

Lastly, *empowerment* is a crucial focus and goal of participatory action research. This implies that the poor, oppressed and exploited acquire power through research. Empowerment is given such a high priority that PAR could essentially be understood to be first and foremost a research approach for empowering participants and only secondly as a methodology for producing research in the traditional sense.

In summary, participatory action research can be seen to differ from the standard ways of conducting social research in

a number of ways. One observed difference between PAR and other methodologies is the *location of power* in the research process. It is participatory in the extreme, because it focuses on people's roles in setting the agendas, participating in the data gathering and analysis, and controlling the use of outcomes. As such, the approach challenges the world view that subject and object are separated by regarding participation as shared ownership of the entire research process. Another reason why PAR differs from normal social science is that it explicitly embraces the *political*. It is constantly addressing the issue of which political interests are being satisfied through the research. In addition, given that participatory action research is closely related to action research, it is concerned with methodology for *productive work* rather than research for research's sake. Knowledge is produced for action and not research as an end in itself. A final distinguishing characteristic is *empowerment* of the participants by means of actively encouraging participation in both the production of knowledge and the generation and promotion of actions.

Since PAR promotes a participatory and 'bottom-up' approach rather than an imposed, blueprint or 'top-down' approach to development, it is particularly relevant tool for South African researchers. This is not only in recognition of the fact that the majority live in impoverished conditions, but also due to an understanding that post-apartheid development efforts need to be flexible so as to accommodate the needs of different locations more generally and responsive to meet the needs of, and empowering, the dispossessed more specifically.

methodological issues

There is a diverse range of data-gathering methods that are considered suitable for use in participatory action research. The approach tends to be both multidisciplinary and eclectic due to its applied and problem-solving nature. The research methods used must therefore be tailored to each specific situation and should be adapted to what the participants believe to be relevant to achieve their objectives. Because of this, PAR must be structured differently in different contexts, which is the reason why it uses a wide variety of research methods and techniques.

It is commonly accepted that PAR gives preference to qualitative rather than quantitative analysis. This is partly because it draws upon methods that have their roots in anthropological and sociological traditions, which tend to be more interpretive and inductive in nature. The fact that PAR collects most of its information in its natural setting or context (naturalism) makes qualitative research methods especially appealing. Qualitative methods are also favoured because they facilitate an in-depth, rich understanding of the research setting, focus on the participants' experience of their situation, and are consistent with an emphasis on local knowledge. For these reasons, unstructured and group interviews as well as participant observation are commonly used qualitative methods for PAR. It also uses certain unconventional methods such as collective research techniques or dialogues, using participants' own records, and witness accounts.

Feedback and diffusion of research findings to the participants and their communities is an important component of PAR, as it serves to verify and validate the data and makes the research ultimately more reliable and credible.

In essence, the research process involved with PAR is cyclical in nature, with the design, implementation and analysis all happening in the context of the community being studied. Given this, there is not a linear, standardised approach to undertaking a PAR project. However, three general stages involved in such research can be identified, namely problem definition, data collection and analysis, and using the results.

chapter 2

information and research

understanding & unpacking the language of research

Research is something that we can all do. But often research seems hard because it requires many skills that we do not have, or it seems hard because we do not know what is going on in the world of research: we don't seem to have the `right' education to speak the language of research. Research does have its own language – it is full of jargon that can be very confusing. Most of us have had the experience, say of going to the doctor, where we do not understand much of what is being said to us simply because the language that person is using is full of jargon: "Your prognosis is fair given the diagnosis of psoriasis".

The best way to demystify research is not only to become familiar with the research process but to understand that the jargon – the complex terms of research language – can be said in a much simpler way. At the back of this workbook is a glossary that contains a section on research terms. You can refer to these terms whenever you come across jargon, and you can use this jargon yourself if you want to. Of course, it is not possible to list all the research terms in any one publication so when we look at the internet as a research tool we will also find out more about accessing dictionaries, thesaurus', sites which contain research terms, and so on.

And now we want to do research, which means looking at information and finding new information. You will be shown how to organise information as well as the technical aspects of information. But for now let's look at some simple guidelines for filtering, sorting, accepting and rejecting information. This is really important because the one fact we have to accept upfront is that there is far too much information in the world for us to ever hope to access and understand all of it.

As mentioned earlier on, the process of sketching a research design requires that one should be able to sift the crucial pieces of information from the less important ones. If one is unable to do so, then one will end up with a whole lot of information that can be quite confusing. Here are simple steps to consider when filtering information from the pieces of information that you have at your disposal:

1. Know your objectives
2. List your information
3. Put your information into categories
4. Start reading (Use indexes, Scan the information, Reference the material that you use)

What do we research?

In our daily lives we come across a number of problems that require solutions. Some of these problems are easy to solve. I'm sure that you could come up with a number of problems (e.g. you do not have transport to work) that are easily solved. However, other problems are more complex and require more complex procedures in order to understand why they exist and how to solve them.

Identifying the purpose of research

People do research for a number of reasons. We need to be clear about the purpose of the research because this will impact on how we conduct our research and what the outcomes are. Identifying the purpose of the research is very important in developing a research project in that it keeps it focused. For each thing we do in the research process, we can ask ourselves when it is done, does this match or advance the purpose of this piece of research? If the answer is no, this particular activity probably needs review.

- Where are you coming from?
- Whose side are you on?
- What do you want to change through this research and why?

Turning a problem into a Research Question

Generally research comes into existence because of problems or puzzles. We rout research in these problems and thus one of the early steps in the research process is to state the problem and then turn this problem into a question. Once this is done we ask

- Does the question reflect the purpose of the research?
- Is there more than one question in the question ?
- How wide or narrow is the question?
- Is the question over ambitious considering available resources?
- Is the question ambiguous at all?

Collecting Information

In addition to using research skills in our daily lives we also collect data or information. Whether we are filling out a timesheet or doing a headcount at a workshop we are collecting data. A lot of information that we would require to answer our research question can be collected from research agencies or organisations that have already done similar research in this area or keep records that we may find useful.

There are many different ways of collecting information. There is no one way of collecting information but some ways are better than others given the questions you are dealing with and whether you are doing quantitative or qualitative research. Methods of collecting information are also often dictated by external realities such as budget.

Our different ways of collecting information can then be split into qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The main differences between these two methodologies can be summarised as follows.

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Inductive	Deductive
Subjective/insider centred	Objective/outsider cented
Process oriented	Outcome oriented
Relative lack of control	Attempt to control variables
Goal: understand actor's perspective	Goal: find facts and causes
Thick description	Numerical description
Cyclical research design	Linear research design

There are different methods for generating or collecting data. Some of these are

Archival or Secondary Data: Data that already exists that has been collected by some-one else is referred to as archival data. This type of data is the simplest kind to gather.

Observation and field notes: This simply means collecting data by watching what people do. Field notes are comments written about what you observe.

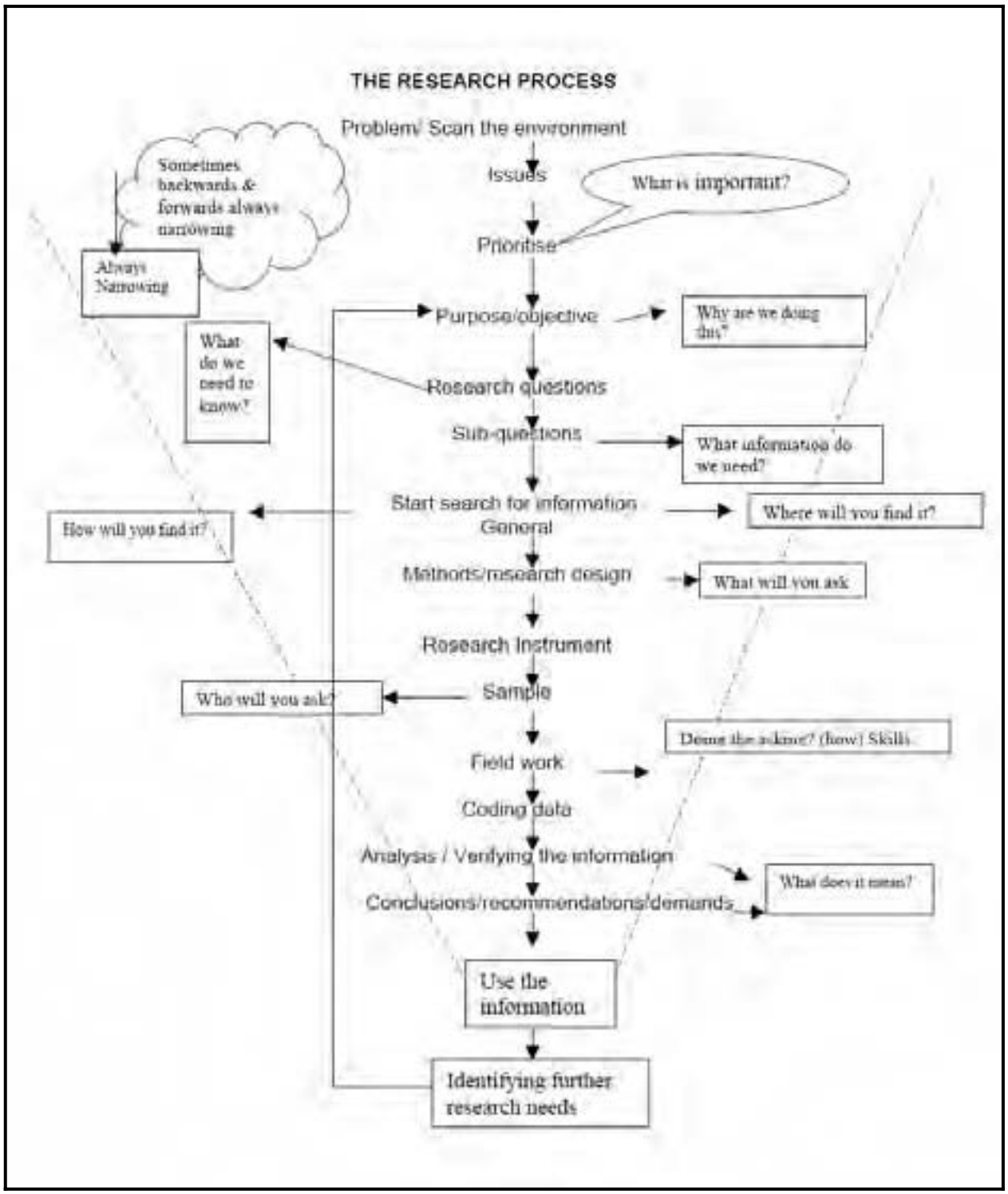
Focus Groups: These are in-depth guided discussions amongst several participants led by a trained researcher. An everyday example of a focus group is a staff meeting that is called to discuss a specific issue (e.g. restructuring). A focus group is a research method that enables you to collect data to address the problem.

In depth interviews: This refers to a conversation between the researcher and the participant with the aim of collecting detailed information about that person, or their perspective and experience of a particular issue.

Survey: This is a series of structured written questions that are administered to a large number of people. Surveys begin with a questionnaire.

the research process

It is vital that we see research as a process that involves many steps – some of which we already know, some of which you will learn about this week and some which we will just never get to, or won't need to learn but will find out who does know. Research is a process that seems really hard precisely because it seems to require so many specialised skills. But the hardest thing about research is that there's never enough time to do your research and you always have to make choices and compromises. But let's first look at what it means to understand research as a process that we can ALL do.



When you are using this diagram, its important for you to see the research process as cyclic rather than linear. There is always a vibrant interaction between the different parts that make up the research process and a good researcher always reflects after and during each phase to assess if the information he/she is gathering is accurate and whether his/her treatment and attitudes to his/her research community is ethical and respectful.

Problem/Scan the environment

As community activists and NGO practitioners, you have a valuable resource that even academics may not have and that is your direct access to communities and the environments that form their contexts. The first step of your research is to scan the environment, observe the way people are living, observe their survival strategies and the things that affect them the most. By observing, questioning and problematising the context in which different sectors of the community (women, youth, men, unemployed, pensioners etc) are living in you will be able to make a considered assessment of what needs to be researched and this will also inform what you do with the research thereafter.

Prioritise: What is important?

There are probably well over a dozen issues that you may have observed in your communities and in your organisations. But realistically speaking, these may not all be researched at one go. You may be required to prioritise the issue you want to research. This will require you listing out all the issues that affect your community or organisation and then ask yourself "what is important?". This will then allow you to list the issues in order of importance.

Purpose/Objective : Why are we doing this?

People do research for a number of reasons. We need to be clear about the purpose of the research because this will impact on how we conduct our research and what the outcomes are. In order to work out what the purpose or objective of our research is we can ask ourselves, "why we are doing this?" Identifying the purpose of the research is very important in developing a research project in that it keeps it focussed. For each thing we do in the research process, we can ask ourselves when it is done, does this match or advance the purpose of this piece of research? If the answer is no, this particular activity probably needs review. This stage of the research process is very important in the reflective process. It becomes the reference point for the rest of your research project. Here are a few questions that you can use in this reflective process :

- Where are you coming from?
- Whose side are you on?
- What do you want to change through this research and why?

Research questions : What do we need to know?

Defining the research question is critical to the direction and focus of the research. By constructing the research question, you would have developed the brief for your research. The research question should reflect the issue you have prioritised but more importantly, it should reflect the purpose of your research. The research question can also include a few sub-questions that will indicate to you what information you will need. To assist you in defining and constructing the research question here are a few guiding questions :

- Does the question reflect the purpose of the research?
- Is there more than one question in the research question?
- How wide or narrow is the question?
- Are you able to conduct the work required in this question given the time frame and resources available?
- Is there any ambiguity or vagueness in your question?
- Do the terms or concepts used need operational definitions? (this is an important one to emphasise, ie. Researchers should give operational definitions of the concepts they have in their research questions.

Searching for the information: Where and how will you find it?

We have discussed in detail the importance of accessing information. At this point in your research process you should start looking for all the data that is available that relates to your research question. This includes primary, secondary and tertiary data. You should look for your information in libraries (books, journals, periodicals etc), newspapers, government departments (especially for statistics), the internet, and other research reports that may be available from university departments.

Methods/research design: What will you ask?

At this point in the research process you should be interrogating the kinds of things you would like to find out in your research project. You should be starting to conceptualise the plan for your undertaking and thinking about the kinds of questions you would like to ask. You should also be deciding whether you want to measure something or whether you want to get an insider account of what people are thinking or feeling.

Research Instrument

After you have figured out the answer to the last questions asked above, this would help you determine the instrument you will use to conduct the research. So for example if you decided that you would need to measure how many people receive a social grant in the Bayview area (quantitative methods) your instrument would be a survey, but if you decided that you wanted to find out how people in the Bayview area were surviving with or without access to a social grant (qualitative methods) then you may use the interview method as your research instrument.

Sample : Who will you ask?

You also need to decide how many people you would want to interview or how many surveys you will send out (and receive back). Your sample size needs to be realistically based on the resources and time that you have and it must be representative. So for example interviewing just ten people to get a sense of what the youth require in Mogale City is not adequate enough for you to formulate a plan based on the needs of the youth in Mogale City where the population, for example, may be 500 people. You should also determine how you will get in touch with the people you want to interview or conduct the survey with.

Fieldwork

This is going out into the "field" (the space where you will be conducting your interviews or administering your survey) and asking the questions. Here you will use your skills in interviewing, conducting focus groups, observing, or administering your questionnaire with the sample you have chosen.

Coding the data

After you have conducted your field work you would need to collect the information and collate it in an organised way that would make for easy analysis.

Analysis and Verification of Information : What does it mean?

Once you have gathered all the information, extracted it from your interviews or questionnaires, you must analyse the data to see what story it is telling. This will be like piecing together a puzzle so that some picture is formed with all the information you have. You also need to cross-check it with the information you have gathered through your literature review and ask whether it is contradicting anything or is it also making similar points that have been made in the literature.

Conclusions, recommendations, demands

Using all your empirical data you can now make your case in your conclusion. Following from this you can make your recommendations and your demands to whom your research is directed at. At this point you need to reflect back on the purpose and objective of your research and see whether these concur. If not, its back to the drawing board...

All the while through your research process you are required to move back and forth between the stages narrowing your focus to make your research tighter and less and less vague.

Remember, its not merely a linear process but rather a cyclic process of action and reflection.

understanding information

We live in an era in which we are bombarded with information on a daily, in fact hourly basis. From the moment we awake, whether it's the radio at home, or the radio in the taxi/car on the way to work, billboards on the freeways, newspaper headlines on lampposts, pamphlets at street intersections, memos, email or faxes at work, sms' on our cell phones, meetings at work and after work in which we share, deliver and exchange information, movies or perhaps a concert in the evening, or a soapie and the news on television, until we go to sleep we see, hear, receive huge amounts of information.

Our lives are flooded by news, by opinions and by piles and piles of papers and documents. They all steer us, or attempt to steer us, towards some action. We switch on the TV. We hear from the announcer that, according to a journalist of the Sowetan Newspaper, there are racial tensions in the Bafana Bafana soccer squad in Mali.

We shake our heads. We switch on the radio and already there is a phone-in programme about the "racial tensions" in the soccer squad and we hear somebody expressing her opinion that there must be racial tensions because she knows that "coloureds are unpatriotic". Most of us enjoy phone-in programmes, there is a feeling that we can all express ourselves through them. Listening to them, there is a sense that South Africa is talking and talking directly to everyone.

We want to phone-in our opinion. Some of us realise that we can't because we have not paid our telephone bill. We return to the TV, frustrated that our special insight about the tensions in the soccer squad have not been expressed.
On the screen we see War Veterans somewhere in Zimbabwe dancing in front of a burnt-out farmhouse. Over the next few days the newspapers are flooded by opinion-letters about the "situation" in Zimbabwe. Some of us are stirred to write. On the next page of the newspaper we read that a politician has been found to be corrupt. The photograph shows a smiling policeman. It is only when we read the caption underneath that we realise that his smile is not because he had won the Lotto but that he was promoted after his great work around corruption.

Some of the images, news and stories are based on feelings, some are opinions but some of them, we are told, are based on a systematic investigation or are based on a methodical inquiry. Usually the word "research" crops up. Somehow, we realise, research involving a systematic investigation of some issue has to be separated from feelings and opinions.

For example: we see Professor Shelelembuze on TV who proudly announces that, based on his research findings, his own methodical investigation, standards of living have improved in South Africa at a rate of 10% a year since 1996.

Usually we go silent: no phone-ins, no protests to the press. After all, Shelelembuze is a "Prof" and he is not telling us about feelings or opinions, his talk on TV is based on research. Our silence occurs even if we think that our lives and our neighbours' lives have been on a downward slide. What we understand by "standards of living" have not been improving.

To return to our introduction: our original response to be "silent" about research-findings is only partly correct. Research is based on a systematic investigation which is carried out by somebody like Shelelembuze, or teams of researchers. In most cases it tries to tell us something that we don't already know.

We therefore need to explore ways of constructively breaking the silence. We need to develop the tools and the critical ability to question research-findings. We need to have the confidence to say that a piece of research was well done or badly done or to be able to stand up and say that the effort was nonsense, that it was not worthy of our attention or energy.

Researchers claim they are professionals and experts. They also claim what distinguishes them from other experts is their application of scientific methods in their effort to gather and process information. They claim that the methods and procedures they follow have to be reliable or valid. Yet, they disagree as we will be finding out later, over what constitutes "reliability" or "validity". They do not doubt that their "reliability" is based on, what they call, method-

ologies, but they cannot agree fully on their meanings of "systematic" or "methodology".

Research that is quantitative measures something: for example, it tells us that 33% of South Africans are HIV-positive. It also tells us that unlike Jamaica where people are expected to live to the age of 70, here we only have a life-expectancy of 53. We can shrug our shoulders and say, "so what?" The measurement though tells us that we have to do something if we are serious about creating "a better life for all." It helps us to act or intervene in sensible ways.

It also asks us to think: is it because Jamaica is less poor than us? Other measurements in the study tell us that Jamaica's average incomes are lower than South Africa. The inequalities in Jamaica are also higher than in South Africa. If we check the statistics for Canada, the average incomes are much, much higher than in Jamaica or in South Africa; the inequalities between the rich and the poor are also far smaller than both Jamaica and South Africa. Life-expectancy in Canada is much higher than South Africa and higher than Jamaica. People live there to 78. So we have to think: it is not only poverty and inequality, it has to be the kind of poverty and inequality that exists and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other diseases that are implicated. So we have to act.

Research that is qualitative tells us for example that in a community studied, people do not talk about HIV/AIDS because they are afraid to be stigmatised. Such research points to how difficult it is to act to create "a better life for all" there, because of the feelings, silences, fears and expectations of people in their everyday lives.

So we have to think harder: if people don' talk about HIV/AIDS where does the figure of 33% come from? How did the researchers get to that figure? Perhaps the answer is from blood-samples and tests. But surely they have not taken blood from all of us? Obviously not. But they would claim that they have taken enough samples to argue about it with conviction. What we have been introduced to here are two methods, quantitative and qualitative, of conducting research.

Sometimes researchers use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In doing that, they believe that they can provide a more complex understanding of a social problem.

For example, Prof Shelelembuze might get approached by the CEO of a Music company that produces CDs after the CEO was impressed with his appearance on TV. The CEO wants to find out whether there is a strong market for maskanda music in the country. His wife loves maskanda music and she says that he is mad not to sign up maskandi musicians in his company. Although Mr. CEO loves his wife, his CD company cannot run on love, it needs to make money.

Prof Shelelembuze thinks that this is a wonderful research opportunity. To produce a reliable report he feels that he has to combine quantitative and qualitative methods of research. His research report could be something like this: maskanda music is very popular in KZN. 80% of all age groups, men and women, of Zulu-descent rank it as their first choice above kwaito, hiphop, R&B and jazz. But this figure declines to a 10% preference in all the other provinces outside KwaZulu-Natal. A further interesting finding is that despite the above there is a growing international market for the music among Japanese youth.

The qualitative aspect of his research will also add to his understanding of the situation: the reasons for the enjoyment of maskanda music has to do with the content of the lyrics and the guitar-sound, it speaks to their lives. For those who do not appreciate it, it feels too ethnic, too low-class and too influenced by very particular conditions. For the Japanese youth, words are irrelevant, they love for their own cultural reasons the sound and the mournful voice of the singers.
So Prof Shelelembuze, in combining quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation has provided the CEO of the CD-company with a piece of research that is bound to make him think. Do I risk money on the basis of this information, or not?

Let us return to a final observation about qualitative research: done in a sensitive way qualitative research may allow us to distinguish between what people "say" and what people "do." Sometimes we say one thing but our actions are exactly the opposite. A sensitive researcher who is accepted in a community might observe such discrepancies.

For example, despite what people say about crime, that they are all against it, many people in South Africa help and harbour criminals and criminal activity. It is suggested that every third person in our country knows criminals and has a splendid relationship with them. This tension between what we believe and say and what we do, is an interesting and complex research topic in its own right.

The specific point that is being made here is that good research, research that is reliable and valid, informs strategic action. It is therefore important to understand how research is constructed, what are its methods, how it organises findings, in order to be enabled to act sensibly and strategically.

organising information & information resources

There are many resources available to researchers. There are those that are specific to the problems as well as general resources.

Sources of information traditionally have been classified (sorted) according to three levels - primary sources, secondary and tertiary sources.

- **Primary sources** - deal with original ideas and research. Often these are published in the form of reports, journal articles or conference papers. Legislation and standards are also primary sources.
- **Secondary sources** - these are journal articles and books that are based upon the primary sources or original ideas, and they interpret and assess these ideas.
- **Tertiary sources** - these include books and articles that review and critique earlier works. Journal indexes provide subject access to the range of journal articles and conference papers already published. Bibliographies list a range of resources on specific topics. Encyclopaedias and dictionaries synthesise the breadth of knowledge on topics into concise and general definitions or articles. Textbooks also provide an overview of topics within specific disciplines. (Source: http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/compass/find/information_cycle.htm)

Structuring information

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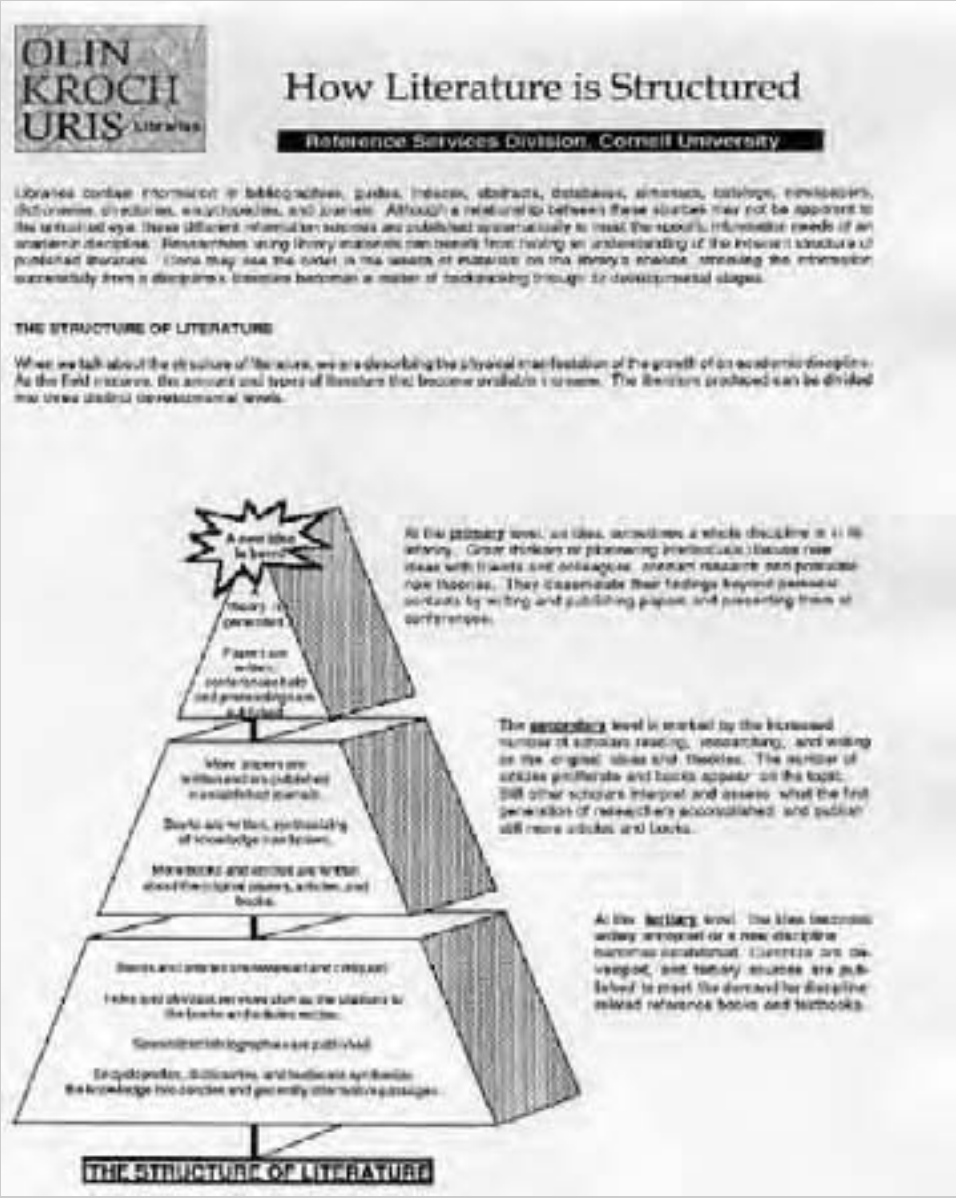


(source : www.library.cornell.edu/kuref/skill8a.htm)

finding existing information

Basically, finding existing research information may be clustered into two broad categories, i.e. print and electronic sources. Before the advent of computers the print media has been the most popular source of research information. However, in the age of technology, through the Internet finding information not only has become easier, but more readily accessible on a variety of subject matters. Despite the move to electronic methods of retrieving valuable research material, the print source continues to serve as a reliable source of information. In this part participants will be given an opportunity to familiarise themselves to the different sources of information that will be relevant for their research projects.

print sources

Textbooks

Provide basic definitions and clarify terms. It is useful for obtaining a basic understanding of complex matters – especially at the beginning of a research project. One of the major advantages of textbooks is that as disciplines develop the demand for tertiary sources simultaneously increases. Libraries are a ready source for textbooks. These are often classified into broad disciplines (e.g. Sociology, Local Government, History etc) and easy to locate. Drawbacks include a possible time lag in reflecting the very latest news and movements in the field. Further, due to the cost of books, very often libraries cannot afford to upgrade their stocks.

Reference Books

These types of books contain statistical data, definitions, numerical data, and basic facts. Like textbooks, although these may serve as an important source of reliable information, the problem is that time lags can make the validity of the information difficult to rely on. This may be due to the fact that statistical data for example may change over a period of time. Similarly, definitions about a concept may change over time due to new research and the reformulation of definitions. Despite these drawbacks, reference books serve as an important source for base line studies. For example, if you want to know how population trends have changed over the past twenty years, previous statistical data and reports serve as an important benchmark for comparing present trends and patterns in population growth.

Non-fiction Books

These books provide in-depth coverage of a particular topic. It is the opposite of fiction books such as novels, drama, storybooks etc. Non-fiction books are useful for obtaining a deeper understanding of complex topics. For example on the issue of privatisation and cost-recovery, although much has been written about it in developing and developed countries, in the case of South Africa this concept is new and tracks down how privatisation and cost-recovery is unfolding in contemporary South Africa. Hence the book by David McDonald on *Cost Recovery and the Crisis of Service Delivery in South Africa* deals with contemporary debates on this particular issue. Non-fiction books by contemporary researchers such as Ashwin Desai (*The Poors of Chatsworth* and *We are the Poors*) are current non-fiction books that deal with service delivery in the post-apartheid South Africa. Similarly, Patrick Bonds book on *Against Global Apartheid* is another example of non-fiction books on contemporary South Africa. On the contrary, although Arundhati Roy the International Booker Prize winner for her fiction book on *The God of Small Things* is celebrated as the best literary work in the 21st Century, her work highlights the sufferings of individuals and communities in a capitalist society based on philosophical understand of the global capitalist world and brings a sense of consciousness about the issue of class differences and indifferences. Whilst this non-fiction epic has much to do about the morality of capitalism, the lack of empirical information in her book will not qualify as a classical non-fiction source of information. A major drawback include of non-fiction book is the length of time it takes to get through and absorb an entire book during a fast-moving research project.

Directories

Directories are made up of catalogues, inventories, enumeration information, gazettes and bulletins, briefs, registers, schedules and specification. An obvious example of a directory is the telephone directory. It comprises a list of names, addresses and contact de-

tails of persons living in a particular geographical area. If you wish to know the attitudes of Indians in the City of Durban about privatisation of basic services, the telephone directory serves as an important source of the profile of Indians in the city. Assuming if you want to know about the different Indian ethnic groups attitude towards privatisation, the surname will tell you about the different ethnic groupings in the city. To illustrate when you encounter surnames such as Desai, Patel, Khan, Mohammed etc. you will immediately get a sense that these are Muslims. On the other hand the down side is that the telephone directory is unlikely to present an accurate picture of the religious affiliation of Indians based on just surnames. For example, the Desai's and Patel's not only belong to the Indian population group in general, ethnically, they belong to different religious groups such as Hinduism and Islam. Hence directories are limited to a certain extent as a source of existing information. Generally, directories can serve as a good source for overviews, snapshots, finding contact information and tracing events and people (for companies, magazines, products, etc.). One of the major drawbacks include the short life span of most directory originated data, making it necessary to find and use the latest edition (or even no more than a year old). To illustrate once again to know the quality of life of urban households in Durban, the statistical data from Urban Strategy Department generated from household surveys will serve as an important source of existing information. However, the last household survey undertaken by the Urban Strategy department in Durban was in 1996. Although this data set will provide some insight about the nature and composition of urban households in the city, the time lag from 1996 the most comprehensive study on urban households by now may probably have changed. However, in this case this source of information can serve as an important benchmark to compare the evolution of households since 1996. Hence using old databases from directories has a great potential of providing insights into research issues accurately.

Newspaper Articles

Newspaper articles provide coverage of events of local significance not covered elsewhere; cites expert opinion, critic on policy issues, provides information on current issues and is usually written in a non-technical manner. Drawbacks include occasional superficial coverage of complex topics. An additional drawback on the admissibility of information from newspaper sources in research reports is its particular bias towards certain ideological positions. For example, we recall the role of the print media in the apartheid era, which distorted the political upheaval in favour of certain political parties and economic interest. However, in the new South Africa, freedom of expression in newspapers respects the right of private newspapers to tell the truth about a phenomenon without having to support any ideological positions.

Recently, many community newspapers have mushroomed predominantly in the cities. Some of these are the *Rising Sun, Umgeni Times* etc. These newspapers although community based have great potential for bias. This largely emanates from the fact that community newspapers do not enjoy stringent editing process such as the Sunday Tribune, Daily News and the like. This is most likely due to the fact that community newspaper lack resources (primary source of income is through adverts) and the lack of expertise in undertaking rigorous editing of the newspaper. Ideologically, there are many newspapers that serve as mouthpiece for certain socio-political and economic groupings. A good example is *Ilanga* known to promote the political ideologue of a political organisation such as the IFP. The Al-Qalam (known as the Pen) serves the interest of the national Muslim population in South Africa. On the other hand one cannot discount the important roles that these community papers play in documenting the peculiar issues concerning the communities that they represent. As a community newspaper, they are likely to highlight community issues, which is otherwise not publicized in the mainstream commercial newspapers. The very fact that community newspapers have strong grass root links, it is likely to highlight issues that directly affect local communities. One needs to note that when in doubt about the validity of information found in newspaper articles, it will be worth a try to interview the relevant reporter for greater insight into the problem at hand.

Magazine and Journal Articles

In every field of inquiry journals serve as an important source of information. Due to its stringent review procedures journals are more selective in what they accept for publication than others. Along with important factors such as circulation and quality of editing, it is selectivity that serves to establish the reputation of scientific journals.

On the journal side of the equation, the number of manuscripts received in relation to the space available determines the competition faced by each submission. One journal may receive so many submissions that it can publish only 5% of the manuscripts received. Another journal ultimately may print more than half of the manuscripts received. The differences between the two publications may not be great, and they are unlikely to be immediately apparent to a novice, but they are there, and they are likely to involve issues of quality and thereby, trust. Journals that are more selective are more prestigious among researchers (and in the academic community more generally) simply because of the difficulty of having a report published in them. Beyond that, however, the matter of selectivity has some genuine importance to anyone who reads research because it is related to the degree of trust that can be placed in the contents of any journal. The nature of that relationship is complex, and we want to be very clear about how you should understand it. Excellent studies do appear in relatively unselective journals, and defective studies (or incomprehensible reports) do slip through the best screening efforts of selective journals. Nevertheless, if readers want to stack the odds in favour of locating sound research and intelligible reports, they should consider the source of publication as one factor when deciding what to read – and what to trust.

However, people who are engaged in research or who do extensive reading of research reports usually develop a personal hierarchy of quality in journals – and it will be based in large measure on reputations for selectivity. For those new to the task of reading research, or are new to a particular field of inquiry, knowing which journals deserve greater respect and trust is more difficult. With that advice and some practice, you should be able to accumulate a strong sense of the trustworthiness that is characteristic of each journal. For the more immediate purpose, however, you can obtain a preliminary sense of the confidence you can have simply by learning more about the journals you use. For example, you might ask the following questions, for which a "yes" suggest stronger and more selective publications.

- Reputation of the Author(s)
- Source of Funding
- Sponsorship by a Research or Professional Organization
- Reasons to Suspend Trust in Research
- Technical Problems
- Sampling
- Lack of Replication
- Conflicts
- Carelessness
- Errors and Poor Scholarship

It must be noted that magazines and journal articles tend to have more depth than newspapers. A journal is an academic magazine like a periodical. Unlike magazines, there is very little advertising in academic journals. Journals are considered to be the best overall general research source. Journal articles are an important source of information because the research it presents is generally more current than that published in books. This does not mean that one should not use books for research.

With the advance of technology a variety of journals are readily available electronically. However, most electronic journals require subscriptions and as such access to such information may be restricted to those who can afford it. Nonetheless, most academic libraries maintain a variety of journals in stock, broken down into different academic disciplines. (Source: Sumser, 2001)

problems with using data from secondary sources

When using data from secondary sources you need to be careful, as there may be certain problems with the availability, format and quality of data. The extent of these problems varies from source to source. While using such data some issues you should keep in mind are:

- **Validity and reliability** - the validity of information may vary markedly from source to source. For example, information obtained from a census is likely to be more valid and reliable than that obtained from most personal diaries.
- **Personal bias** - the use of information from personal diaries, newspapers and magazines may have the problem of personal bias as these writers are likely to exhibit less rigorousness and objectivity than one would expect in research reports.
- **Availability of data** - it is common for new researchers to assume that the required data will be available, but you cannot and should not make this assumption. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the required data is available before you proceed further with your study.
- **Format** - before deciding to use data from secondary sources it is equally important to ascertain that the data are available in the required format. For example, you might need to analyse age in the categories 23-33, 34-48 etc., but in your source, age may be categorised differently, e.g., 21-24, 25-29, et

(*Source*: Kumar R 1996 Research Methodology Sage California)

electronic sources of information

Since mid 1990s, many professional researchers consider the Internet as an important source of online information. While research on the Internet still has its inherent frustrations and drawbacks, it is now legitimately the preferred means of conducting not just ***online research*** but virtually any kind of research. The Internet provides an incredible amount of valuable information, governmental data and reports, health and medical advice, and much more. And, while searching the Internet can still be tricky, there are now a variety of search tools and friendly search engines that were not available at least in any effective manner, until the mid 1990s.

The Internet has become the place to turn to for finding almost any kind of information. There is need for understanding what exactly is on the Internet and how to best pinpoint just what you need.

The Internet, like any tool, has unique characteristics that create both benefits and drawbacks. On the positive side, the Internet offers the following:

- Access to new and valuable sources of information that came into being because of the Internet. These includes electronic journals and Internet discussion groups.
- A more efficient route for accessing certain standard information sources such as newspapers, particularly overseas papers and electronic versions of existing print journals.
- Access to an enormous amount of information. Currently it is estimated that there are about 800 million pages of information on the Web.
- Access to non-mainstream views. Fringe groups and those without access to the media or a printing press can now make their opinions known on the Internet.
- Access to obscure and restricted information. Because there are so many people with such diverse interests on the Internet, a search can often turn up the most unusual and hard-to-locate nugget of data.
- Access to digitised versions of primary sources. Some libraries are digitising (making electronic versions) of primary research sources such as personal letters, official government documents, treaties, photographs, etc. and making these available for viewing over the Internet. The same is true for audio and, in some cases, video.
- Access to searchable databases and datasets. There are many sites on the Internet where you can search a collection of statistical data, such as demographic or social sciences data.
- Access to international information. Not only can you easily find official data from other countries by connecting to embassies, consulates, and foreign governmental sites, you can also search other countries, newspaper, discuss issues with citizens from around the world on the newsgroups, and locate Web established by individuals from other nations.

Other key benefits that the Internet brings to the researcher include:

- **Speed**. Doing a search on the Internet can take just seconds.
- **Timeliness.** On the Internet you can find information that has just been made available a few minutes earlier.
- **Multimedia**. The Internet delivers not just text, but graphics, audio and video.
- **Hyperlinking**. The ability to click between Web pages can facilitate an associative type of research, and make it easier to view citations and supporting data from a text.

On the downside, the Internet, despite its real and seemingly growing benefits to the researcher, still presents certain drawbacks. Among the most significant are:

- **Diverse collection of information**. The Internet is truly a potpurri of information – that's one of its strengths, but its also one of its weaknesses. On the Net you can come across everything from a scholarly paper published on particle physics to a 14 year old's essay on her summer vacation.
- **Difficult to search effectively.** A traditional electronic database that you might search in a library may take a little learning and practice, but once you get the hang of it you can become an effective searcher: But on the Internet, even if you know all the ins and outs of searching, because of the built in limitations of Internet search engines and the way Web pages are created, you'll only be able to search a small percentage of what's on the Net. You also won't be able to easily distinguish the valuable from the trivial pages; and you can obtain unpredictable results.
- **Emphasis on new information.** The Web came into being in the early 1990s, and, consequently, most of the information available on the Internet postdates that time. However, this is changing as certain web site owners are loading older, archival material.
- **Lack of context.** Because search engines will return just a single page from a multipage document, you can miss the larger context from which that information was derived.
- **Lack of permanence.** Web pages are notoriously unstable. They appear, move and disappear regularly. This

can be of particular concern for academic researchers, who need to cite a stable page for reference purposes.

- **Selectivity of coverage.** Despite the size of the Internet, the vast majority of the world's knowledge still resides in print. So a search for information on the Internet in no way represents a comprehensive search of the world's literature or knowledge.

Similarly, a good deal of what's on the Internet is "off-limits" to search engines and is not retrievable. These off-limit sites include those that are accessible only to those who register, input a password, or pay a subscription fee. These include most of the major commercial fee-based databases and online services that have a presence on the Web.

Is the Internet a reliable source of information?

For some, the Internet is becoming the preferred way to obtain daily news. Many major daily newspapers put out an online version, and there are hundreds of newspapers published in other countries that are now available on the Web.

Online newspapers offer two primary advantages. One is immediacy – by going online you can find out what happened literally seconds ago. The second is the easy availability of papers from other countries, which previously were often extremely difficult to locate, and sometimes impossible to search electronically.

For research purposes, though, keep in mind that accessing breaking news is rarely of great use. Researchers typically want to search archives – the older, previously published issues, sometimes going back several years.

You can do this at a library, or on a professional online service like EBSCO, for example. But it is tricky to do this on the Web for several reasons. First, some newspapers that have put their papers on the Web are not making their archives available; in other cases, publishers are indeed making their archives available but only the past few weeks. Other publishers may make their archives available but charges a fee to access and read any articles. Also from a researcher's point of view, the benefits of searching newspapers' archives is the ability to search not just a single newspaper's archive, but to be able to search dozens or even hundreds at once, as one can do on a professional database. On the open Web, such searchable databases of newspaper archives are difficult to find. The end of this chapter lists a few useful sites that provide this capacity.

Like newspaper's many magazines and journal publishers are putting electronic versions of their publications on the Web. Again, the real value of these for the researcher is not necessarily finding the current issue (though this is nice and can be useful in some circumstances), but in being able to search circumstances), but in being able to search the back issues. Again, like the newspapers, publishers' policies for searching their archives vary. See the end of this chapter for sites that can help.

Perhaps more so than any other aspect of the Internet, it is the search engine that holds out the most promise, but also presents the most frustration. Search engines promise you pearls from the Internet's sea of data, but too often just dredge up the muck. But with a little knowledge, understanding, skill, and practice, you can direct these search engines to make them work for you.

One caution. As fast as the Internet changes, search engine features and technologies change about the fastest! For this reason, although all of the principles and general advice that you read here will remain valid, the actual capabilities and workings of some of these search engines will have evolved by the time you read this.

Figure out what you are really researching?

Before you begin to create your search statement or go on the Net, it's a good idea to take a few minutes to think about what exactly you are looking for. Can you write it in a sentence? Are there other ways of describing what you are seeking? A key to good searching is the ability to come up with synonyms for your query. Let's look at one research inquiry, and how you might turn it into a search statement.

Say that you were researching the effect of water disconnection on the health of children in a particular community. How would you turn that question into a statement for a search engine? The first step would be to write a search statement in plain English. For this example, that might be:

What is the impact of water disconnection on the health of children?

It's not a pretty sentence, but it is a potentially useful one, since you can examine it to create your keyword search statement. The next step would be to identify the most important or keywords and phrases in the sentence. These would be those that are the most ***likely, unique***, and ***best describe*** the focus of your research query.

As a first rough search, you might link to a search engine, and enter these key words and phrases:

"water disconnection" (phrases are normally enclosed in double quotes) effect on children's health in the city"

This would be a reasonable search, with a decent chance that you'd end up getting back some relevant results. However, to increase the odds of success, it's normally important to think of synonyms for your key words, and enter these in the search box too. In this case you might come up with these:

"Water disconnection":	*"Water policy", water-cut offs, service delivery*
Children:	*babies, school going children,*
Health:	*disease, illness, development, performance*
Effect:	*causes, consequence of, results of*
City:	*jurisdiction*

Coming up with good synonyms is something of an art, and you need to use your judgment. What you want to do is to come up with common synonyms, and add those words to your search statement. You don't want to break out a dictionary and try to find every possible synonym, only those likely to be used by someone who wrote a Web page. In this case, you can make a reasonable case for some of the above synonyms, but not those that seem unclear or off the mark.

A new, expanded search might read something like the following;

"water disconnection" "water cut-off" effect on children's health.

Search Tips: Surfing the net effectively

A Boolean search can help you create more effective searches by establishing more precise relationships between your key words. Most search engines allow for at least some limited Boolean searching. The basics are as follows:

The primary Boolean operators are **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT** and work like this:

- The AND operator requires that all the words or phrases surrounding the AND be present:

e.g. water disconnection AND children AND health requires that all those words be present in any Web pages retrieved.

- The OR operator requires that any of the entered words or phrases be present:

e.g. "water disconnection" OR children OR 'health" tells the search engine to bring back pages that have any of those words or phrases.

how search engines work?

The first thing you should understand is how a search engine works. A search engine is a piece of software that is programmed to travel the Web and link form page to page in order to create an internal index of all of the pages that it finds. So when you input your key words into the search engine, it compares those words to the pages it has indexed, and returns to you those pages that it has determined most likely to be relevant to what you are looking for.

The way that the search engine decides which of its indexed pages are most relevant varies form search engine to search engine. Each has its own mathematical formula, or algorithm for making that determination. But in general, the major factors are how often your keywords are found in a page, where they are located on the page (if they are in the title or near the beginning they are typically considered more likely to be relevant), and how unusual the word is (pages that contain less common words that you've entered are sometimes given a higher ranking). Some search engines will also look at other factors, such as the number, which have many other pages linking to them.

There are dozens of search engines that you can link to on the Web, but only a handful of really popular ones. The best-known ones are AltaVista, Excite, Hotfoot, Infoseek, and Lycos.

Because features of search engines change so quickly, it is not helpful to describe each of their capabilities in a print book. The key is to find one search engine you like and get proficient at it. One way to do this, of course, is to practice over and over, but you should also be sure to print out a copy of the search engine's "help" pages and read these carefully. You might also want to keep a copy close to your computer to consult when conducting a search. This is generally a lot easier to do than trying to find the specific help you need online.

(Source: Berkman R.I. (2000) Find it fast Harper Collins Publisher New York)

problems with search engines

Although we all need to rely on search engines to find what we need on the Internet, they all suffer form certain inherent drawbacks. Some of the biggest problem areas are:

- Search engines can only index a portion of the Internet. Even the most powerful search engines cannot index the entire Web, only a percentage of it. There are several reasons why. As discussed earlier, some Web pages are off-limits to search engines – these include sites that require the user to enter a password, to register, or to pay a fee, those that have forms to be filled out by the user, those that are purely graphic. Web page creators can also create a robots exclusions command that prevents search engines for entering the site and indexing the pages. But search engines also miss millions of other pages as well, simply because they may be smaller sites that were not found by the search engine.

- Search engines do not categorize sites by content. Unlike a traditional database, which contains data only on a certain defined server of information, the Internet is filled with all types of information, ranging from advertisements and pornography to peer-reviewed journal articles and government reports. Search engines, when they return results, cannot determine the actual content of what they have returned, leaving it up to you to slog through the pages to find the substantive, informational ones.

- Search engines can be slow to update their indexes. When you run a search on a search engine, you are not conducting a live search on the Internet as it exists at the moment of your search, but of the index that the engine has created of the pages it had found on its most recent crawl. Search engines vary on how often they refresh their index. Some are very fast, but for others, the newest site that can be retrieved may be a few weeks or even a month or two old.

- Search engines get spammed. Most Web searchers have by now had the experience of conducting a search on some innocuous term, but getting back a batch of irrelevant hits, many of which are obviously money-making comes on, pornographic sites, and other unwanted pages having nothing to do with your search.

(Source: Berkman R.I. (2000) Find it fast Harper Collins Publisher New York)

Advanced Search Tips

Often, Boolean searches are used when you have constructed a long and complicated search statement. These often need to integrate parentheses in order to clarify to the search engine which keywords are supposed to be linked with which. For example, say you were searching the Web to find a discussion of how water disconnection is impacting on children's health in South Africa and Senegal. In a Boolean search, you might enter:

Water disconnection on children's health AND South Africa OR ***Senegal***

However, the problem with that search statement is that the search engine cannot tell if you mean to search:

Water disconnection on children's health AND South Africa (the page must include both these words) **OR** ***Senegal*** (any pages that contain the word Senegal)

With this search, any page that contains the word "Senegal" is going to qualify as a relevant hit, which isn't what you want. Or if you mean to search:

Water disconnection on children's health AND [the page must contain the word water disconnection] ***South Africa OR Senegal*** [and it must contain one of these words, too].

This search will return Web pages that fulfil the following requirements: they contain the word Water disconnection and they also contain either the word South Africa or Senegal. This is what you want.

The way to make the distinction clear is to use parentheses to group those items together that are supposed to be acted on together. So in this case, your search statement should actually read like this:

Water disconnection on children's health AND [***South Africa*** OR ***Senegal***]

chapter 3

literature review

understanding theories and research paradigms

A theory is an attempt to explain or represent some aspect of reality. Theories are abstract, in the sense that they do not refer to some concrete, immediately testable reality. Famous theories include the theory of relativity and the theory of evolution. These are grand theories, often called “macro-level theories” because they are so all encompassing. Macro-level theories in the social sciences include Marxism, symbolic interactionism, feminism, and systems theory, to name just a few. These theories – like all theories – cannot be tested directly, so they are neither true nor false. Rather, they are rich enough to create hypotheses that can be tested and found to be either valid or invalid. A theory must be capable of generating testable hypotheses; otherwise, it cannot be considered a scientific or social scientific theory. A theory that cannot be tested in this manner is a philosophical theory or a religious belief.

For most part, the theories that are used in empirical works have been generated elsewhere – in different articles or books, at an earlier time.

review of the literature

A literature review is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that we learn from and build on what others have done. Scientific research is a collective effort of many researchers who share their results with one another and who pursue knowledge as a community. Although some studies may be especially important and individual researchers may become famous, a specific research project is just a tiny part of the overall process of creating knowledge. Today's studies build on those of yesterday. Researchers read studies to compare, replicate, or criticize them for weaknesses.

Reviews vary in scope and depth. Different kinds of reviews are stronger at fulfilling one or another of four goals. It may take a researcher over a year to complete an extensive professional summary review of all the literature on a broad question.

We must remember that intellectual effort is a social phenomenon. We do not think in a vacuum. We get our ideas from others, and we look to others to clarify or advance our thinking. When you get a research idea, you have to go to the library and find out what is already known about the topic. This is called “reviewing the literature.”

A review of the literature is conducted for a number of reasons:

- To find out (and incorporate) the most current theoretical thinking.
- To place a question within a scholarly context.
- To find out (and build on) the results of recent (and historical) empirical research.
- To see how variables have traditionally been operationalised.
- To find, borrow, and build on the research designs of others.

In short, the review of the literature allows us to put ideas into a scholarly context in order to clarify them and to allow us to build on what is already known. This process provides the knowledge and information required to move your ideas to the point where they can be tested empirically.

Types of Reviews

- **Self-study** reviews increase the reader's confidence.
- **Context reviews** place a specific project in the big picture.
- **Historical reviews** trace the development of an issue over time.
- **Theoretical reviews** compare how different theories address an issue.
- **Integrative reviews** summarise what is known at a point in time.
- **Methodological reviews** point out how methodology varies by study.

When beginning a review, a researcher decides on a topic or field of knowledge to examine how much depth to go into and the kind of review to conduct. The six kinds listed above are ideal types. A specific review often combines features of' several kinds. All reviews follow the first goal to show familiarity and establish credibility to some degree. In addition to giving others confidence in a reviewer's command of a field, it has the side benefit of building the reviewer's self-confidence.

The most common reason for writing a literature review is creating links to a developing body of knowledge. This is a background

or context review. It usually appears at the beginning of a report or article. It introduces the rest of a research report and establishes the significance and relevance of a research question. It tells the reader how a project fits into the big picture and its implications for a field of knowledge. The review can emphasise how the current research continues developing a line of thought, or it can point to a question or unresolved conflict in prior research to be addressed.

The historical review traces the development of an idea or shows how a particular issue or theory has evolved over time. Researchers conduct historical reviews only on the most important ideas in a field. These reviews are also used in studies of the history of thought. Sometimes they are helpful, when students are introduced to an area, to show how we got to where we are today. They may show how, during the advance of knowledge, a single past idea split into different parts or separate ideas combined into broad thought.

The theoretical review primarily presents different theories that claim to explain the same thing, then evaluates how well each accounts for findings. In addition to examining the consistency of predictions with findings, a theoretical review may compare theories for the soundness of their assumptions, logical consistency, and scope of explanation. Researchers also use it to integrate two theories or extend a theory to new issues. It sometimes forms a hybrid - the historical theoretical review.

The integrative review presents the current state of knowledge and pulls together disparate research report, in a fast-growing area of knowledge. Researchers may publish such valuable reviews as an article to provide a service to other researchers.

The methodological review is a specialised type of the integrative review. In it, a researcher evaluates the methodological strength of past studies. It describes conflicting results and shows how different research designs, samples, measures, and so on account for different results. For example, a researcher may discover that all experiments that relied on males yielded different results than those that used both sexes.

operationalising concepts for research

To operationalise an idea is to state it in terms that can be researched empirically. It is to state it so clearly that a person reading the article can use the same operationalisation in a new research project. Consider the fact that a researcher wants to know the relationship of television violence on children. The following are examples of what acts may be considered to be violent depending on how we perceive it:

- A gangster is seen firing a gun, and a man is later found dead.
- A mother lashes out with a rolling pin and knocks unconscious a man who is trying to molest her daughter.
- A police officer sitting on the steps of a house tells us that someone inside has been horribly murdered.
- Roger Rabbit hits himself on the head with a hammer.
- A gunshot is heard, and a man falls, dead, to the floor without any cry of pain or indication of a wound.
- A beginning driver gets a blow out, loses control of her car, and runs over a small child.
- A villain slaps a woman cashier during a robbery.
- A police officer shoots and kills an armed robber who shot at her.

To consider any of these as instances of television violence, we would have to have a very clear definition of violence and then a very clear operationalisation of violence. The definition (also known as the conceptualisation) tells us what sort of thing to look for. The operationalisation spells out the criteria for saying that something is, or is not, an “act of violence.” For example, if we define violence as any action that results in, or is intended to result in, injury to another person, then we have to decide if Roger Rabbit is a “person.” We would then have to operationalise “person” as either “any character capable of playing a role in a story” (which would include animated rabbits) or “any actual human being depicted”.

It is amazing how difficult it is to operationalise even obvious things such as television violence. Should the mother protecting her daughter, the driver with blowout, and the police officer be lumped in the same category as the gangster and the cashier-slapping villain? And, because we’re talking about violence in a visual medium, do we have to see the actions resulting in injury” for them to count? The policeman sitting on the steps tells us about the body inside, indicating that a murder has occurred. We see nothing. We see the gangster fire his gun, but do not see the bullet hit anyone. We see the man clutch his chest and crumple silently to the floor, but we see no causal action. Are these instances of television violence? If the situations listed above occurred in one evening’s programming, would it be informative or misleading to say that there were eight acts of violence on television that night?

And then there are smaller but equally difficult problems. What if the gangster shoots the person twice? Is that one act of violence or two? What if only second’s lapse between the two shots? What if minutes go by? Days? Years? At what point does it become two distinct actions? All this has to be decided. It has to be operationalised.

We must note that the point of operationalising a term or a concept is to

- State clearly exactly what we mean by the term, in the context in which it is being researched.
- State clearly what it means for something to be included or excluded from a category.
- Make it possible for another researcher to replicate (repeat) or expand on your study.

(Source: Sumser J. 2001 A guide to empirical research in communication Sage Publications California)

overcoming reading difficulties

It is perfectly natural for the beginner to be unclear about what is essential for an understanding of the report and what is peripheral. But finding their exact meaning can be put off until after a broad understanding of the study has been acquired. Here are four ways to avoid getting hung up on things that do not matter, that you cannot find out anyway, or that can be put safely aside until later.

- **Don't get stuck on understanding unfamiliar words.** First, look around in the text to see if the author explains the term. If that does not work, try looking the word up in whatever reference aid you have-a dictionary, a research textbook with a glossary, or a thesaurus. If someone is handy who might be familiar with the term, ask for an explanation. If none of these easy strategies works, make a note to remind yourself to pursue the matter later, and get on with the task of reading. You just have to pick the story up at a point where the offending word no longer is essential. It may sound unlikely to you, but there are few instances when a single unfamiliar technical term brings reading to a complete halt. Remember that in reading a text written in a technical language that is not your own, it is inevitable that there will be problems of comprehension. You have to puzzle them out or, failing that, flag them and get on with the task. Giving up is not a useful option.

- **Don't get stuck on what is not there.** It is not possible to write a truly comprehensive history of a study in a report, particularly when given the space limitations imposed by research journals. Accordingly, authors use their judgment about what readers will find essential and leave the rest out of their account. If you encounter a point in the report that seems to demand a particular piece of information, and it is not there, what do you do? Perhaps making a note reminding yourself to return to the problem later, and get on with the job. Do not let what is not there bring you to a halt. There usually is enough information left to engage your useful efforts. Finally, it is absolutely true that some reports do reach print with important points left out. You can write or call the author for more details.

- **Don't get stuck on statistics,** which by far is the greatest impediment to the beginner in reading quantitative studies. There is a good rule of thumb to use with statistical analyses of data. If the technique is unfamiliar, ***look in the text and not in the table!*** Often this will be found in the text. Where there are plain numbers reported (sometimes as raw data and sometimes as descriptive statistics, such as totals, averages, ranges, and frequencies), it may be quite possible to puzzle out the logic of the analysis, even without an understanding of the technicalities involved. Ready assistance is available in some excellent books about statistics that were written for non-statisticians. If you still are stuck, however, after looking for raw numbers, searching out the author's plain language description of important findings, and using whatever reference aids you have at hand, skip over the statistics and keep on reading.
- Don't let skipping something like statistics panic you, and certainly do not let it make you feel guilty or inadequate. Statistics have a practical purpose. The basic purpose of most statistical operations can be figured out with the help of a beginner-level textbook or the help of a friend or mentor.

- ***Don't get stuck on the question, "Is this good research?"*** To be honest, it takes years of experience to quickly discern flaws of logic and imperfections of analysis in a complicated investigation. You must trust the integrity of the journal in which the report appears (and the adequacy of its review procedures), and keep the proverbial grain of salt close at hand. Fortunately, even the novice will be able to spot the difference between simple forms of sense and nonsense. Torturing yourself with the question, "Is this good research?" will soon short-circuit your ability to attend closely to the author's explanations. Quality in research always is a matter of degree, and perfect studies are rare (it can be argued that they are impossible). Hold on to making a judgment about the quality of the investigation until you have read the whole report.

However, there are studies in print that contain such gross errors that they are not worth the effort of reading. It is our experience that such publications are so rare as to represent little serious risk to the novice reader. In any case, people with extensive experience in doing, writing, and reading research invariably come to believe that the distinction between good and bad research is not easily drawn.

(Source: Locke L.F. Silverman S.I. Spirduso W.W. (1998) Reading and Understanding Research_Sage Publications California)

critical thinking and reliability

Being a critical thinker is vital for research. But what does critical thinking really mean? Critical thinking means a number of things. It means:

- Not just believing something because everyone says it's so.
- Not just believing something because you have heard it repeated so often.
- Not just accepting the first opinion you hear.

Critical thinking means constantly asking questions, probing and digging deeply into a subject to learn more until you yourself are satisfied of the truth of the matter. Critical thinking also means looking at bits of data, pieces of information, and bodies of knowledge and searching for connections and differences. It means sitting down and simply thinking hard about all that you've uncovered and trying to figure out what it all has in common. What are the threads that link the data? How do they differ?

The title: The importance of the title is established by one important fact. More people will read the title than any other part of the report. Indexing and retrieval systems often depend on the title for key words on which to base the listings for a report, and being listed in the right categories will determine whether a study comes to the attention of potential readers. Also, the interest inspired by a good title may make the difference between large and small readerships. Accordingly, authors who are sophisticated about the mechanisms of retrieval and the interests of their primary audience will spend considerable effort on devising a title wording that is clear, concise, accurate, and appealing. In addition, the title of the report will inform the researcher as to whether it is relevant to his research and worth studying it. Titles often help the researcher to narrow the number of reports relevant for scrutiny as demanded by the research topic.

Reading critically*:* At the most general level, the title describes what was studied, at least in terms of naming the primary constructs/concepts examined and the type of research involved. Particular parts of the study that are unusual or of special interest (subjects, means of measurement or analysis, scope of data collection) will be noted. A good title tells enough to move the appropriate subset of potential readers, those who might reasonably have an interest in the content of the report, to the next step, which is reading the abstract. For any study that you may consider, if the title performs its function well, you will take that next step of reading the abstract.

The Abstract: Almost all research publications require an abstract, usually placed in prominent fashion on the first page of the report. Often limited to a single-paragraph format, the abstract ordinarily contains a general statement of the research topic, a brief description of the study design and the methods involved, and the most important results obtained.

The first function of the abstract is to extend the information provided in the title. The intention is to allow potential readers to make a quick determination about **the match between the study and their interests.** The need for economy (many journals dictate the maximum number of words permissible in the abstract) limits the explanation, but artfully designed abstracts can display most of the elements that will concern readers.

What Was Found? At last we come to the really exciting part of any report: finding out what was discovered! Although we have argued that many of the valuables people retrieve from research reports have nothing to do with the findings, it is nevertheless true that virtually every reader will be interested in the final instalments of the researcher's story. For some readers, of course, the findings (and conclusions) are the primary (if not sole) target of their search.

Figures: The cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words is true and is just as true in research reports as in any other type of writing. Indeed, graphics are so much more effective than word descriptions for portraying complex relationships between or among variables that they have become common in newspapers and magazines. Word processing and graphics programs that allow easy creation of graphs and other figures have encouraged such illustration in all kinds of print reporting. For that reason alone, learning how to look at graphic displays of information with a critical eye is necessary equipment for any educated person, whether he or she intends to read research reports or not.

In research reports, graphs and line drawings are always called figures. That distinguishes them from "tables," which usually contain exact values in numerical form, although lists of discrete items of information in verbal form sometimes are designated as tables. Conversely, figures are used when it is important to draw readers' attention to general comparisons that require less precision and to interactions among variables.

As a category of symbolic representations, figures include line graphs, cumulative line graphs, cumulative frequency graphs, surface area graphs, bar graphs (histograms), double-axis graphs, pie charts, drawings, and photographs. Figures are always described by captions that present the number of the figure as cited in the main text and then identify all of the constructs and relationships that are shown. Captions often are not written in complete sentence form, but they must be complete in respect. A caption must allow the figure to stand alone as an intelligible presentation. If you study a graph, for example, and still cannot understand what finding is represented by a particular line, or if you have to go back into the text to retrieve the names of the variables displayed, the caption is defective - and the fault rests with the author or the editor, not you. (Source: Berkman R. I. 2000) Find it Fast Harper Collins publisher New York)

understanding quantitative research reports

There are no magic tricks or intellectual device that will make reading research reports an easy task for the beginner. What we can offer, however, is a means for organizing the process that will reduce the initial confusion and, particularly, the tendency to become overwhelmed by the flood of details that appear in most reports.

In the process of mastering the skills needed to read research, the act of keeping a simple record of major points, in whatever order they may appear in the report, seems to provide a reassuring sense that you are following the story. This process demands that you reduce those points to the essentials, using the least elaborate term's possible. In this way, the record becomes the perfect note card to support later recall and use.

Virtually all beginners find that following a particular format is a useful support during the period when they are gradually building confidence in their ability to extract information and good ideas. Most people are not used to reading any kind of text that is so dense with details. Sorting through the thickets of information to identify essential points in the history of a study is the very first skill to be mastered. Put simply, we urge you *to just try it* (at least until you are confident that you no longer need to do so)! Refer to the format in the 12 steps to understanding a quantitative research report, which will provide you with a broad guideline as to what you need to look for when studying a report.

12 Steps to Understanding a Quantitative Research Report

Record notes only in enough detail to support recall in the absence of the original document. Except for Item 1, use abbreviations, diagrams, shorthand, and a careful selection of only what is essential to the study. Work on this sheet alone (except for Item 6), and do not be tempted to run onto additional pages.

1. What study report is this? (Record a full reference citation.)
2. What kind of study is this?
3. What was the general purpose of the study? What questions does it raise?
4. How does answering the research questions add something new to what is already known? If the study is a replication, why is that important?
5. Who or what was studied? (Number and key characteristics)
6. In sequential order, what were the major steps in performing the study? (Record these in a flowchart-use additional sheet only if needed.) Do not just repeat details from Items 1-5 and 7-10. Create an explanatory sketch that a year from now would help you recall how the study was done.
7. What data were recorded and used for analysis? (E.g. questionnaire responses test scores, field notes, meter readings, etc.)
8. What kinds) of data analysis was used? (e.g. statistical, logical categorization, etc)
9. What were the results? (After analysis what do the data from Item 7 say about the questions raised in Item 3?)
10. What does the author conclude? (In light of both Item 9 and the entire study experience, what is said about Item 3?)
11. What cautions does the author raise about interpreting the study, and what do you think are important reservations?
12. What particularly interesting or valuable things did you learn from reading the report? (Consider results, method, discussion, references, etc.)

Please note that the 12 steps included on this form cover all of the significant points in all possible kinds of reports. Most of what you are asked to record deals with essential information that commonly gets lost or jumbled when novices first begin to work their way through research reports. Making you pay attention to some purely routine things is good discipline-precisely because beginners too often are not inclined to do so! Recording a full reference citation, making a flowchart, and carefully noting your own response to a study, for example, fall in the category of routine 'good habits" that will pay off down the line.

understanding qualitative research reports

Qualitative research starts with different philosophic assumptions. Although some of the items in the quantitative guide would work perfectly well despite those differences, others would not.

Qualitative research is relatively new as a way of thinking about inquiry, the tasks of reading and understanding qualitative research reports often are as unfamiliar to research teachers, advisors, textbook authors, and scholars as they are to the beginning readers.

Unlike most of the reports and reviews that recount studies based on the assumptions of quantitative science, the text of reports based on a qualitative view of the world tend (at first encounter) to seem remarkably accessible more like good storytelling or journalism.

Qualitative research includes a large family of loosely related inquiry traditions rooted in both the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology) and the liberal arts (philosophy, history, literature). Each tradition differs from the others in terms of the phenomena studied and means of analysis employed. You may encounter reports of studies that purport to combine qualitative and quantitative research traditions. In some instances, these studies employ methods of data collection or analysis that commonly are associated with qualitative research (e.g., interviewing or field observations) without also adopting the fundamental assumptions of qualitative inquiry. Such studies should be regarded as quantitative in nature and may be read as such.

12 Steps to Understanding a Qualitative Research Report

Record notes only provide enough detail to support recall in the absence of the original document. Except for Item 1, use abbreviations, diagrams, shorthand, and a careful selection of only what is essential to the study. Work on this sheet alone, and do not be tempted to run onto additional pages.

1. What study report is this? (Record a full reference citation.)
2. Who is the investigator? Include personal history, particularly as related to the purpose, participants, or site of the study.
3. If made explicit, what type of qualitative research is this? Is the author working from a feminist, Marxist, structural functionalist, symbolic interactionist, critical theorist, or other vantage point?
4. What is the purpose of the study? What are the focusing questions (if any)? Is the purpose primarily theoretical, practical, or personal?
5. Where does the study take place, and who are the participants? Describe the general physical and social context of the setting and salient characteristics of the main actors. If this is not a field study, describe the setting and participants presented in the secondary data source.
6. In what sequence did the major elements of the study occur? Describe (or diagram in graphic format, such as a flowchart) timing, frequency, order, and relationships used in organizing the study.
7. How were data collected? Was recording done through observation and field notes, taped interviews with transcription, document analysis with record forms, or some combination?
8. If this was a field study, what was the author's role while collecting data?
9. What procedures were used for analysis of data? Was constant comparison used, were categories developed inductively, were themes constructed, was computer software employed?
10. What were the results? In general terms, what is the answer to the question, "What was going on there?"
11. How are design or research methods used to enhance the credibility (trustworthiness and believability of the study?
12. What parts of the study did you find powerful or particularly instructive? What was moving or striking, and what provided new insight?

filtering Information

Research will involve collecting and filtering information. Below are some brief pointers on sources and the filtering process.

- The library and its resources
- Computer and software
- Statistics
- Special collections e.g. the Afrikaner Collection at Killie Campbell Library
- The National Archives (online as well as based in Pretoria)
- The Human Sciences Research Council databases
- National Productivity Institute
- Newspapers (see glossary for online addresses)
- Government departments (online too)
- Statistics South Africa
- Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (online)
- Reserve Bank

As mentioned earlier on, the process of sketching a research design requires that one should be able to sift the crucial pieces of information from the less important ones. If one is unable to do so, then one will end up with a whole lot of information that can be quite confusing. Here are simple steps to consider when filtering information from the pieces of information that you have at your disposal:

1. Know your objectives

2. List your information

3. Put your information into categories

4. Start reading
   a) Use indexes
   b) Scan the information
   c) Reference the material that you use

5. Prioritise the materials that are most important

6. Make a list of the materials that are prioritised with references in your notes to what pages the information can be found on and a brief description of what it says.

Collecting information is vital to every part of the research and advocacy process. Reading works that have been written on the area you would like to study is very important in giving you a sense of what actually exists or what is missing. You can use this information in deciding on the type of questions you would like to ask in your interviews. You can also use the information to further the points you want to make when you are compiling your report.

For example, in David McDonald's research into cost recovery and service delivery in South Africa, he found that people in the Cape Flats area, like Tafelsig and Khayelitsha, were not paying for their basic services not because they didn't want to or because they were too lazy but rather that they just couldn't afford to pay for them. He also found that a large number of households would sacrifice food, clothing and other necessities to be in a position to pay for water, electricity or housing. Youth for Work, which is working in the Cape Flats area are doing their research project on access to education. Having read David McDonald's work they are now including in their interviews the extent to which the poor would go in order to give their children access to education. What they are doing is extending McDonald's conclusion for water, electricity, housing to another area, ie. Education.

So before you start your interviews or questionnaires, your first research exercise would be to see what information exists out there relating to your topic. This would also include locating the policy or piece of legislation that relates directly to your problem that you have identified.

chapter 4

research methods

introduction to research methods

quantitative research

Quantitative research refers to a broad area of investigation that generates and uses information – known as data in the research world – with a distinctive quantitative nature. This means that quantitative research offers data that can be represented by numbers. For example, a quantitative research report tells us that 33% of South Africans are HIV-positive.

Quantitative research usually involves collecting and analysing the responses of a large number of respondents (usually people, households or countries). Quantitative research usually allows researchers to generalise their results beyond just the set of respondents that were interviewed.

Quantitative research is associated with rigorous research design and the survey method of data gathering.

Quantitative research methods use data that is in numbers. This makes it possible for us to apply statistical techniques to it. Quantitative research usually has tight and clear research designs, using surveys to gather data. This is usually done with a structured questionnaire as the main research instrument.

As you have discovered, research is full of jargon. Unfortunately, if you want to work with research and researchers, you need to know and understand researcher jargon. We start off here by explaining some key concepts. Other new concepts will pop up in later modules, and we will explain them when they do. You will find some in the glossary.

qualitative research

Qualitative research usually involves in-depth collection and analysis of information from a smaller group of respondents. For example, we know that people in a certain community do not talk about HIV/AIDS. We could find out, by having detailed conversations with some people in the community, that they do not talk about HIV/AIDS because they are afraid of being seen in a bad light. The results of qualitative research can generally not be extended beyond the respondents who contributed to the study. For example, we would not be able to say that all, or a certain proportion of people in the community, do not speak about HIV/AIDS for fear of being stigmatised. We cannot make generalisations using qualitative research. But qualitative research helps us to understand a particular issue in more detail.

Qualitative research is a broad approach in social research that is aimed at describing and understanding human behaviour rather than explaining it. A range of qualitative methods exists for gaining access to research subjects, for gathering data and for analysing data. Since there is not a straightforward definition of qualitative research, it is best understood by the characteristics of the various methods that make it up. Some of the key features that distinguish qualitative research are as follows:

- **Naturalistic**: Qualitative research emphasises, and is well-suited to, the study of attitudes and behaviours in their 'natural setting', as opposed to what may be considered the artificial settings of quantitative surveys. The research setting is not contrived but natural instead, with nothing being predefined or taken for granted. There is a concern with the 'normal course of events', with events and actions being observed as they unfold without interfering or intervening.

- **Process oriented**: Qualitative research is oriented towards studying processes over time rather than outcomes. The qualitative researcher is therefore interested in studying events as they occur rather than having to reconstruct them after the event has actually happened. As a result, qualitative research follows a *more cyclical research design* than quantitative research, allowing for successive passes through steps in the research process and for trial and error.

- **Insider perspective**: Qualitative research attempts to view the world through the eyes or perspective of the people being studied. The implication of this is that the researchers have to attempt to be more than just an observer in the natural setting being studied. They are not trying

to be objective outsiders. A deliberate attempt has to be made to put themselves in the shoes of the people being observed and try to understand their actions, decisions, behaviour, practices and so on from their perspective. The focus on the insider perspective is especially important when there are huge perceived differences between the researcher and the people being studied, such as in language, race, culture, beliefs, etc. These introduce potential barriers between the researcher and the participants and pose a serious challenge to this ideal.

- **'Thick' description**: The main aim of qualitative research is in-depth or 'thick' descriptions and understanding of actions and events. Instead of focusing on counting and quantifying patterns in behaviour, thick description is a rich, lengthy description that captures actions as they occur. It entails a lot of detail and a lot of quotations. Because of this, qualitative reports are often rich in description, colourful detail and unusual characters, which gives the reader a feeling for social setting, in contrast to quantitative reports, which have a formal, neutral tone. A qualitative researcher may use a case study approach, in which she gathers a great amount of information on one or a few cases, goes into greater depth and gets more detail on the cases examined, i.e. gathers a range of information on a small number of selected cases.

- **Context sensitivity**: Qualitative research places strong emphasis on many aspects of social, historical and physical context for understanding the social world. When an event, social action, answer to a question, or conversation is removed from the context in which it appears, social meaning and significance become distorted.

- **Inductive approach**: In quantitative research, theories are explored and hypotheses developed before data is collected. The purpose of the research process is to test these hypotheses (deductive). Qualitative research starts off with little more than a basic research question, with hypotheses and theory emerging during the data collection and analysis process, based upon observation. This inductive method is referred to as *grounded theory*, since theory is built from data or grounded in the data and is therefore faithful to the evidence.

Data is information that we use to describe and analyse things in life.

Physical data such as air temperature is information about physical reality.

Social data is information that tells us something about our social reality. This could include population information, economic indicators or people's political values. For example, data from the CASE *CSG Report* includes information about living conditions, family structures, demographic profiles of households that receive the CSG, conditions relating to access of the grant and so on.

Research design is a plan that outlines the parts that go into making up a research project, and how the parts relate to each other. It usually consists of four parts:

- The research question (for example: how can we identify and understand the conditions of young people in South Africa today?).

- The data needed to answer the question (for example, data about living conditions, opinions, attitudes, and policy preferences).

- The methods suited to collecting the relevant data (such as survey, focus group discussions, interviews).

- The analytical techniques that will allow the data to answer your research question. This may include analysing the relationship between demographic characteristics of youth (like age, race, sex), their living conditions and its impact on their views, in-depth analysis of textual material from qualitative research, and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Research method is the way the parts of your research design can be put into action. Often this has to do with how the relevant data are gathered. For example, the C A S E youth survey used a national sample survey, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews as data-gathering methods. This is a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Research instrument is the tool each method uses to collect data. For example, in survey research the instrument is usually a questionnaire. With focus group discussions the research instrument is usually a discussion guideline with moderating instructions

strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research

One of the basic benefits of adopting a qualitative research method is that it provides a rich, contextual perspective on the issues that you may not get in a standardised questionnaire. It can also produce new theories and recognize phenomena ignored by most or all previous researchers and literature. Research done according to this tradition helps people see the world view of those they are studying. They recognise that in any social context it is possible that people may occupy different socially constructed realities and may therefore have different ways of interpreting their actions and the actions of others. Finally, quantitative researchers examine phenomena in their natural setting, attempt to capture what is happening without being judgmental; present people on their own terms, and try to represent them from their perspectives so that the reader can see, appreciate and understand their views.

Nonetheless, the qualitative approach is not without its shortcomings. The nature of qualitative research makes it exorbitantly expensive to involve large number of participants. In addition, because of the limited number of participants usually involved in qualitative studies, there is the possibility that the individuals interviewed are significantly differently from the rest of the population, meaning that the results may not be able to be generalised. Qualitative research also leaves open the possibility that important issues may be missed altogether. The small sample size also makes it difficult to aggregate data and make systematic comparisons. Qualitative research is dependent upon researcher's personal attributes and skills, since he or she represents the principal research instrument. Finally, participation in a setting can always change the social situation, although it could also be argued that not participating can always change the social situation as well).

Quantitative research finds its strength where adequate sampling allows the researcher to generalise the research to the entire population being researched. It is often quicker to analyse as the data can be pre-coded in the way it is collected. Quantitative research instruments often reduce the number of potential responses making analysis easier. Qualitative research is very good for describing causal relationships between variables but on the downside is less equipped to understand the relationship in any depth.

chapter 5

research design

introduction to research design

Research design is a plan that outlines the elements of the research and how they are related to each other. It is an overall framework, which consists of a research question, the data needed to answer the question, the methods to be used in collecting the relevant data, and the analytical techniques used in order to allow the data to answer the question.

From the perspective adopted in this manual, there is no sharp distinction between qualitative and quantitative research designs. The difference between them consists primarily in the nature of the data collected in the course of the research. Frequently the same design is used to collect and analyse both types of data. Having said that, we recognise that designs used for collecting and analysing quantitative data tend to be formal and more precisely defined. It is to this kind of formal design that we now turn, but before we discuss this in detail a few additional concepts should be introduced:

Experiment: a specific research design, which is based on the ability of the researcher to isolate the subjects of the research from the wider reality, and examine the precise effect of certain variables on them without interference. Experimental designs are common in the natural sciences (such as Physics and Chemistry), but are rare in the social sciences (with the exception of Psychology), where practical and ethical issues make them difficult to conduct.

Control: a procedure frequently used in experiments, which serves to isolate the effect of a certain variable and study it independently of the effects of other variables. Statistical control refers to a procedure by which the effect of each variable is measured separately. In reality the effects of variables cannot be separated from each other (because reality always consists of multiple forces that operate simultaneously). However, statistical techniques allow this procedure to simulate the effects of experiments.

Hypothesis: this is an assumption or an expectation about the relationship between variables. A hypothesis formulated before the research is undertaken, can give direction to the study and shape its design. It can be tested with the use of the data collected in the course of the research.

A hypothesis usually takes the form of a statement that can be evaluated in light of the research findings. For example, "the higher a person's income is, the more likely s/he is to support lower taxes", or "blacks are more likely than whites to vote for the ANC", or "there is higher unemployment in the rural areas". In these examples the relationship is identified in terms of indicators, but it can also be formulated in conceptual terms, as one between income and policy positions, or between race and political behaviour, or between availability of jobs and area of residence.

Significance: statistical significance is a measure that serves to evaluate the results of a test. If the results are significant it means that they indicate a relationship that exists in the real world and is not merely a coincidence. As a rule of thumb, we must have at least 95% confidence that our findings are not coincidental before we can declare the findings statistically significant. The determination of confidence levels and significance is part of the field of inferential statistics that will be explored in more detail later on.

models

One crucial aspect of design is modelling. A model specifies the relations between two or more variables. It identifies one variable as the factor to be explained – the **dependent variable** or the effect – and another variable or a series of variables as the factors to be used in the explanation – the **independent variables** or the causes. The term explanation is used here but in a sense it is imprecise. Technically the model puts forward and tests an assumption (or hypothesis) about the extent to which variation in the values of the independent variables is associated with variation in the values of the dependent variables. In other words, the model points out how the variables tend to change at the same time and in a certain direction. The conclusion that this relationship (known as correlation) indicates that the independent variables 'explain' or 'cause' changes in the dependent variable is reasonable, but is matter of interpretation rather than fact.

Let us clarify the issue. Correlation means that two or more variables tend to vary together. An example of this is the relations between levels of education and levels of income. It is commonly assumed, and supported by research findings, that people who have completed many years of schooling tend to receive higher income than do people who have completed fewer years of schooling. In formal terms this can be represented as correlation of education and income: they vary together and in the same direction. Whether we can proceed from this to the conclusion that education 'explains' income (in other words that higher income is caused by higher education level and that low income is caused by lower education level) is not obvious, however.

Causality is a relationship in which variation in one variable causes changes in another. A possible story in our case would focus on prejudice against working women, which expresses itself in lower pay for equal work, justified by the notion that women are unlikely to be the main breadwinners in the family. Or we may look at women's role in child care and discover that it prevents them from taking full part in university life and therefore results in lower reward for their services. Another possibility is that women tend to publish less and therefore earn less or they may receive less reward for similar publication records, and so on. We can test each of these 'stories' by adding a related independent variable to the model, and separating out its effects. Once we eliminated other variables that affect the findings indirectly, we are left with the 'pure' effect of sex and may talk about its causal role.

In reality we never reach a situation in which **all** indirect variables are eliminated – there is an unlimited number of them. However, we can identify the variables that may reasonably affect the findings, test their effects, and improve the model accordingly.

Models outline a relationship between independent and dependent variables. This may take the form of a simple model with one independent variable affecting directly the dependent variable, or it may assume more complicated forms (as outlined below). In addition to the two types of variables already identified, complex models may include intervening and extraneous variables as well.

Intervening variables provide the mechanisms through which the independent variables affect the dependent variable. For example, a person's level of education (independent variable) affects his/her level of income (dependent variable) through opening up better job opportunities (an intervening variable). In this case the variable of job opportunities is an essential part of the causal model.

Extraneous variables are correlated separately both with the dependent and the independent variables and may therefore create the impression that they are part of the model. However, this correlation may not necessarily indicate a relationship between the independent and dependent variables. For example, a person's taste in food (independent variable) is correlated with his/her taste in music (dependent variable), because food and music are affected by race and by culture (extraneous variables). If we find that within each racial and cultural group there is no relationship between, say, liking spicy food and preferring rock or classical music we can conclude that tastes in food and music are not part of a causal model. In this case the correlation between them is regarded as **spurious**.

In order to identify clearly the model used in the research design, and eliminate spurious relationships, it is useful to outline explicitly the relationship between the variables and, where possible, illustrate it in the form of a diagram to allow easy identification of the model.

To come up with a model we can ask ourselves the following questions:

- What are we seeking to explain (in other words, what is the dependent variable or effect)?
- What are the explanatory factors (in other words, causes or independent variables)?
- What are the mechanisms that link the causes and the effect (in other words, what are the intervening variables)?
- Which of these we are going to explore in the proposed research?

The last question is important to address, since in principle there are multiple causes for every effect, and potentially many independent and intervening variables. No research design can accommodate all the possible causes, and researchers must always choose the variables that seem the most relevant for the model.

A model specified in this way can be tested against the research findings. Testing means the formulation of hypotheses and their assessment against agreed criteria in order to reject or confirm them. This process frequently involves setting up alternative hypotheses to be examined within the same design in order to determine which one of them provides the best explanation. In other words, testing usually means comparing the explanatory capacity of competing hypotheses rather than measuring each hypothesis on its own.

Correlation is essential for any explanatory model. It is necessary but insufficient for the formulation of a successful explanation. Three other conditions must also be met. The first condition deals with sequence. **The independent variable – the cause – must precede the dependent variable – the effect.** This seems obvious but not always easy to determine. Let us take again the example of education and income. It is true that education usually precedes income, in the sense that a higher level of education leads to a higher level of income. But the relationship can work in a different direction. Higher income may allow people to improve their education. Another more complicated possibility is that higher education initially leads to higher income, which then in turn leads to further improvement in education with the anticipation of further increase in income (this is a two-way relationship).

The second condition that must be met is that the dependent variable must **be capable of being affected and changed** as a result of the operation of the independent variable. A model makes sense only if what it defines as an 'effect' can logically play this role. Examples mentioned earlier can illustrate this point: race can determine musical taste, but musical taste cannot determine race. Sex can affect salaries but salaries cannot affect sex. For all practical purposes race and sex are fixed features of one's identity and therefore cannot be dependent variables.

This condition may also affect the independent variable. It is important to realise that constants cannot explain variables or, to put it in less stark terms, variables with a value that remains fixed for a long period of time cannot explain specific manifestations of variables that vary over time. For example, the mode of production cannot explain variations in poverty levels. Its current value (capitalism in most countries) has existed for a long period of time in much of the world, and it cannot explain circumstances that vary between countries and over time. The dominant mode of gender relations (patriarchy) cannot explain **specific** manifestations of violence against women, which differ from place to place as well as historically. Concepts such as capitalism and patriarchy are useful in explaining general problems such as inequalities and gender violence, but they cannot be included in models that by nature deal with specific relations between variables.

The third condition for a successful explanatory model is that it must be **theoretically plausible**. As noted earlier, the model must put forward a convincing story that shows how the independent variable can indeed cause the effect. To be plausible or convincing means to be consistent with other research, or with accepted theories or with common sense. In the social sciences statistical proof of a relationship is insufficient without an adequate narrative of how it works in practice.

experimental designs

The **Experimental design** is frequently applied in the natural sciences and medical research and is less common in the social sciences. Although not used often in social research, the experimental design is exemplary in its rigorous attitude to research. Its logic allows us to focus on the requirements for a successful research design, even if not all of them may be met in practice.

The basic experimental design consists of five elements:

- Two groups: one is exposed to the independent variable or intervention (the experimental group) and the other is not exposed (the control group)
- Random allocation of participants to the groups before a pre-test
- A pre-test: measurement on the dependent variable (referred to as the outcome) before the application of the independent variable
- An intervention: application of the independent variable
- A post-test: measurement on the dependent variable after the application of the intervention.

What is the logic or assumptions behind this design? First, it is assumed that we can isolate one independent variable out of many possible such variables through the **random** allocation of participants into groups. In this way background factors that may have an effect on the dependent variable are controlled for – their potential effects are neutralised because the background characteristics are found equally in the experimental and control groups. Random allocation means that each participant has the same chance of being assigned to either group.

The second assumption is that the only relevant event between the pre-test and post-test measurements is the intervention (the application of the independent variable). If this is the case we can attribute all the differences we detect in the results of the tests (changes from 'before' to 'after') to the effect of the intervention. The third assumption is that we can attribute the differences we detected between the post-test results of the two groups to the exposure to the intervention on the part of the experimental group and lack of exposure on the part of the control group.

Let us examine how this design is applied in practice through the example of medical research. When a new drug or a treatment is tested, the experimental design is frequently used. The example below of diet to reduce cholesterol levels can be explored in detail. The experimental group will be required to follow a diet, while the control group will continue with its normal diet (or both groups will be subjected to different kinds of diet). Participants in the research will be randomly allocated to the groups, to prevent a concentration of people who may respond in specific ways to the intervention in one of the groups. The pre-test measurements will provide baseline data for the research, and may also serve to confirm whether the allocation to group was done successfully.

longitudinal design

Longitudinal design focuses on measuring change over time. For example, the CASE *Youth 2000* survey is a follow-up on a 1993 study, and one of its goals is to measure changes between the two periods. This design is similar to the experimental design in that it involves multiple measurements, but usually does not include a comparative component in the form of a control group. A unique type of longitudinal design is a retrospective study, in which people are asked about their past as well as present and the study is conducted only at one point in time, but this is exception to the rule.

Two types of longitudinal studies are **trend studies**, which examine the same set of issues with different samples over a period of time, and **panel studies**, which examine the same set of issues with the same respondents at various points in time. A public opinion survey, which periodically measures the perceptions and attitudes of a sample of the population (each time different households), is an example of a trend study. A survey of experts regarding their views of the country's economic performance, conducted at 6-months intervals (each time with the same experts), is an example of a panel study.

By definition all longitudinal studies involve the study of change over time. They differ though, by the length of time covered in the design, the number of points at which measurement takes place (at least two), and the choice of interventions that are planned versus naturally-occurring events. In the former case measurements can be taken after exams or after meetings with community representatives, and in the later case measurements can be taken after elections, or each year at the opening of the school year.

cross-sectional design

Cross-sectional design differs from the previous designs in that all the data are collected at one point in time. Groups are compared as they are and change over time is not addressed directly. The measurement is that of the existing differences rather than of the differences that emerge as a result of intervention, and there is no random allocation to groups. Behind this design is the search for answers to questions about existing groups and their differences at present, rather than about the impact of a particular intervention.

Population surveys (of living conditions, opinions, values and preferences) are a common type of a cross-sectional study. We study the sample, and then break responses down on the basis of variables such as age, sex, race, education, income, and so on. We do not construct experimental groups but rely rather on the existing groups in the population. In other words, instead of selecting black and white respondents or men and women and allocating them to groups, we compile the responses of one category and compare them to the aggregate responses of another.

Although different responses reflect the effect of all the independent variables taken together, we can separate out the effect of each one of them through statistical analysis conducted on the data collected in the course of the research. This statistical control plays a similar role to the elimination of differences between groups through random allocation to groups in experimental designs (this procedure will be explored further in the section on surveys and data analysis).

combining methods

Research methods need not be seen according to a strict division between qualitative and quantitative traditions. In fact, in designing appropriate research methodologies, researchers nowadays tend to advocate a process of triangulation, where more than one method is used.

In research methods, triangulation has come to refer to the use of multiple methods and represents a plan to action that will allow researchers to rise above the personal biases that emanate from using single methodologies. It is based on the idea that the qualitative and quantitative methods should been seen as complimentary rather than as rival or dichotomous. It also refers to the combination of methodologies that are used in studying the same phenomenon, the aim being to improve the validity of one's findings.

Four types of triangulation have generally been identified in the literature. The first of these is known as *data triangulation*. This relates to the advocacy of a range of data sources in the context of a project or study. Examples of this could include comparing data from early and later phases of fieldwork, or from different cases or settings. It could also entail comparing, for instance, observational data with data from interviews. The second type is *investigator triangulation*, where several different researchers or evaluators are used in a project. This can assist in drawing attention to previously unnoticed researcher effects (i.e. effects of the researcher on the research context). The notion of investigator triangulation could be extended to *interdisciplinary triangulation*, where researchers from different disciplines are used to verify findings. A good example would be the inclusion of medical sociologists and demographers, epidemiologists, and economists in a study looking at the socio-cultural factors that affect the transmission or spread of HIV. The third

type is *theory triangulation*, where multiple theoretical perspectives are used to interpret a single set of data. Finally, there is *methodological triangulation*, where multiple methods are used to study a single problem, looking for convergent evidence from different sources, such as participant observation, surveying and a review of documentary resources.

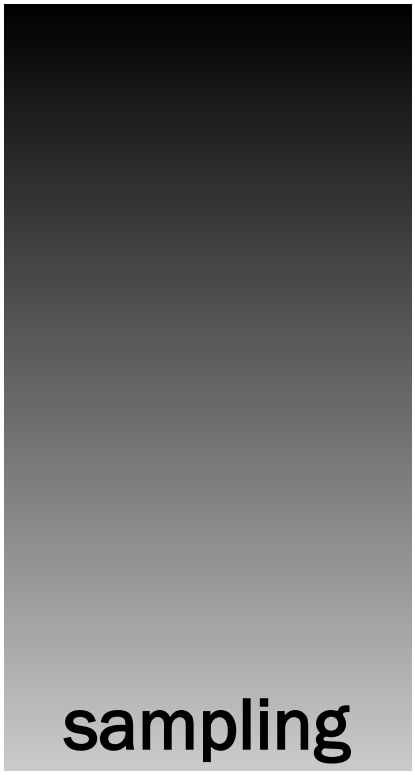
The desirability and usefulness to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse social realities is pretty much accepted in the literature today. There have been increasing attempts at integrating the two approaches. But systematic attempts have been few, and successes have been even fewer. While there is a general acceptance of the obvious complementarities between the qualitative and quantitative approaches, tensions still remain apparent. In particular, there appears to be a nagging feeling of irreducible tradeoffs, and loss of information and effectiveness by forcing 'marriages' between approaches. While the drawing together of information that has been gathered in different ways is widely recognized as a good thing, with benefits on both sides of the qualitative/quantitative divide in terms of the richness and robustness of findings and analysis, the concern is that qualitative fieldwork will become more like survey work because of the pressure to produce bold conclusions and strong policy messages. The danger is that this will result in a loss of precisely the features for which qualitative methods have been recognized as robust, capable of generating valid, reliable and illuminating results.

Thus, there appears to be agreement on large gains to be had from limited movements from either direction (e.g., qualitative researchers using a sampling frame and/or standardization some of their questions; quantitative researchers including more open-ended questions), but also agreement that too large a degree of movement could eradicate what is valuable in each form of research. In light of this, another way of proceeding is what was referred to as 'sequential' as opposed to 'simultaneous' mixing of approaches. This essentially means allowing each approach to do its best, untainted by the other, and then using the results to triangulate and to inform the next stage of design of each, rather than forcing a combination or mixing which might not be appropriate.

In view of the current trend towards combining the two methodological approaches, should an integration be forced at the design stage, or should each technique be allowed 'to do its best', leaving integration for a later stage? The evidence so far tends to suggest that the answer is in fact 'both'. On the one hand, as mentioned above, there is considerable support for *small* movements of qualitative researchers towards the quantitative and quantitative researchers towards the qualitative. However, on the other hand, there are grave concerns about large movements of the approaches in the other direction, ending up with an undifferentiated single instrument or approach. In response to these misgivings, a sequential approach to triangulation or mixing methods may be the most practical approach. While combining data and methods from the two traditions may provide a more complete picture of reality, it may also serve to highlight critical differences, which can be equally as significant and illuminating.

Triangulation is generally considered to be one of the best ways to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research. By combining methods and investigators in the same study, researchers can partly overcome that flow from one investigator or method. As such, the primary strength of triangulation is that it enables researchers to be more confident of their results. It can also help enhance a study's generalisability. However, since triangulation relies on the basic assumption that the weaknesses of a single method will be compensated by the strengths of another method, it therefore assumes that the measures used in the study do not have the same weaknesses. However, if the various methods used are similar in terms of their weaknesses (e.g., in-depth interviews and participant observation), triangulation may not achieve its primary objective.

chapter 6



sampling

introducing sampling

Can we identify the study population?

The study population is *the group of people or households that we want to make the finding about* – and hence this is the *group from which we will choose our sample*. It is important to identify the study population accurately and explicitly so that we don't draw silly or incorrect conclusions. It is also important that the two groups referred to above (the group we want to make our finding about and the group from which we choose our sample) are identical.

Consider the following example: You walk into a shebeen at 2:30 on a Wednesday afternoon and ask the two men at the first table how long they had been there and how much alcohol they had consumed. Suppose that they say they have been there since 9 that morning and that they have already had 6 beers each. Would you be justified in claiming that all (or most) South African men are drunks who spend half their lives in shebeens? Why not?

In our voting example the study population consisted of all the participants in this class, not all people who are attending the course, or all young people in South Africa. Think about our question about the waiting period before receiving the first CSG payment. Can we identify the study population? The study population in this case consists of adult CSG beneficiaries who have already received at least one CSG payment.

The answers to the exercise questions are as follows:

<u>How many households are there in South Africa?</u>
The study population consists of all households in South Africa. We would have to decide for example, whether we are including only South African citizens or whether we want to include tourists and migrants.

<u>How many people in South Africa have HIV/AIDS?</u>
The study population consists of all people in South Africa. We would have similar questions about the inclusion of tourists and migrants.

<u>How many households in the rural Eastern Cape do **not** have access to running water?</u>
The study population consists of all households in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. We have a good idea of the boundaries of the Eastern Cape but we would have to decide precisely what we meant by the term rural.

<u>In your community, what is the average age of women when they give birth to their first child?</u>
The study population consists of all women in your community who have given birth to at least one child. We would have to decide on the precise geographical boundaries of the community in question.

<u>How many people in this room voted in the last municipal elections?</u>
The study population consists of all the people in the room at this moment.

In summary, we note that the study population can be defined by geographical or personal characteristics, or a combination of the two. It is essential that the definition that we use is good enough for us to decide whether a household, person or institution is part of the study or not.

How do we select the people, households or institutions that will provide us with information?

This is probably the most important question and it will determine the accuracy of our results and whether or not we can draw general conclusions.

There are two main ways of selecting respondents for inclusion in a study: *random* and *non-random* selections. A random *sample* (also called a *probability* sample) is one in which every respondent has an equal chance of being selected. [This is not necessarily true since there are many probability sampling designs that may assign different selection probabilities to different groups (e.g. a non-proportional stratified sample). However, it is probably not useful to deal with these issues in the time available.]

Consider the scenarios we were dealing with in the exercise we just completed. Were these selections random? Why were they not random?
Consider the following example: If we needed to pick 5 people from the class as a sample to rep-

resent the class' voting behaviour in the last local elections we could:
a) Write down everyone's name on a piece of paper and then pick five pieces of paper out of a hat, or
b) The facilitator could pick someone from the class and ask them to choose five people.

The first selection is a random selection because the group of respondents has been selected purely by chance. No person or circumstance has been able to influence the set of people who will be asked to contribute their views or experiences. The second selection is not a random selection. Even though we think that the person doing the selecting is not biased (i.e. does not favour any particular person or type of person in the class) we cannot be sure. Perhaps they have picked people who have been in their working groups, or people they have spoken to during the breaks between sessions. Maybe they have included the person they find most attractive!

To summarise: A random selection is one in which every person or thing in the study population has a (equal) chance of being chosen to participate in the study and the selection of participants in the study is by chance and is not influenced by the people who do the selection or by any other circumstances.

The most important thing about random and non-random selections is that we can only be confident of extending the results of our investigation to the study population if we had worked with a random selection. We cannot deal with the details of why this is true during these sessions but the general principle is that with a random selection we are reducing the possibility that the selection is biased and improving the possibility that the selection represents our study population.

Consider the following example: Is it possible to extend the results of our voting exercise to all the participants in this course? In other words, can we make a general finding about the voting behaviour of the entire set of course participants based on the results of the exercise we conducted in class? The answer is probably not. Even though we may believe that this class is fairly typical of the type of participant who attends this course we can't really be sure that this is true.

sampling methods

Non-probability (non-random) samples:

These samples focus on volunteers, easily available units, or those that just happen to be present when the research is done. Non-probability samples are useful for quick and cheap studies, for case studies, for qualitative research, for pilot studies, and for developing hypotheses for future research.

Convenience sample: also called an "accidental" sample or "man-in-the-street" samples. The researcher selects units that are convenient, close at hand, easy to reach, etc.

Purposive sample: the researcher selects the units with some purpose in mind, for example, students who live in dorms on campus, or experts on urban development.

Quota sample: the researcher constructs quotas for different types of units. For example, to interview a fixed number of shoppers at a mall, half of whom are male and half of whom are female.

Other samples that are usually constructed with non-probability methods include library research, participant observation, marketing research, consulting with experts, and comparing organizations, nations, or governments.

Probability-based (random) samples:

These samples are based on probability theory. Every unit of the population of interest must be identified, and all units must have a known, non-zero chance of being selected into the sample.

Simple random sample: Each unit in the population is identified, and each unit has an equal chance of being in the sample. The selection of each unit is independent of the selection of every other unit. Selection of one unit does not affect the chances of any other unit.

For example, to select a sample of 25 people who are attending this course, make a list of all 75 people in the course. Assign each person a unique number, between 1 and 75. We can then use a table of random numbers to select our respondents.

Another way to select this simple random sample is to take 75 table-tennis balls and number then from 1 to 75. Put them into a large box and mix them up, and then grab 25 balls. Read off the numbers. Those are the 25 people in your sample. This is called the lottery method.

Systematic random sampling: Each unit in the population is identified, and each unit has an equal chance of being in the sample. For example, to select the sample of 25 respondents out of 75 students we would walk through the classrooms and count off every third person (75 divided by 25 is 3) and interview that person.

However, you must be aware of problems that can arise in systematic random sampling. If the selection interval matches some pattern in the list (e.g., each 3rd person is male) you will introduce systematic bias into your sample.

Stratified random sampling: Each unit in the population is identified, and each unit has a known, non-zero chance of being in the sample. This is used when the researcher knows that the population has sub-groups (strata) that are of interest. For example, if we wanted to examine the voting behaviour of all participants in this course but wanted to make sure that we were able to make findings about males as well as females we could specify that the sample had to contain a certain number of males and a certain number of females.

Cluster sampling: cluster sampling views the units in a population as not only being members of the total population but as members also of naturally-occurring clusters within the population.

We used the cluster sampling method to select the final sample for the CSG evaluation. In this case we had access to a database of all CSG beneficiaries containing approximately 183 000 names. It would have proved difficult (and extremely expensive) to randomly select 1000 names and to try and interview these respondents because they may have been quite widely dispersed. To make the study feasible we needed to ensure that the beneficiaries we interviewed were not too widely dispersed – i.e. that they were clustered in some way. We accomplished this by randomly selecting 200 paypoints from all possible paypoints, and then selecting and interviewing 5 beneficiaries at each paypoint.

All national surveys (e.g. the October Household Survey, the HSRC annual surveys, the C A S E *Youth 2000* survey) use a cluster sampling method.

Comparison of Sampling Techniques

Non Probability Samples

Description	Cost and Degree of Use	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. **Convenience**: Researcher uses most convenient or economical sample.	Very low cost, extensively used.	No need for list of population	Variability and bias of estimates cannot be measured or controlled; generalising data beyond sample inappropriate.
2. Judgement: An expert or experienced researcher selects the sample to fulfil a purpose, such as ensuring all members have a certain characteristic.	Moderate cost, average use.	Useful for certain types of forecasting; sample guaranteed to meet a specific purpose.	Bias due to experts beliefs may make sample unrepresentative; generalising data beyond sample inappropriate.
3. Quota: Researcher classifies population by pertinent properties, determines desired proportion of sample from each class and fixes quotas for each interview.	Moderate cost, very extensively used.	Introduces some stratification of population; requires no list of population.	Introduces bias in researcher's classification of subjects; non– random selection within classes means error from population cannot be estimated; generalising data beyond sample inappropriate.
4. Snowball: Initial respondents are selected by probability samples; additional respondents are obtained by referral from initial respondents.	Low cost, used in special situations.	Useful in locating members of rare population.	High bias because sample units not independent; generalising data beyond sample inappropriate.

Source: Sruwig & Stead (2001)

Comparison of Probability Sampling Techniques			
Probability Samples			
Description	**Cost and Degree of Use**	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
1. Simple random: Researcher assigns each member of the sampling frame a number, then selects sample units by random method.	High cost, not frequently used in practice (except random digit dialling).	Only minimal advantage knowledge of population needed; easy to analyse data and compute error.	Requires sample frame to work from; does not use knowledge of population that researcher may have; larger errors for same sample size than stratified sampling; respondents may be widely dispersed, hence higher cost.
2. Systemic: Researcher uses a natural ordering or order of sampling frame, selects an arbitrary starting point, then selects items at a preselected interval.	Moderate cost, moderately used.	Simple to draw sample; easy to check.	If sampling intervals are related to a periodic ordering of the population, may introduce increased variability.
3. Stratified: Researcher divides the population into groups and randomly selects sub-samples from each group; variations include proportional, disproportional, and optimal allocation of sub-sample size.	High cost, moderately used.	Assures representation of all groups in sample; characteristics of each stratum can be estimated and comparisons made; reduces variability of sample size.	Requires accurate information on proportion in each stratum; if stratified lists are not available, they can be costly to prepare.
4. Cluster Researcher selects sampling units at random and then observes all items in the group.	Low cost, frequently used.	If clusters are geographically defined then field costs lower; requires only listing of individuals within clusters; characteristics of clusters as well as population can be estimated .	Larger error for comparable size than other probability samples; researcher must be able to assign population members to a unique cluster, or duplication or omission of individuals' results can occur.
5. Multi–stage Progressively smaller areas are selected in each stage; researcher performs some combination of the first 4 techniques	High cost, frequently used, especially in nationwide surveys	Depends on techniques combined.	Depends on techniques combined.
Source: Sruwig & Stead (2001)			

Most surveys are sample surveys in that they select a number of people from the broader population for inclusion in the survey – they do not cover the entire population. People are selected as members of groups (such as racial or ethnic groups) or of social categories (men and women, young people) or as residents of particular areas (urban and rural areas, specific cities and settlements). Survey findings are presented and analysed on the basis of categories such as race, sex, age, income and education (or intersection of some of the above). The assumption behind this is that these characteristics are relevant to our understanding of people's views. They allow us to cluster views into useful bits of information, and they provide us with the beginning of an explanation of why people have views of a particular nature, by linking these views to their background characteristics.

Our ability to infer from the findings of a sample is determined primarily by the extent to which the sample is **representative** of the population. If the sample is not randomly selected any projection of the results to the population is problematic. A **random** sample means that every member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Accurate representation means, in this context, the extent to which the sample reproduces or mirrors the composition and diversity of the population that is being studied. The sample is **not** supposed to represent the overall population of the country but rather the specific population about which we seek to gain information.

When deciding on the size of the sample we must bear in mind that a large sample does not necessarily ensure a greater degree of representation though it usually allows us to reduce the margin of error and conduct analysis and comparisons between sub-groups. The rule of thumb used in calculating sample size is that we need at least 30 respondents for the overall sample, and 30 respondents for each sub-group that we wish to study. Even so, this really depends on the population size.

Formula for determining size

$$n = \frac{Zq^2 S^2}{H^2}$$

n = sample size
Z = value of Z for given confidence level
S = standard deviation of population
H = desired precision level
q = desired confidence level

The population about which we gather information (through the sample survey) may be the population of South Africa, the population of Cape Town, the Wits student population, or the population of people living with HIV/AIDS. Whatever the case is, the requirement that the sample should be representative is technical in nature rather than political. Whether the sample is balanced on racial or sex grounds is a meaningless question in the abstract. The sample should reflect the diversity of the specific population from which it is drawn. If race is seen as an important feature of the study, then a racially homogeneous population would call for a racially homogeneous sample, and a racially diverse population for a racially diverse sample, and so on.

It is impossible for a sample to represent the population in all of its aspects, without making the sample very large and therefore costly and logistically complicated. This is because diversity is infinite and covers many different aspects. The researcher must identify which aspects of the population's diversity are relevant for the specific research. For example, we may choose race, sex and residence (urban, rural) as important aspects when conducting research on educational attainment among youth, and sample the population accordingly. At the same time, we may ignore other aspects such as ethnic identity, religious beliefs, hair colour and height as irrelevant to the research. In this case we do not care whether or not our sample is representative of the population with regard to these latter aspects.

Social research in South Africa normally uses race, residence and province as the bases on which to construct a sample. This choice is motivated by an assumption that these variables are important to our understanding of most topics of research. In other words, we assume that if the sample is not representative of the population with regard to these aspects, this will affect the validity of the findings. At the same time, failure to be representative of, say, the distribution of hair or eye colours in the population will not have such a negative effect. Assumptions of this nature are specific to each study. In each case the choice of variables must be explicit and be done on grounds that can be defended and not merely assumed.

Having said that, let us consider cases in which race is not expected to have an impact on the findings. We have used an example of medical research on the relationship between diet and cholesterol levels. It is a reasonable assumption

that race does not have an effect on the extent to which certain diets are effective in reducing cholesterol levels. This in turn may be based on a more general assumption that all human beings function biologically in the same way, and what happens 'under the skin' cannot be affected by superficial physical differences. These assumptions may be derived logically from other scientific principles or from prior research.

Whatever the source of our assumptions, we use them as a basis for sampling. The fewer variables we need to control, the simpler the design is. In the example above, race is not considered to be important in the sampling, and therefore we do not care whether or not the sample is racially representative of the population. If our assumption holds, our findings will not be affected by the racial composition of the sample. In other words, the effectiveness of the diet in reducing cholesterol levels would be the same for all people regardless of race.

On the other hand, we may assume that sex would have an effect on the findings of this research, based on prior findings that indicate that men and women consistently respond differently to diets. In this case we should ensure that the sample includes sufficient numbers of men and women to enable us to study the drug's effect on both groups (and possible sub-groups among them). A study of men would be valid only for men and not for women, and vice versa. Of course, if we discover that the diet is equally effective for both groups, and subsequent research confirms this conclusion, we may at a future point in time discard sex as an aspect of the sampling.

The crucial point here is that decisions regarding sampling must be made on the basis of the goals and expectations of a **specific** research project. They should not be made on the basis of abstract principles. When we look at research products we must examine how the sample was selected and whether it is representative with regard to what is relevant to the research. Being representative of the population with regard to aspects that do not feature in the research is likely to increase its costs without adding any benefits.

Although a random sample survey is the most useful approach in surveys that seek to capture the views of a large population, a number of other strategies are used. One of these strategies is **purposive sampling**, which is used when we want to target particular individuals and categories of individuals for investigation. For example, we may select directors of large national NGOs in South Africa, or government officials in departments of social services of the rank of chief director and above, and interview all those available from these categories.

Another strategy is **quota sampling**, which is based on the need to interview sufficient numbers of people from different categories and we proceed with the interviews until we reach the required number. For example, select 30 men and 30 women at a conference, with no regard to any characteristic other than their sex. **Snowball sampling** is used to target difficult-to-reach people (members of religious sects or illegal migrants) by asking some of them to direct the researcher to others of the same group. Ultimately though, the choice of a sampling strategy depends on the research questions and the goal of the investigation.

qualitative sampling strategies

As mentioned there will often be differences in sampling depending on whether you are using quantitative or qualitative methodologies. In qualitative research you are more likely to use smaller sample that are very directed by the research questions, much like purposive sampling mentioned earlier. In this type of research you are normally not trying to create data that you can expand to the whole population but rather finding out something new or gaining deeper insight into an issue.

Qualitative sampling tends to be a little more flexible and tends to emerge during the research process as opposed to quantitative methods. You need to think strategically and theoretically as well as know your ontological and epistemological positions in order to develop a sampling strategy that delivers and fits the research best.

Sampling is integrally tied to analysis. The categories you sample for example will determine the categories you analyse, what you can compare or generalise in your analysis.

What and how we sample is deeply tied to the question of are we measuring what we say we are measuring (validity). In qualitative sampling you can not establish either validity or reliability in statistical terms as generally you are not dealing with probability thus you must establish these connections logically. To do this, as the researcher you must make all you sampling logic explicit, i.e. you must write it down.

Many qualitative researchers use a form of theoretical or purposive sampling, which involves selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, the theoretical framework, how you plan to do the analysis and of course what relevance it has to the argument you are developing. To get to this point you must ask yourself why is it important to speak to or observe the people or sample I am intending to view. You would build in

test of the argument you are developing or focus on exceptional cases. You also need to imagine how you are going to deal with the data in advance, whilst being weary of falling into the trap of thinking that the sample is drawn on the basis that it represents the population. It may share common characteristics but this does not mean that it represents the population.

Qualitative researchers sometimes say that the sample just provides an illustration of what may or may not happen in the wider population, which of course can not be established one way or the other as the sample is statistically insignificant.

It is perhaps best then to view your sampling practice as something that grows and changes based on a set of strategic choices through the research process that the researcher specifically records and reports at the end of the research.

Firstly then looking at the ontology of issues you need to decide what you are sampling.

You could be sampling (data Sources)
People (individuals, groups, communities) or (feelings experiences etc)
Different group characteristics depending on the research puzzle and questions
Organisations and entities
Texts
Settings and environments
Objects artefacts media products and
Events and happenings
And so the list can go on....but the guiding logic here is to be found in your ontological perspective and even more importantly in your research puzzle. You set about developing sampling categories may be it is people with all their characteristics or maybe it is just sampling peoples feelings or actions or experiences.

example

If you were researching the impact of returning child soldiers on family structures for example your puzzle is one that really tries to look at the impact of the child's experiences on how they relate and are related to by family members. Here we would only be sampling firstly families where a child served in a military capacity on one level and at a more refined level we would be sampling family members (we would need to decide how close e.g. immediate household, which would include the child soldier who just by that name you can see is being seen in terms of experience. This both exposes and validates certain ontological assumptions in the context of the research puzzle. We also are viewing our analysis down the research process where we are suggesting that we need to get data on the Child's specific experiences relating to war along with family experiences of the child before and after military 'service', as well as their experiences of family life before and after the child's abduction. In our strategic decisions to sample particular categories of experiences we would make clear our assumptions and reasons for these decisions. We also see in this process of sample selection emerging thoughts around arguments. The sampling suggests that we theorise the Child's experiences as having a direct impact on subsequent family experiences of family life social integration etc. Lets carry the example along...so after we have conducted a set of interviews and observed these experiences for example in one family and detailed the rich contextual data and then moved onto another family observing similar interactions of the experiences and then another where similar experiential interactions were documented we would begin to get a sense of increasing validity. We would be strengthening our argument of the impact and nature of the impact of one set of experiences on the others. We may then wish to test our emerging or inductive arguments by seeking out family experiences after a child soldiers return that were atypical of what we had observed thus far in our research. Should we find such a set of experiences we would examine these to see why they differed from the others we had documented...maybe the child did not see active combat, maybe the abduction was of very short duration etc. As we find explanations for the anomaly (the experiences that are different to the rest) we may well be strengthening the validity of our research. If we fail to find an anomaly we would document our attempts in the search as part of the strategic sampling process in the report.

This example also raises other key strategic issues other than what to sample. of what

We also are viewing our analysis down the research process where we are suggesting that we need to get data on the Child's specific experiences relating to war along with family experiences of the child before and after military 'service', as well as their experiences of family life before and after the child's abduction.

As this exert from the example tends to suggest that our sampling category of experiences of different family members has a dimension of time to it...i.e before and after the abduction. The people are the same people but their experiences are from different periods in time. Again this must be made specific in explaining your sample.

Finally the question which many people battle with is the issue of how many, or the sample size?

How many to sample?

The answer to this is situationally dependent and it depends what you want your sample to do. In this type of research setting it is often the relationship between the different categories that you are sampling and how these relate to theoretical issues in your study and understanding the social reality you wish to analyse than generating experiences that can be generalised to the whole population of the study.

So to go back to our example if you have sampled ten families and you are detecting the same patterns in the data then it would probably not develop your argument or understanding of the intellectual puzzle any further to continue sampling in this way, perhaps if time and money allowed you would perhaps look for another comparison such as in another country or as mentioned earlier begin to look specifically for atypical cases to test your theory.

Or

For example in interviewing one or two people or families who have been evicted, about coping strategies they adopted, and examining the lack of state support through this data generation process, is not the same thing as suggesting that these one or two interviews are representative of evictee experiences or coping strategies but rather serve to focus the research on lack of social support by asking people about some of the alternatives they are driven too. This describes the relationship we see between the sample and the population

The key issue in qualitative sampling is how to focus strategically rather than how to represent a whole population of experiences.

In summary qualitative sampling is generally strategic as opposed to representative. You make the strategic decisions by linking the your sample decisions to

- questions
- theory
- argument you are developing
- analysis type

Through these decisions you select sample categories and the size shape and location of the sample on an ongoing basis as the research process unfolds as your arguments may change and as you organise the data and it begins to have meaning.

Desirable sample size

How many cases or participants can be considered sufficient for a qualitative research project? The experienced researcher will have a general sense of when the coverage of the principal issues being studied is sufficiently comprehensive and in-depth. However, for those of us who have not had such exposure, let us consider in more detail how the experienced researcher is able to perceive when 'enough' material has been gathered. The most commonly applied notion is that of 'theoretical saturation'. As mentioned above, this marks the point at which one stops adding new material because new information being gathered is no longer challenging of contributing to the emerging interpretive understanding, when no new relevant information emerges, when category development is dense and rich, when relations among categories are well established and validated, and when there is a sense that the theoretical account is nearing a complete and adequate form. However, despite this approach, for project or research proposals we are often required be more precise about sample size.

The number of cases selected is partially dependent on the current level of theoretical development in the field of study. In situations where a large and strong body of theory is already available, then the researcher is usually expected to set quite specific research questions to verify of contest certain ideas. Under such circumstances, a small number of cases may be required. However, if you are planning a study around a relatively new or unexplored theme, then it is quite likely that your sample size will have be substantially larger to ensure that the topic is adequately covered and described. Deciding on appropriate sample size is also going to depend on the amount of detail that the proposed research method is likely to generate. For example, conducting in-depth interviews may yield as much as several hours worth of material per respondent, which will enable very detailed accounts to be formed with a smaller number of cases. In contrast, if you plan to use brief semi-structured interviews on attitudes, you may require a larger sample size in order to gather sufficient detail.

In summary, there are no cast-iron rules about sample size and different texts tend to provide a range of different suggestions. Apart from the aforementioned considerations, the sample size is also influenced by the proposed or actual time and budget that the researcher has available.

chapter 7

collecting and generating data

collecting and gathering data

are you mining for facts or generating knowledge?

Do we see the knowledge as already existing in the world as facts that we need to put on a hard hat and go and mine like gold or do we see knowledge being created through social interaction. How we answer this question determines whether we are mining: collecting data (excavation) or generating data (construction).

Qualitative interviewing is generally based on epistemological (what makes up knowledge) assumptions that see knowledge as constructed in a situation through social interaction. I.e. as the researcher you and your interaction make up part of the process of generating data. Interviews therefore generally see knowledge as socially generated and not as simple facts that need to be excavated. Quantitative research in the form surveys may often take the opposite view, i.e. that knowledge can be excavated as facts, and i.e. it is engaging in a process of collecting data rather than generating it. What relevance does this have for the interview? Well it impacts on the kinds of questions you will ask and the type of answers you expect as well as how you will deal with this data in analysis.

Mason (2002) points out that questions that attempt to generate knowledge tend to focus on lived experiences rather than hypothetical scenarios or abstract concepts. As always though you have flexibility you may use mostly questions that attempt to generate social knowledge but also have some that ask people to 'relate' facts about the situation'. It is important though that you know which are which when it comes to analysing your data This is one of the reasons it is critical to write down questions you ask in an interview.

Generating Data

A set of questions asked about water disconnections in a community. If you follow the sequence of questions that hint at what the answers were you see how knowledge around how people perceive power in interacting with local government begins to be *generated in the interaction.*

How did you react when the municipality arrived to disconnect the water?

Can you remember what you were thinking at the time?

Oh I see so when you were chasing the municipal security guard that had been separated from the others what did you intend to do?

How did this make you feel?

If you say for once you felt some power in dealing with the municipality how would you describe experiences of dealing with the officials up to the point of the disconnection teams arriving?

Can you tell me what in your experiences of the two situations is different?

(You might then ask a hypothetical question such as; given that you felt power in direct physical action in stopping the cut off as opposed to negotiating can you give an opinion on how you believe municipalities should be dealt with in the future.)

Collecting Data

Do you think that people in the community feel they have no power in dealing with the municipality?

On a scale of 1-10 rate the violence that took place that day?

Do you think that all local governments are the same?

How should communities deal with the municipality?

From this example you can see that the different focus of the questions may well deliver quite a different understanding of the event and its meaning. The data may well then result in different conclusions or observations being drawn by the researcher. The example also serves to demonstrate how important it is to respond to the social situation and what is being said rather than just going through a list of prepared questions.

gathering and collecting data using primary sources

Several methods can be used to collect primary data. The choice of a method depends upon the purpose of the study, the resources available and the skills of the researcher. There are times when the method most appropriate to achieve the objectives of a study cannot be used because of constraints such as a lack of resources and/or required skills. In such situations you should be aware of the problems these limitations impose on the quality of the data.

In selecting a method of data collection, the socio-economic-demographic characteristics of the study population play an important role: you should know as much as possible about characteristics such as educational level, age-structure, socio-economic status and ethnic background. If possible, it is helpful to know the study population's interest in, and attitude towards, participation in the study. Some populations, for a number of reasons, may not feel either at ease with a particular method of data collection, (such as being interviewed) or comfortable to express opinions in a questionnaire. Furthermore, people with little education may respond differently to certain methods of data collection compared to people with more education.

Another important determinant of the quality of your data is the way the purpose of the study is explained to potential respondents. Whatever method of data collection is used, make sure that respondents clearly understand the purpose and relevance of the study. This is particularly important when you use a questionnaire to collect data because in an interview situation you can answer a respondent's questions but in a questionnaire you will not have this opportunity.

In the following sections each method of data collection is discussed briefly. The purpose of this brief discussion is to consolidate previous knowledge on different methods of data collection and analysis.

observation

Observation is one way to collect primary data. Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place. There are many situations in which observation is the most appropriate method of data collection, for example, when you want to learn about the interaction in a group, study the dietary patterns of a population, ascertain the functions performed by a worker, or study the behaviour or personality traits of an individual. It is also appropriate in situations where full and/or accurate information cannot be elicited by questioning, because respondents either are not co-operative or are unaware of the answers because it is difficult for them to detach themselves from the interaction. In summary, when you are more interested in the behaviour than in the perceptions of individuals, or when subjects are so involved in the interaction that they are unable to provide objective information about it, observation is the best approach to collect the required information.

Types of observation

There are two types of observation:

- participant observation; and
- non-participant observation.

Participant observation is when a researcher participates in the activities of the group being observed in the same manner as its members, with or without their knowing that they are being observed. For example, you might want to examine to study the social life of residents in an informal settlement. You can study aspects of their social life by living as a resident in an informal settlement Alternatively, you might want to study the internal workings of the local police station in a community. You may enlist as a police reservist or join the local community police forum.

Non-participant observation, on the other hand, is when the researcher does not get involved in the activities of the group but remains a passive observer, watching and listening to its activities and drawing conclusions from this. For example, you might want to study the attitude of welfare officials towards pensioners. You may have to join the monthly pension pay out queues in different localities to make your observations. As an observer, watch, follow, and record the activities as they are performed. After making a number of observations, conclusions can be drawn about the attitudes of welfare officials towards pensioners

Problems with using observation as a method of data collection

The use of observation as a method of data collection may present a number of problems, which is not to suggest that all or any of these necessarily prevail in every situation. But as a beginner you should be aware of these problems.

- When individuals or groups become aware that they are being observed, they may change their behaviour. Depending upon the situation, this change could be positive or negative - it may increase or decrease, for example, their productivity - and may occur for a number of reasons. The use of observation in such a situation introduces distortion: what is observed does not represent their normal behaviour.

- There is always the possibility of observer bias. If an observer is biased, he/she can easily introduce bias and there is no easy way to verify the observations and the inferences drawn from them.
- The interpretations drawn from observations may vary from observer to observer.
- There is the possibility of incomplete observation and/or recording, which varies with the method of recording. An observer may watch keenly but at the expense of detailed recording. The opposite problem may occur when the observer takes detailed notes but in doing so, misses some of the interaction.

Situations in which observations can be made

Observations can be made under two conditions:

- natural; and
- controlled.

Observing a group in its natural operation rather than intervening in its activities is classified as observation under natural conditions. Introducing a stimulus to the group for it to react to and observing the reaction is called controlled observation.

Illustration of three-directional rating scale

Aspects of interaction	positive					neutral					negative
	←						→				
Participation	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Rapport	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Aggressiveness	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Withdrawnness	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Friendliness	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Aloofness	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(Source : Kumar, R, 1996 Research Methodology – A step –by –step guide for beginners Sage Publication California

The recording of observation

There are many ways of recording observation. The selection of a method of recording depends upon the purpose of the observation. Keep in mind that each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

- **Narrative**: in this form of recording the researcher records a description of the interaction in his or her own words. Usually, s/he makes brief notes while observing the interaction and soon after the observation makes detailed notes in narrative form. In addition, some researchers may interpret the interaction and draw conclusions from it. The biggest advantage of narrative recording is that it provides a deeper insight into the interaction. However, a disadvantage is that an observer may be biased in his/her observation and, therefore, the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the observation will also be biased. Also, if a researcher's attention is on observing, s/he might forget to record an important piece of interaction, and, obviously, in the process of recording, part of the interaction may be missed. Hence, there is always the possibility of incomplete recording and/or observation. In addition, with different observers the comparability of narrative recording can be a problem.

- **Scales:** at times some observers may prefer to develop a scale in order to rate various aspects of the interaction or phenomenon. The recording is done on a scale developed by the observer/researcher. A scale may be one, two or three directional, depending upon the purpose of the observation. For example, in the scale designed to record the nature of the interaction within a group-there are three directions: positive, negative, and neutral.

- One of the problems with using a scale to record observations is that it does not provide in-depth information about the interaction. In addition, it may suffer from any of the following problems:

  - Unless the observer is extremely confident of his/her ability to assess an interaction, s/he may tend to avoid the extreme positions on the scale, using mostly the central part. The error this tendency creates is called the ***error of central tendency.***

  - Some observers may prefer certain sections of the scale in the same way that some teachers are strict markers and others are not. When observers have a tendency to use a particular part of the scale in recording an interaction, this phenomenon is known as the ***elevation effect.***

  Another type of error that may be introduced is when the way an observer rates an individual on one aspect of the interaction influences the way s/he rates that individual on another aspect of the interaction. Again something similar to this can happen in teaching when a teacher's assessment of the performance of a student in one subject may influence his/her rating of that student's performance in another. This type of effect is known as the halo effect.

- **Categorical recording**-sometimes an observer may decide to record her/his observation using categories. The type and number of categories depend upon the type of interaction and the observer's choice about how to classify the observation. For example: passive/active (two categories); introvert/extrovert (two categories) always/sometimes/never(threecategories);stronglyagree/agree/uncertain/disagree/str ngly disagree (five categories).
  The use of categories to record an observation may suffer from the same problems as those associated with scales.

- **Recording on mechanical devices**-observation can also be recorded on videotape and then analysed. The advantage of taping the interaction is that the observer can see it a number of times before drawing any conclusions, and can invite other professionals to view the tape in order to arrive at more objective conclusions. However, one of the disadvantages is that some people may feel uncomfortable or may behave differently before a camera. Therefore the interaction may not be a true reflection of the situation.

The choice of a particular method for recording your observation is dependent upon the purpose of the observation, the complexity of the interaction and the type of population being observed. It is important to consider these factors before deciding upon the method for recording your observation.

Method theory and practice

The focus group methodology operates on the assumption that by collecting people together to discuss a certain term or concept the interaction not just of researcher and respondent as in the interview for example but other people present, tends to create meaning and a way of building understanding both for the facilitator /researcher as well as the participants. A focus group is led by a facilitator but the role of the facilitator is not simply to ask questions and record the answers but to regulate the flow of ideas and information through the group influencing the direction whether necessary to lend focus but not as far as possible determining the outcomes.

This is in itself a skill that requires practice as there is a natural tendency when standing in front of a group of people to lead and a group of people has a natural tendency to want to be led in artificial situations such as this. Think of when this workshop started as we get going everyone looks to the front for direction. So what are we going to do today seems to be the question on everybody's lips. At this point where do you believe power is resting in the room? The process of facilitation is really about shifting that power or energy back to the people in the group in a way that still meets the broad objectives of people coming together in the first place.

Two things can be learnt about facilitation. The first is often said and seldom practiced and that is that the facilitator is responsible for the process but participants are responsible for the outcome. It is probably important to try to explain this openly when facilitating any kind of group session and keep explaining it throughout the process. So if you were starting off a focus group session it is useful top clarify the purpose of the gathering and the areas of broad discussion but stressing that where the discussion goes and what comes out of the discussion is really their responsibility and what they bring to the research. People are experts of their own experience.

The second truism is to trust the process. By this is meant, don't be too directive. You are there to focus peoples thinking and interaction around a topic. Where that takes them and how they get there is up to the interaction, of which it is always too complex to direct every last element. Besides if you did you may as well then just interview yourself. As the facilitator you are responsible for the process but that is about focussing things when they are drifting into irrelevant paths such as a bilateral discussion between two participants that has no real bearing on the topic, or intervening if it seems that destructive conflict is brewing. It is also about ensuring participation by all and that one or two parties are not dominating the whole discussion and others just following along. Whilst this is bad education practice it is especially problematic in a research setting.

This is not to say that no preparation is necessary for running a focus group. It is not simply a matter of turning up reading a research question and saying, ok who wants to start? Like the process of preparing an interview you need to focus your theoretical and methodological thoughts, know your key concepts and their operationalisation etc. How will you introduce issues for discussions? What issues need to be pursued when they emerge in discussions. How are people likely to engage with the issues and what sort of language and operationalisation will they bring to the concepts.

Facilitating a focus group is also a lot more to manage than an interview as you are now dealing with multiple interactions looking for cues and links to bring focus to the discussion. You should also be taking notes although with a focus group it is suggested that you make use of some sort of recording equipment, as it is extremely difficult to record and facilitate simultaneously. A practical hint video is better for focus groups as you can recognise who is saying what. If you are only using a tape recorder remember to get participants to introduce themselves first every time they speak as you may not recognise who is speaking simply from the voice when you play the session back later.

Are you mining for facts or generating knowledge?

Before we start to interview people and record their answers to our questions there is an important theoretical question to deal with. Do we see the knowledge as already existing in the world as facts that we need to put on a hard hat and go and mine like gold or do we see knowledge being created through social interaction. How we answer this question determines whether we are mining; collecting data (excavation)) or generating data (construction).

The focus group tends to come down squarely on the side of generating data. If you are simply collecting data through the focus group it would probably just be better to give a couple of questionnaires out. The interaction process is fundamental to constructing the meaning that is interpreted into data. Very little literal data emerges from focus groups where the only real function of a focus group in collecting literal data is to check reliability of responses internally. For example interviewing a group of shop stewards in a plant and asking how many hours of overtime are worked a month. If one respondent answered 23 hours you can use other participants by questioning them directly to assess how accurate the figure is.

Focus group interviewing is generally based on epistemological (what makes up knowledge) assumptions that see knowledge as constructed in a situation through social interaction. I.e. as the researcher you and your interaction make up part of the process of generating data. Interviews therefore generally see knowledge as socially generated

and not as simple facts that need to be excavated. Quantitative research in the form surveys may often take the opposite view, i.e. that knowledge can be excavated as facts, and i.e. it is engaging in a process of collecting data rather than generating it. What relevance does this have for the focus group? Well it impacts on the kinds of questions you will ask and the type of answers you expect as well as how you will deal with this data in analysis.

Mason (2002) points out that questions that attempt to generate knowledge tend to focus on lived experiences rather than hypothetical scenarios or abstract concepts. In a focus group participants share experiences that tend to spark other experiences and, as these are collected through the facilitator, understanding of the issues in the group tends to grow. The focus group itself can serve as a valuable tool to conscientise people and hence is frequently used in participatory action research methodologies.

life histories

Life history research is a full-length account of a person's life expressed in his or her own words. Typically, the life history will be gathered over a number of years with guidance from the researcher, with the subject either writing down episodes of life or tape recording them. One of the basic characteristics of this method is a concern with the subjective reality of the individual. Based on a belief that the subject's life can only be properly understood by entering into his or her cultural system (way of organising the world), life history research offers a framework through which the meaning of human experience is revealed in personal accounts. It gives the researcher access to how individuals create and portray the social world they live in. This method is thus especially useful for providing an inside view of a culture. It is a deliberate attempt to define the growth of a person in a cultural setting and make sense of it. Apart from intimately entering the individual's subjective reality, the life history method is appropriate for documenting the confusions, ambiguities and contradictions that characterise our daily lives. It does not try to impose order or rationality upon the individual's experiences and view of the world. The method also favours totality of experience, rather than cutting up, selecting and organising material.

Data can be generated from interviews and personal documents such as letters, journals and diaries. Most of the data collected in a life history should be channelled to some extent before progressing with analysis. Apart from arranging the material in chronological order, the data can be also be organised and presented according to the dimensions of the person's life, as well as the main turning points and the events between the turning points.

One advantage of the life history method is its ability to provide specific information about events and customs of the past, showing how the individual interacts with the culture, studying cultural changes that have occurred over time, learning about cultural deviance, and gaining an insider's perspective of a culture. It is also rich source material for developing hypotheses that can be tested in later studies. One of the major problems with the method is the absence of accepted principles for selecting participants. Life history research does not provide representative cases and may thus produce findings that are not typical. However, it should be recognised that, in general, the concern for context tends to outweigh the concern for generalised findings in qualitative studies.

Another potential problem is the authenticity of the material. While issues of authenticity are seldom raised about data that has been collected orally or requested from informants, the authenticity of unsolicited documentation, such as diaries and letters, has to be determined when they are used. Similarly, there is a possibility that distortion or deception could occur in the life history if, for instance, the subject has reason to exaggerate the reconstructed event or situation. These possibilities can be addressed by consulting official records to verify the subject's account against written documents and archival material. Interviewing other people in the subject's life, such as friends, could also corroborate the events discussed in the life history.

visual methods

Sociologists and anthropologists tend to use film, video and photography as a way of recording and documenting the social life of the group under study. Such visual methods are becoming increasingly important qualitative research tools. Films can provide visual records of events and can be used as permanent resources. Filming is a powerful way of studying past events and it has the ability to capture situations with apparent objectivity, although always from the perspective of the filmmaker. Research film methodology requires that the time, place and subject are well documented, as well as the photographer's purpose and interests.

Since a huge wealth of visual material emerges from even small natural events, and given the fact that a complete record of any such event is not practically feasible, some form of sampling needs to occur. There are essentially three major forms this can take: opportunity, programmed and digressive sampling. Opportunity sampling occurs when the photographer decides to record unexpected or poorly understood phenomena as they unfold. Filming based on programmed sampling involves deciding in advance which events are likely to be important and should therefore be recorded. Finally, digressive sampling is a deliberate attempt on the part of the photographer to search for places and events that are interesting, novel and usually beyond typical public understanding.
On the positive side, film can be especially helpful in terms of discovering and validating, since it records nonverbal communication and actions such as facial expressions or emotions. It can also preserve activity and change in its original form, which allows interpretations of information to be validated by other researchers. On the negative side, these visual methods are limited by issues of observer identity and possible bias in that the photographer's own interests will determine what is filmed. In addition, film is expensive and beyond the budgetary limits of many research budgets and requires special expertise on the part of the researcher.

Practical tips for conducting focus groups

Group interviews generally involve a degree of risk and unpredictability. While they can be very successful in eliciting a wealth of information at a low cost, they may sometimes be failure. If members of the group are not *comfortable* with each other, if a single individual dominates discussion or if the topic stimulates little interest then little of value will emerge. It is also important that group is as *homogenous* as possible in terms of sex, educational background, economic and marital status and other relevant characteristics. This homogeneity will reduce the danger that discussion is inhibited by considerations of status or hierarchy. The *choice of venue* for the discussion is one important practical consideration. It should be informal and congenial. It is important to make provisions for refreshment or attendants to take of young children.

The performance of the moderator is vital to the success of a group. The task does not require high academic qualification skills but good communication skills. It is important that you, as the moderator:

- Do not convey the impression of being an expert. However, you should be familiar with the subject matter.
- Remain objective. Do not allow your opinions to become apparent.
- Encourage all to participate and do not allow one person to dominate.
- Encourage discussion between participants.
- Control the time allocated to each topic.
- Be sensitive to new information and ensure that these are discussed in depth.

Interviewing is a commonly used method of collecting information from people. In many walks of life we collect information through different forms of interaction with others. Any person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview. on the one hand interviewing can be very flexible, when the interviewer has the freedom to formulate questions as they come to mind around the issue being investigated, and on the other hand it can be inflexible, when the investigator is to keep strictly to the questions decided beforehand. Interviews are classified according to the degree of flexibility as:

- unstructured; and
- structured.

Unstructured interviews

In an unstructured interview, also known as an in-depth interview, the interviewer develops a framework, called an interview guide, within which to conduct the interview. Within this structure the interviewer formulates questions spontaneously during an interview. Unstructured interviews can be carried out in a one-to-one situation or collectively with a group of respondents (called group interviews or focused group interviews).

This approach to data collection is extremely useful in situations where either in-depth information is needed or little is known about the area. The flexibility allowed to the interviewer in what s/he asks of a respondent can elicit extremely rich information. As it provides in-depth information, many researchers use this technique for constructing a structured research instrument. On the other hand, since an interview guide does not list specific questions to be asked of respondents, the comparability of questions asked and responses obtained may become a problem. As the researcher gains experience during the interviews, the questions asked of respondents change, hence, the type of information obtained from those who are interviewed at the beginning may be markedly different from that obtained from those interviewed towards the end. Also, this freedom can introduce investigator bias into the study, using an interview guide as a means of data collection requires much more skill on the part of the investigator than does using a structured interview.

Structured interviews

In a structured interview the researcher asks a predetermined set of questions, using the same wording and order of questions as specified in the interview schedule. An interview schedule is a written list of questions, open or closed-ended, prepared for use by an interviewer, in a person-to-person interaction (this may be face-to-face, by telephone or by other electronic media). Note that an interview schedule is a research tool/instrument for collecting data, whereas interviewing is a method of data collection.

One of the main advantages of the structured interview is that it provides uniform information, which assures the comparability of data. Structured interviewing requires fewer interviewing skills than does unstructured interviewing.

preparing for an interview

A great deal of intellectual preparation is needed for qualitative interviews. As you will not have a structured questionnaire, you will need to develop a system to help you make on the spot decisions on your next question in each interview. While these decisions will need to be made quickly they will need to strategic and considered in line with your research objectives. It is therefore necessary that your decisions be based on your intellectual puzzle and your research questions. It is important that you are able to recognise issues that are relevant to your research questions and are able to pursue an appropriate line of questioning in your interviews.

The following diagram is meant as a guide of the procedure that you may follow to plan for your qualitative interviews. It will give you an idea of the type of work that is necessary for you to do to prepare for your interviews.

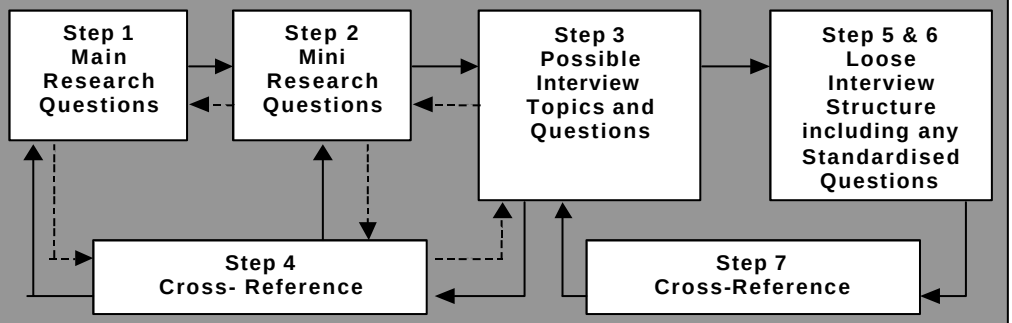
In-depth interviewing

In-depth interviewing is a data collection method that is relied upon extensively and is both informal and unstructured in nature, with the purpose of learning about the participant's perspective and experiences. In-depth interviews adopt a conversational style rather than having a question-answer format. They may be conducted with key informants. Key informants are people in the community who are knowledgeable about the topic of interest and about local cultural beliefs. The researchers establish a special rapport with these informants who will provide general information The in-depth interview differs from most interviews in that it is an open interview allowing respondents to speak for themselves rather than providing predetermined hypothesis-driven questions. Typically, the researcher has a list of topics to cover in the interview, which are developed in the form of an interview guide. Respondents are given substantial freedom to express their opinions concerning the topics of interest, and are given the chance to convey their perceptions and experiences in a context important to them. Consequently, this method enables the researcher to examine select issues in greater detail and depth. This interview method allows for greater flexibility in questioning the respondent. Re-

searchers have the opportunity to explore unanticipated issues, probe when insufficient information is provided, clarify ambiguous issues or inconsistencies, and pose questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. They are also able to observe non-verbal behaviour, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the respondent's emotional state.
With particularly complex or sensitive topics, it may be advisable to conduct repeated interviews with the same respondent to build trust and rapport. The aim is to elicit as much narrative as possible. The emphasis is on getting people's own perspectives on events or episodes of illnesses and on gaining a rich description of the context and situations in which these events and actions occur. Repeat contact with the same respondents may be useful to obtain a deeper understanding of underlying motives of behaviour. They give the researcher ample opportunity to probe for explanations, resolve apparent contradictions and obtain additional examples of events or actions.

Interviews may be tape-recorded, written down in the form of notes or both methods may be used. Where notes are taken these need to be expanded as soon as possible after the end of the interview. There are advantages of the tape recorder because it allows the researcher the opportunity to listen to the flow of discussion and the exact vocabulary used by informants. However, it may be regarded as intrusive and disrupt the nature flow of discussion especially when talking about sensitive issues. In-depth interviews produce a very large amount of information for each respondent and methods of recording and analysis may be time consuming. Data interpretation also demands a high level of skills.

Overview of the planning and preparation procedure for qualitative research interviews



Step 1
List the main research questions that the study is designed to explore

Step 2
Break down the main research questions into 'mini' research questions. The links between the main and mini questions must be clearly defined, for example, in a numbered format or a flow chart.

Step 3
Develop ideas on how it might be possible to get to relevant issues for each mini research question. This will mean converting you main and mini questions into possible interview topics and questions. The process of developing these topics and questions will prepare you to keep your interview in line with your research questions. Again, make sure that your interview topics and questions are clearly linked to your main and mini questions.

Step 4
Cross-reference each step so far so that each main research question has mini research questions and each of these has interview topics and questions. Make sure that your cross-reference works in reverse so that your interview topics and questions are appropriate to your mini research questions and these are relevant to your main research questions.

Step 5
Start to develop a loose structure for each of your interviews. While this should be flexible and variable, it should provide a guide to the type of issues and questions you will want to raise.

Step 6
Work out whether you want to ask any standardised questions to all of the people that you are going to interview, for example back ground questions such as age or employment status.

Step 7
Cross-reference your structu re to make sure that it adequately covers and is appropriate to your possible topics and questions.

Mason (2002)

A questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. In questionnaire respondents read the questions, interpret what is expected and then write down the answers. The only difference between an interview schedule and a questionnaire is that, in the former it is the interviewer who asks the questions (and if necessary, explains them), and records the respondent's replies on an interview schedule. This distinction is important in accounting for the respective strengths and weaknesses of the two methods.

In the case of a questionnaire, as there is no one to explain the meaning of questions to respondents, it is important those questions are clear and easy to understand. Also, the layout of a questionnaire should be such that it is easy to read and pleasant to the eye and the sequence of questions should be easy to follow. A questionnaire should be developed in an interactive style. This means respondent should feel as if someone is talking to them. In a questionnaire, a sensitive question or a question respondents may feel hesitant about answering should appear earlier by an interactive statement explaining the relevance of the question. It is a good idea to use a different font for these statements to distinguish them from the actual questions.

The different ways of administering a questionnaire

- **The mailed questionnaire-**the most common approach to collecting information is to send the questionnaire to prospective respondents by mail. Obviously this approach presupposes that you have access to their addresses. Usually it is a good idea to send a pre-paid, self-addressed envelope with the questionnaire as this might increase the response rate. A mailed questionnaire must be accompanied by a covering letter (see below for details). One of the major problems with this method is the low response rate. In the case of an extremely low response rate, the findings have extremely limited applicability to the population studied.
  The contents of the covering letter

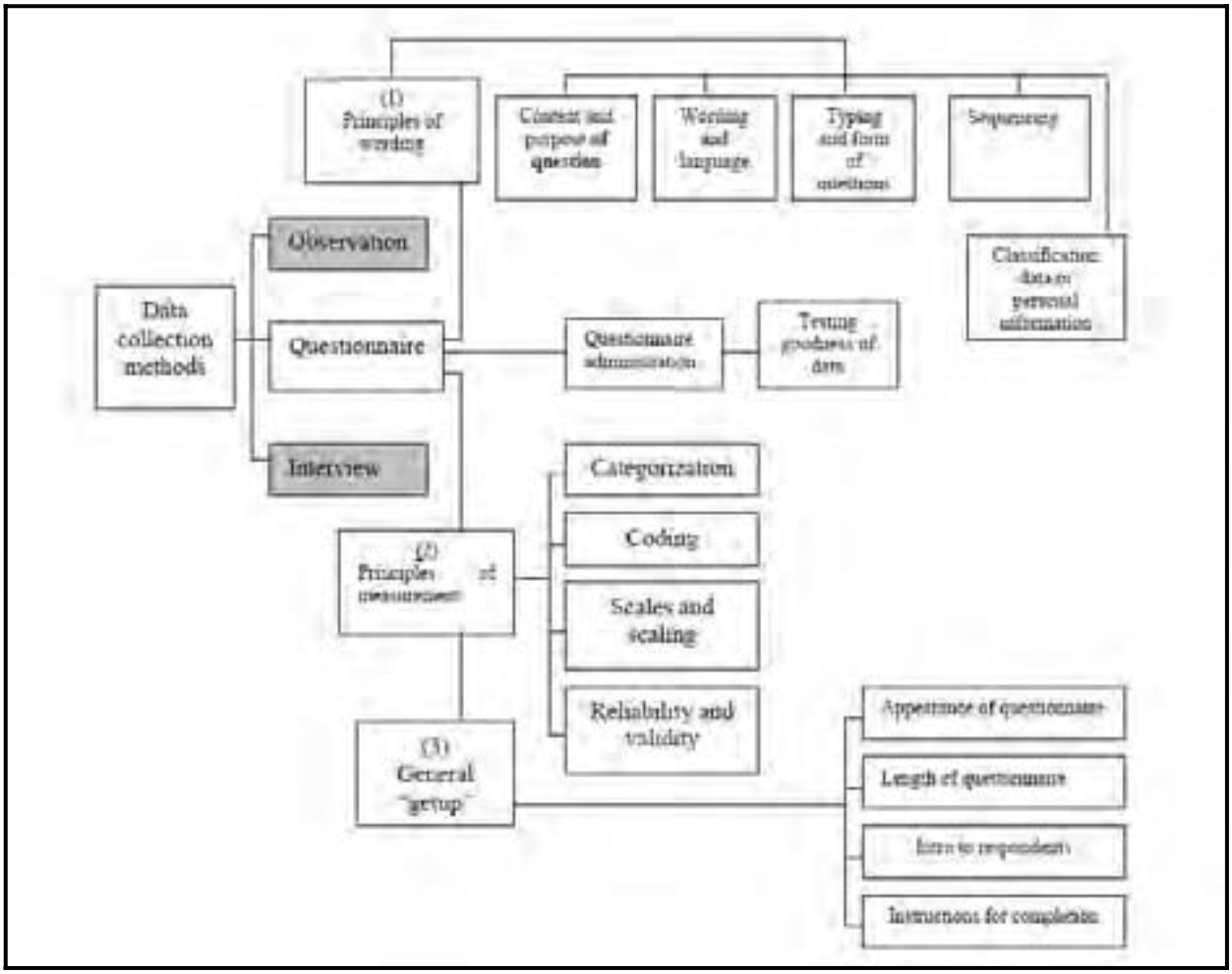
  It is essential that you write a covering letter with your mailed questionnaire. It should very briefly:

  - introduce you and the institution you are representing;
  - describe in two or three sentences the main objectives of the study;
  - explain the relevance of the study;
  - convey any general instructions;
  - indicate that participation in the study is voluntary-if recipients do not want to respond to the questionnaire, they have the right not to;
  - assure respondents of the anonymity of the information provided by them;
  - provide a contact number in case they have any questions;
  - give a return address for the questionnaire and a deadline for its return., and thank them for their participation in the study.

- **Collective administration**-one of the best ways of administering a questionnaire is to obtain a captive audience such as students in a classroom, people attending a function, participants of a program or people assembled in one place. This ensures a very high response rate as you will find very few people refuse to participate in your study. Also, as you have personal contact with the study population, you can explain the purpose, relevance and importance of the study and can clarify any questions that respondents may have. If you have a captive audience for your study, don't miss the opportunity-it is the quickest way of collecting data and you save money on postage.

- **Administration in a public place**-sometimes you can administer a questionnaire in a public place such as a shopping centre, clinic, hospital, school, or shebeen. Of course this depends upon the type of study population you are looking for and where it is likely to be found. Usually the purpose of the study is explained to potential respondents as they approach and their participation in the study is requested. Apart from being slightly more time-consuming, this method has all the advantages of administering a questionnaire collectively.

Illustration: Principles of Questionnaire Design



choosing between an interview schedule and a questionnaire

The choice between a questionnaire and an interview schedule is important and should be considered thoroughly as the strengths and weaknesses of the two methods can affect the validity of the findings. The nature of the investigation and the socio-economic-demographic characteristics of the study population are central in this choice. The selection between an interview schedule and a questionnaire should be based upon the following criteria.

- **The nature of the investigation**-if the study is about issues that respondents may feel reluctant to discuss with a researcher, a questionnaire may be the better choice as it ensures anonymity. This may be the case with studies on drug use, sexuality, and indulgence in criminal activities and personal finances. However, there are situations where better information about sensitive issues can be obtained by interviewing respondents. It depends on the type of study population and the skills of the interviewer.
- **The geographical distribution of the study population**-if potential respondents are scattered over a wide geographical area, you have no choice but to use a questionnaire, as interviewing in these circumstances would be extremely expensive.
- **The type of study population**-if the study population is illiterate, very young or very old, or handicapped, there may be no option but to interview respondents.

The advantages of a questionnaire

- It is **less expensive** as you do not interview respondents, you save time and human and financial resources. The use of a questionnaire, therefore, is comparatively convenient and inexpensive. Particularly, when it is administered collectively to a study population, it is an extremely inexpensive method of data collection.

- It offers greater **anonymity** as there is no face-to-face interaction between respondents and interviewer, this method provides greater anonymity. In some situations when sensitive questions are asked it helps to increase the likelihood of obtaining accurate information.

The disadvantages of a questionnaire

- **Limited application**-one main disadvantage is that its application is limited to a study population that can read and write. It cannot be used on a population that is illiterate, very young, very old, or handicapped.

- **A low response rate**- - i.e., people fail to return them. If you plan to use a questionnaire, keep in mind that because not everyone will return their questionnaire, your sample size will in effect be reduced. The response rate depends upon a number of factors: the interest of the sample in the topic of the study; the layout and length of the questionnaire; the quality of the letter explaining the purpose and relevance of the study; and the methodology used to deliver the questionnaire. You should consider yourself lucky to obtain a 50 per cent response rate and sometimes it may be as low as 20 per cent. However, as mentioned, the response rate is not a problem when a questionnaire is administered in a collective situation.

- **Self-selecting bias**-not everyone who receives a questionnaire returns it, so there is a self-selecting bias. Those who return their questionnaire may have attitudes, attributes or motivations that are different from those who do not. Hence, if the response rate is very low, the findings may not be representative of the total study population.

- **Lack of opportunity to clarify issues**-if, for any reason, respondents do not understand some questions, there is no opportunity for them to have the meaning clarified. If different respondents interpret questions differently, this will affect the quality of the information provided.

- **Spontaneous responses are not allowed for**-mailed questionnaires are inappropriate when spontaneous responses are required, as a questionnaire gives them time to reflect before answering.

- **The response to a question may be influenced by the response to other questions**-as respondents can read all the questions before answering (which usually happens), the way they answer a particular question may be affected by their knowledge of other questions.

- **It is possible to consult others**-with mailed questionnaires respondents may consult other people before responding. In situations where an investigator wants to find out only the study population's opinions, this method may be inappropriate, though requesting respondents to express their own opinion may help.

- **A response cannot be supplemented with other information**-an interview can sometimes be supplemented with information from other methods of data collection like observation. However, a questionnaire lacks this advantage.

The advantages of the interview

- **The interview is more appropriate for complex situations** - it is the most appropriate approach for studying complex and sensitive areas as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a respondent before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to respondents in person.

- **It is useful for collecting in-depth information**-in an interview situation, it is possible for an investigator to obtain in-depth information by probing. Hence, in situations where in-depth information is required, interviewing is the preferred method of data collection.

- **Information can be supplemented**-an interviewer is able to supplement information obtained from responses with those gained from observation of non-verbal reactions.

- **Questions can be explained**-it is less likely that a question will be misunderstood as the interviewer can either repeat a question or put it in a form that is understood by the respondent.

- **Interviewing has a wider application**-an interview can be used with almost any type of population: children, handicapped, illiterate or the very old.

The disadvantages of the interview

- **Interviewing is time-consuming and expensive-**this is especially so when potential respondents are scattered over a wide geographical area. But if there is a place (e.g. an office, hospital or agency) where potential respondents come to obtain a service, interviewing them in that setting may be less expensive and less time-consuming.

- **The quality of data depends upon the quality of the interaction** -in an interview the quality of interaction between an interviewer and interviewee is likely to affect the quality of the infomation obtained. Because the interaction in each interview is unique, the quality of the responses obtained from different interviews may vary significantly.

- **The quality of data depends upon the quality of the interviewer**- in an interview situation the quality of the data generated is affected by the experience, skills and commitment of the interviewer.

- **The quality of data may vary when many interviewers are used-**use of multiple interviewers may magnify the problems identified in the two previous points.

- The researcher may introduce his/her bias-researcher bias in the framing of questions and the interpretation of responses is always possible.

- **The interviewer may be biased**-if the interviews are conducted by a person or persons, paid or voluntary, other than the researcher, it is also possible that they may exhibit bias in the way they interpret responses, select response categories or choose words to summarise respondents' expressed opinions.

forms of questioning

The form and wording of questions is extremely important in a research instrument as they have an effect on the type and quality of information obtained. The questions should therefore be appropriate, relevant and free from any of the problems discussed under 'considerations in formulating questions'. This section discusses open-ended and closed-ended questions, which are both commonly used in the social sciences.

In an open-ended question the possible responses are not given. In the case of a questionnaire, the respondent writes down the answers in his/her words whereas in the case of an interview schedule the investigator records the answers either verbatim or a in summary describing a respondent's answer. In a closed-ended question the possible answers are set out in the questionnaire or schedule and the respondent or the investigator ticks the category that best describes the respondent's answer. It is usually wise to provide a category, 'other/please explain' to accommodate any response not listed.

The questions in the example below are classified as closed-ended questions. The same questions could be asked as open-ended questions (refer to the following example).

Example of questions classified close-ended

A. Please indicate your age by placing a tick in the appropriate category.

Under 15	1
15 – 19	2

B. How would you describe your current marital status?

Married	1
Single	2
Divorced	3
Separated	4

C. What is your average annual income?

Under R10 000	1
R10 000 – R19 999	2
R20 000 – R29 999	3
R30 000 – R39 999	4
R40 000 >	5

OR

Examples of closed-ended question

D. How would you categorise your average annual income?

Above Average	1

Average	2
Below Average	3

E. What, in your opinion, are the qualities of a good councillor?

Able to make decisions	1
Fast decision maker	2
Able to listen	3
Impartial	4
Skilled in interpersonal communication	5

Other, please specify: _____

_____

Example of Open-ended questions

A. What is your current age?_____ Years

B. How would you describe your current marital status? _____

C. What is your average annual income? _____

D. What, in your opinion, are the qualities of a good councillor?

1_____

2_____

3_____

4_____

5_____

When deciding whether to use open-ended or closed-ended questions to obtain information about a variable, visualise how you plan to use the information generated. This is important because the way you frame your questions determines the unit of measurement by which the responses will be classified. In turn the unit of measurement dictates what statistical procedures can be applied to the data and the way the information can be analysed and displayed.

Let us take, as an example, the question about the variable, 'income'. In closed-ended questions income can be qualitatively recorded in categories such as 'above average/average/below average', or quantitatively, in categories such as 'under R10 000/R10 000-R19 999/...'.Your choice will affect the unit of measurement for income, which in turn will affect the application of statistical procedures. For example, you cannot calculate the average income of a person from the responses of questions in an open ended form nor can you calculate the median or mode category of income. But from the responses to question (C) in the close ended category, you can accurately calculate the mode category of income. However, the average and the median income cannot be accurately calculated (such calculations are usually made under certain assumptions). From the responses to question (C) the different descriptors of income can be calculated very accurately. In addition, information on income can be displayed in any form. The same is true for any other information obtained in response to open and closed-ended questions.

Both open-ended and closed-ended questions have their advantages and disadvantages in different situations. To some extent, their advantages and disadvantages depend upon whether they are being used in an interview or in a questionnaire and on whether they are being used to seek information about facts or opinions. As a rule, closed-ended questions are extremely useful for eliciting factual information and open-ended questions for seeking opinions, attitudes and perceptions. The choice of open or closed ended questions should be made according to the purpose for which the information is to be used, the type of study population from which information is going to be obtained, the method proposed for communicating the findings and the readership.

The advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questions

- Open-ended questions provide in-depth information if used in an interview by an experienced interviewer. In a questionnaire, open-ended questions can provide a wealth of information provided respondents feel comfortable about expressing their opinions and are fluent in the language used. On the other hand, analysis of open-ended questions is more difficult. The researcher usually needs to go through another process-content analysis-in order to classify the data.

- In a questionnaire, open-ended questions provide respondents with the opportunity to express themselves freely, resulting in a greater variety of information. Thus respondents are not 'conditioned' by having to select answers from a list. The disadvantage of free choice is that, in a questionnaire, some respondents may not be able to express themselves, so information can be lost.

- As open-ended questions allow respondents to express themselves freely, they virtually eliminate the possibility of investigator bias (investigator bias is introduced through the response pattern presented to respondents). On the other hand, there is a greater chance of interviewer bias in open ended questions.

The advantages and disadvantages of closed ended questions

- One of the main disadvantages of closed-ended questions is that the information obtained through them lacks depth and variety.

- There is a greater possibility of investigator bias because the researcher may list only the response patterns that he/she is interested in or those that come to mind. Even if the category of 'other' is offered, most people will usually select from the given responses, so the findings may still reflect the researcher's bias.

- In a questionnaire, the given response patterns for a question could condition the thinking of respondents, so the answers provided may not truly reflect respondents' opinions. Rather, they may reflect the extent of agreement or disagreement with the researcher's opinion or analysis of a situation.

- The case of answering a ready-made list of responses may create a tendency among some respondents and interviewers to tick a category or categories without thinking through the issue.

- Closed-ended questions, as they provide 'ready made' categories within which respondents reply to the questions asked by the researcher, help to ensure that the information needed by the researcher is obtained.

- Because the possible responses are already categorised, they are easy to analyse.

considerations in formulating questions

The wording and tone of your questions is important because the information and its quality largely depend upon these factors. It is therefore important to be careful about the way you formulate questions. Some considerations to keep in mind when formulating questions are as follows.

- **Always use simple and everyday language**-your respondents may not be highly educated, and even if they are, they still may not know some of the 'simple' technical jargon that you are used to. Particularly in a questionnaire, take extra care to use words that your respondents will understand as you will have no opportunity to explain questions to them. A pre-test should show you what is and what is not understood by your respondents. For example:
  'Is anyone in your family a kleptomaniac?'

  In this question many respondents, even some who are well educated, will not understand 'kleptomaniac' and, hence, may answer the question wrongly or not at all.

- **Do not use ambiguous questions**- an ambiguous question is one that contains more than one meaning and that can be interpreted differently by different respondents. This will result in different answers, making it difficult if not impossible, to draw any valid conclusions from the information. The following questions fall in this category:
  'Did your pregnancy make it difficult for you to continue with your studies because you are expecting a baby?'
  'Are you satisfied with the service you get at the Spaza shop?'

  This question is also ambiguous as it does not ask respondents to indicate the aspects of the Spaza Shop with which they may be satisfied or dissatisfied. Is it with the service, the prices, the physical facilities, the attitude of the owner or the quality of the food? Respondents may have any one of these aspects in mind when they answer the question.

- **Do not ask double-barrelled questions**-a double-barrelled question is a question within a question. The main problem with this type of question is that one does not know which particular question a respondent has answered. Some respondents may answer both 'questions' and others, only one of them.
  'How often and how much time does your Inkosi spend in community consultations on matters concerning service delivery in your area?'

  The question has two parts: how often do the Inkosis meets with the community and how much time he spends on each contact? In this type of question some respondents may answer the first part whereas others may answer the second and some may answer both parts. Incidentally, this question is also ambiguous in that it does not specify 'how often' in terms of a period of time. Is it in a week, a fortnight, a month or a year?

- **Do not ask leading questions**-a leading question is one which, by its contents, structure or wording, leads a respondent to answer in a certain direction. Such questions are judgmental and lead respondents to answer either positively or negatively.
  "Water disconnection is increasing in your area, isn't it?'
  'Air pollution affects the respiratory system, isn't it?'

  The first problem is that these are not questions but statements. Because the statements are **suggestive** and respondents may feel that to disagree with them is to be in the wrong, especially if they feel that the researcher is an authority and that if she or he is saying that "disconnection is increasing or "air pollution affects the respiratory system", then it must be so. The feeling that there is a 'right' answer can 'force' people to respond in a way that is contrary to their true position.

- **Do not ask questions that are based on presumptions**-in such questions the researcher assumes that respondents fit into a particular category and seeks information based upon that assumption.

  'How many cans of beer you drink in a day?
  'What contraceptives do you use?'

  Both these questions were asked without ascertaining whether or not respondents are beer drinkers or sexually active. In situations like this it is important to first ascertain whether or not a respondent fits into the category about which you are inquiring.

the construction of a research instrument

The construction of a research instrument or tool is the most important aspect of a research project because anything you say by way of findings or conclusions is based upon the type of information you collect, and the data you collect is entirely dependent upon your research instrument. The famous saying about computers-'garbage in garbage out'-is also applicable to data collection. The research tool provides the input into a study and therefore the quality and validity of the output, the findings, are solely dependent upon it.

In spite of its immense importance, to the author's knowledge, no specific guidelines for beginners on how to construct a research tool exist. Participants are left to learn for themselves under the guidance of their research supervisor. The guidelines suggested below outline a broad approach especially for beginners. The underlying principle is to ensure the validity of your instrument by ensuring that the objectives of your study are achieved. Therefore, clearly defined objectives play an extremely important role as each question in the instrument must stem from the objectives, research questions and/or hypotheses of the study.

personal and sensitive questions

In the social sciences, sometimes one needs to ask questions that are of a personal nature. Some respondents may find this offensive. It is important to be aware of this as it may affect the quality of information or even result in an interview being terminated or failure to return questionnaires. Researchers have used a number of approaches to deal with this problem. Which approach is best is a difficult question to answer. It is conceded that no data collection method is superior to other methods for all types of threatening questions. If one accepts the results at face value, each of the data gathering methods is best under certain conditions.

In terms of the best technique for asking sensitive or threatening questions, there appears to be two opposite opinions, and these are that a question of a personal nature should be asked in:

- a direct manner; and
- an indirect manner.

The advantage with the first approach is that one can be sure that an affirmative answer is accurate. Those who advocate the second approach believe that direct questioning is likely to offend respondents and hence they are unlikely to answer even the non-sensitive questions. Some ways of asking personal questions in an indirect manner are as follows:

- drawings or cartoons;
- by asking a respondent to complete a sentence;
- by asking a respondent to sort cards containing statements; and
- by using random devices.

the order of questions

The order of questions in a questionnaire or in an interview schedule is important as it affects the quality of information, the interest and even willingness of a respondent to participate in a study. Again there are two categories of opinions as to the best way to order questions. The first is that questions should be asked in a random order and the second is that they should follow a logical progression based upon the objectives of the study. The author believes that the latter procedure is better as it gradually leads respondents into the themes of the study, starting with simple themes and progressing to complex ones. This approach sustains the interest of respondents and gradually stimulates them to answer the questions. However, the random approach is useful in situations where a researcher wants respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with different aspects of an issue. In this case a logical listing of statements or questions may 'condition' a respondent to the opinions expressed by the researcher through the statements.

prerequisites for data collection

Before you start obtaining information from potential respondents it is important that you make sure of their:

- **motivation to share the required information** - it is essential for respondents to be willing to share information with you. You should make every effort to motivate them by explaining clearly and in simple terms the objectives and relevance of the study, either at the time of the interview or through the questionnaire.

- **clear understanding of the questions**-respondents must understand what is expected of them in the questions. If respondents do no understand a question clearly, the response given may either be wren or irrelevant, or make no sense.

- **possession of the required information**-the third prerequisite is the respondents must have the information sought. This is of particular importance when you are seeking factual or technical information. If respondents do not have the required information, they cannot provide it. In the case of opinions this does not necessarily apply as all of us have opinions.

Using Attitudinal Scales

Broadly, there are three major types of attitudinal scales:

- the summated rating scale, also known as the Likert scale;
- the equal-appearing-interval scale or differential scale, also known as the Thurstone scale; and
- the cumulative scale, also known as the Guttman scale.

As beginners in research and given the short duration of the training programme, it is not possible to discuss all of the above types of scales used in collecting quantitative data. For now, it is important for the participants to familiarize themselves to the Likert Scale of measurement, which is widely used to undertake attitudinal research.

The, Likert scale also known as the summated rating scale, is the easiest to construct. This scale is based upon the assumption that each statement/item on the scale has equal 'attitudinal value', 'importance' or 'weight' in terms of reflecting an attitude towards the issue in question. This assumption is also the main limitation of this scale as statements on a scale seldom have equal attitudinal value.

An example of a scale with statements reflecting varying degrees of attitudes using a five point scale.

No	Attitude	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The implementation of basic water has not benefited the community.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Six kiloliters of water is adequate for household consumption.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The rich should not receive free basic water.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Disconnection of water is against the constitution of the country.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Privatisation of water will lead to an increase in the cost of living.	1	2	3	4	5

It is important to remember that the Likert scale does not measure attitude per se. It does help to place different respondents in relation to each other in terms of the intensity of their attitude towards an issue: it shows the strength of one respondent's view in relation to another.

Constructing a Likert Scale

In developing a Likert scale, there is a number of things to consider. First, decide whether the attitude to be measured is to be classified into one, two or three-directional categories (that is, whether you want to determine positive, negative and neutral positions in the study population) with respect to their attitude towards the issue under study. Next, consider whether you want to use categories or a numerical scale. This should depend upon whether you think that the study population can express itself better on a numerical scale or in categories. The decision about the number of points and the number of categories on a categorical scale depends upon how finely you want to measure the intensity of the attitude in question and on the capacity of the population to make fine distinctions. The first table in this section is an example of a five point categorical scale that is three directional. The table below illustrates a seven point numerical scale that is one directional. Sometimes researchers develop statements reflecting opinion about an issue in varying degrees.

An example of a categorical scale (using a seven point scale)

1	Knows the subject well	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Is enthusiastic about teaching	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3	Shows no concern for participants	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4	Demands too much	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5	Communicates well	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	Knows how to teach	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7	Can explain difficult concepts in simple terms	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8	Seldom shares humour	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9	Is committed to training and research	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10	Believes in what he says	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

An example of a scale with statements reflecting varying degrees of attitudes

The Facilitator

1 Knows the subject ***extremely well***
2 Knows the ***subject well***
3 Has an ***average*** knowledge of the subject
4 Does ***not know*** the subject
5 Has an ***extremely poor*** knowledge of the subject

Calculating attitudinal scores

Suppose you have developed a questionnaire/interview schedule to measure the attitudes of a group of participants in a training workshop towards their facilitator. Also, assume you have decided to use a categorical scale using five categories (a smaller or larger number could also have been used).

In the following example, statement No 1 is a positive statement, hence, if a respondent ticks **'strongly agree'**, s/he is assumed to have a more positive attitude on this item than a person who ticks 'agree'. The person who ticks **'agree'** has a more positive attitude than a person who ticks 'uncertain', and so on. Therefore, a person who ticks **'strongly agree'** has the most positive attitude compared with all of the others with different responses. Hence, the person is given the highest score, 5, as there are only five response categories. If there were four categories you could assign a score of 4. As a matter of fact, any score can be assigned as long as the intensity of the response patter is reflected in the score and the highest score is assigned to the response with the highest intensity.

Statement number 2 is a negative statement. In this case a person who ticks 'strongly disagree' has the most positive attitude on this item, hence, is assigned the highest score, 5. On the other hand a respondent who ticks strongly agree' has the least positive attitude on the item and therefore is assigned the lowest score, 1. The same scoring system is

No	Attitude	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Knows the subject well (+)	5	4	3	2	1
2	Is enthusiastic about teaching (-)	1	2	3	4	5
3	Shows concerns for participants (+)	1	2	3	4	5
4	Makes unreasonable demands (-)	1	2	3	4	5
5	Is difficult to get along with (-)	1	2	3	4	5

SA = strongly agrees A = agree, U = uncertain, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

Calculating the score

To illustrate how to calculate an individual's attitudinal score, let us take the example of two respondents who have ticked the different statements marked in the example by A and B. Let us work out their attitudinal score.

Respondent A= 5 + 5 + 4 + 5 + 4=23
Respondent B = 1 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 7

The analysis shows that, overall, respondent A has a 'more' positive attitude towards the facilitator than respondent B. You cannot say that the attitude of respondent A is three times as positive as that of respondent B. The attitudinal score only places respondents in a position relative to one another. Remember that the Likert scale does not measure the attitude per se but helps you to rate a group of individuals in descending or ascending order with respect to their attitudes towards the issues in question.

Procedure

Step 1 Assemble or construct statements that are reflective of the attitudes towards the main issue in question. Statements should be worded to reflect both positive and negative attitudes towards the issue, that is, they should be for, as well as against, the issue. (If your scale is one-directional, you need only positive statements). Make sure that all the statements have a logical link with the main issue. you also need to decide whether you want respondents to answer in categories or on a numerical scale.

Step 2 Administer the statements to a small group of people.

Step 3 Analyse the responses by assigning a weighting-a numerical value-to the responses. Numerical values are assigned differently to positive and negative statements. For a positive statement the response indicating the most favourable attitude is to be given the highest score. For example, on a five-category or five-point scale, 5 is assigned to the response that indicates the most favourable attitude and 1 to the response which indicates the least favourable attitude. By contrast, a person who agrees strongly with a negative statement indicates that s/he does not have a favourable attitude, hence, the scoring is reversed, i.e., 1 is assigned to the response where a respondent strongly agrees with a negative statement and 5 to the response where s/he strongly disagrees with it.

Step 4 Calculate each respondent's attitudinal score by adding numerical values assigned in step 3 to the responses s/he gave to each statement.

Step 5 Compare all respondents' scores for each item to identify non-discriminative items. Non-discriminative statements do not help you to distinguish respondents with respect to attitude as almost everyone responds to them in the same way.

Step 6 Eliminate non-discriminative items.

Step 7 Construct a questionnaire/interview schedule comprised of the selected statements/items. (*Source*: Kumar R 1996 Research Methodology – A step-by-step guide for beginners Sage California)

Reliability refers to the consistency of the measuring instrument. A test that has used mathematical calculations using, for example, a clock or a measuring stick or device can usually be repeated by a different researcher with a different respondent and the data obtained will be reliable, for example, office desks measured to check conformity with the allocated space per person under the Health and Safety Act. The measurement of the desk should be the same no matter who does the measuring.

The policy researcher needs to strive for the reliability and validity of data, especially data that could have been influenced by the mental or emotional state or the personal circumstance of the respondents. Because the reliability of the data is strong it does not necessarily follow that the validity is also accurate. Validity tells us whether the measuring instrument is measuring what it is supposed to. Validity confirms the truth of the matter and should measure accurately what it sets out to measure. To illustrate this point, there is no point in being very precise about nothing, after all what use is it to tell someone the time by a watch that is always 30 minutes slow. The watch could be described as being reliable but not valid.

It is very important that reliability and validity are carefully considered early in the research process; otherwise the eventual analyses of data could well be meaningless. A research process is reliable if you get similar results each time you repeat it. Research results can be considered reliable if repeated research efforts continually generate similar results. The primary criterion for judging research is reliability because if research is unreliable then questions of validity cannot even be raised. The secondary criterion is validity: If the research is reliable, then we have to consider whether it is valid. We have to consider whether it reflects reality in some meaningful way. Research should be designed in such a way that it is possible for the researcher to find out what is wrong. Research is designed to do two things: provide support for ideas and rule out alternative explanation.

If your ideas will be supported by whatever your research finds, then you are not really asking an empirical question. In this case, you are making a logical argument or are engaged in interpretation. In the past, the idea of falsification was married to a very rigid interpretation of research, one that was based in physical sciences such as chemistry and biology. This “hard science” model plays only a limited role in the social sciences cause of that, the claim make here is much softer than that made by the positivists, who were defending an idealised version of science. All that is meant here is that research cannot presuppose its conclusion and still be considered empirical research
(Source: Coombes H. 2001 Research using IT Palgrave Publishers New York)

Undertaking a Pilot Study – Testing the research instrument for reliability and validity

Apart from the study of the relevant literature and interviews with experts, it is also necessary to obtain a picture of the real practical situation where the prospective investigation will be undertaken. At this stage of the pilot study the researcher should address the goals and objectives, resources, research population, procedures of data collection, the data gathering itself, the fieldworkers, and possible errors which may occur. Preliminary exploratory studies are especially important with a view to the practical planning of the research project, e.g. the transport, finance and time factors.

The pilot study is one way in which the researcher can orientate himself/herself to the project at hand. Prospective researchers are often overly hasty to get to the main investigation, and are therefore inclined to neglect the pilot study. However, the pilot study is indeed a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project. The pilot study forms an integral part of the research process. Its function is the exact formulation of the research problem, and a tentative planning of the modus operandi and range of the investigation. More specifically, the pilot study involves the pre-testing of a measuring instrument. It involves trying it out on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents. Probability does not normally play a role in the pilot study because the researcher does -not plan to generalise the findings. However, the pilot study must take all heterogeneous factors into consideration.

Although a researcher can plan his investigation very carefully and logically, the practical situation will still remain an unknown factor until entered. The pilot study can be viewed as the **"dress rehearsal"** of the main investigation. It is similar to the researcher's planned investigation but on a small scale. Pilot studies are therefore becoming more and more a standard practice in research. By undertaking a careful exploratory study, the researcher can ascertain facts about the neighbourhood where the investigation will be done, e.g. that the area is dangerous after dark and that women are therefore not to be used as fieldworkers under such circumstances. Or, the researcher may find that the homes in the areas to be researched are situated far from one another owing to vacant sites, and that car transport is imperative during the main investigation.

The nature of the problem, the extent to which the problem is known to the researcher, the previous experience of the researcher, and the quantity and quality of the information available on the relevant subject will determine the manner, range and depth of the relevant exploratory study. In reality the researcher should undertake a thorough study, on a small scale, of the real total community where the main investigation will take place.

chapter 8

feildwork

understanding fieldwork

Field research allows us to watch people in natural settings and to engage them in conversation, asking them to explain what it is they are doing. One of the reasons that fieldwork is so valuable to communication scholars is that it is as much about that how people talk as it is about descriptions of their activities. In much of field research, the goal is to understand what people are doing from their perspectives. This makes fieldwork as much a study of conceptualisation as observation.

The need to establish sound initial contacts is obviously of particular importance when the stay of the observer is to be of limited duration. Extended field observations can help build slowly maturing relationships, but with shorter studies first impressions will be crucial - dress, manner, and conduct must be carefully considered. The observer should function in a way that people "must come to see and accept the evaluator as a person (more or less like themselves) rather than as professionals."'

There are different levels of participation implied by this type of study. One extreme is for the observers to become integrated completely, into the community or organization acting, living, and behaving like its members. Such a course is normally not possible in a project context.

The other extreme is for the participation of the observers to not go beyond their physical presence. The obvious limitation of this approach is that the investigator remains primarily an outsider. The members of the community or organization may not reveal their innermost feelings and opinions; indeed, they may not function in a natural manner once they know they that they are being observed.

The desirable middle course requires the observers to be more than passive observers but less than full-fledged members of the group. Although the observer does not act like a member of the community or organization, he participates in its formal and informal activities.

For example, he might assist staff in organizing field demonstrations and meetings, attend staff meetings, and offer suggestions. The advantage of this course is that the observer is able to maintain his independence and yet become useful to the community or organization he is studying,

Practically all organizations and villages have cliques, subgroups, or factions; thus there is always a risk that the observer will arouse suspicion or antagonism among the members *of a* particular faction because he is perceived as being friendly to those of another. A persistent problem faced by many experienced observers is that they tend to be regarded as close to the village elites, so that small farmers, women, and other deprived groups are not candid in expressing their genuine concerns and views.

An observer has three choices about relationships with various factions and social groups. First, he can form a close association with the group considered best able to provide the required information.

Second, the observer can spend time with different groups in the community or organisation. Third, he maintains an independent status from the beginning of the fieldwork. (*Source* : Struwig, 2001)

Sampling the field

Field researchers sample times, situations, types of events, locations, and types of people, or contexts of interest. For example, a researcher samples time by observing a setting at different times. He or she observes at all times of the day, on every day of the week, and in all seasons to get a full sense of how the field site stays the same or changes. It is often best to overlap when sampling (e.g. to have sampling times from 7:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M., from 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M., from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M., etc.).

A researcher samples locations because one location may give depth, but a narrow perspective; sitting or standing in different location helps the researcher to get a sense of the whole site. For example, if a field researcher wants to know how private refuse removal companies collect garbage from a neighbourhood, firstly the researcher must establish the days on which the garbage is removed. Secondly, the researcher needs to ascertain the time of the day in which the private company re-

moves the garbage. Having established this detail, the field researcher makes a decision to observe different locations perhaps before, during and after the removal of the garbage.

Field researchers sample people by focusing their attention or interaction on different kinds of people (old-timers and newcomers, old and young, males and females, leaders and followers). As a researcher identifies types of people, or people with opposing outlooks, he or she tries to interact with and learn about all types.

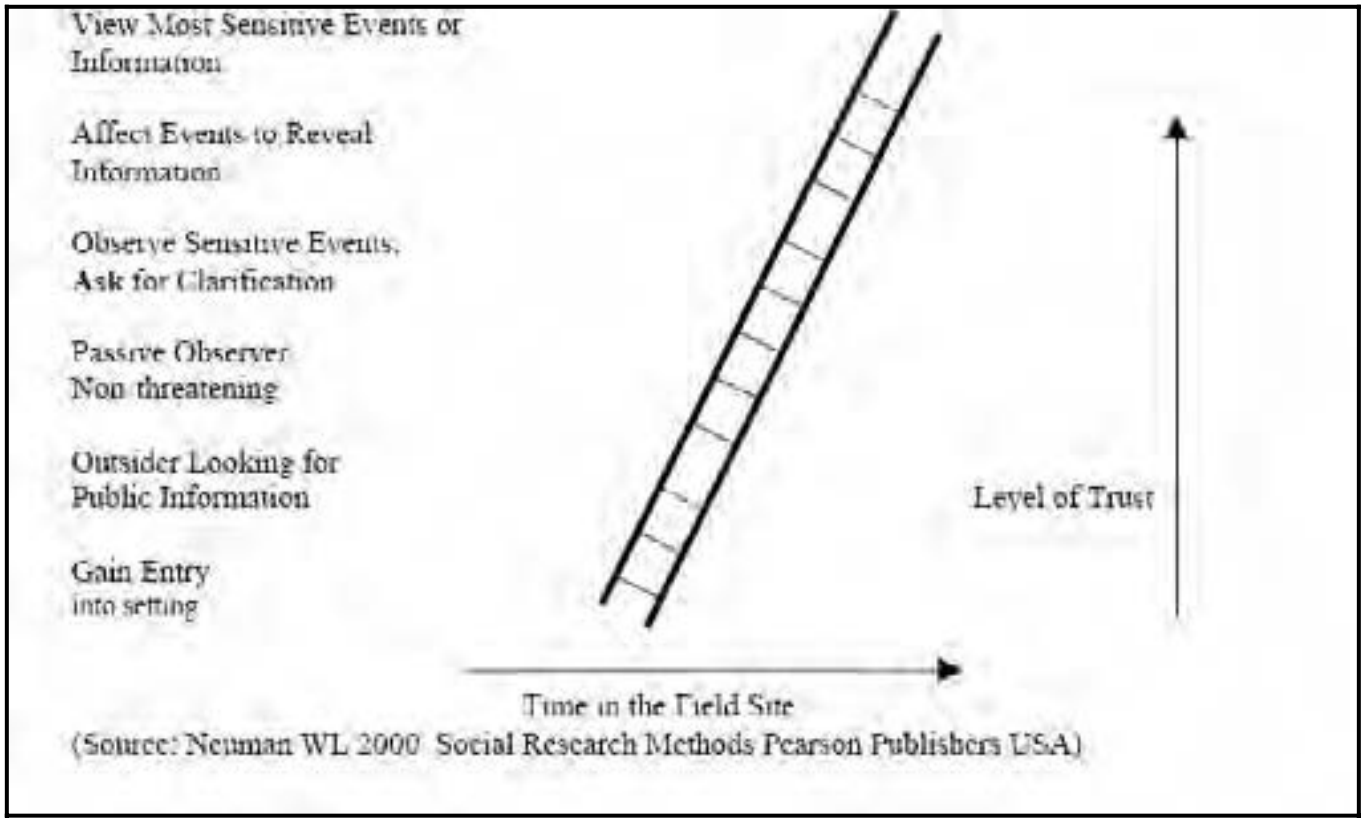
For example, a researcher samples three kinds of field events: routine, special, and unanticipated. Routine events (e.g. opening up a store for business) happen every day and should not be considered unimportant simply because they are routine. Special events (e.g., annual office party) are announced and planned in advance. They focus member attention and reveal aspects of social life not otherwise visible. Unanticipated events are those that just happen to occur while a researcher is present (e.g., unsupervised workers when the manager gets sick and cannot oversee workers at a store for a day). In this case, the researcher sees something unusual, unplanned, or rare by chance.

steps in undertaking field research

- Prepare yourself, read the literature, and defocus.
- Select a field site and gain access to it.
- Enter the field and establish social relations with members.
- Adopt a social role, learn the ropes, and get along with members.
- Watch, listen, and collect quality data.
- Begin to analyze data and to generate and evaluate working hypotheses.
- Focus on specific aspects of the setting and use theoretical sampling.
- Conduct field interviews with member informants.
- Disengage and physically leave the setting.
- Complete the analyses and write the research report.

Note: There is no fixed percentage of time needed for each step. For a rough approximation, it is suggested that, once in the field, the researcher should expect to spend approximately one-sixth of his or her time observing, one-third recording data, one-third of the time analysing data, and one-sixth reporting results (Source: Neuman WL 2000 Social Research Methods

The Field Access Ladder

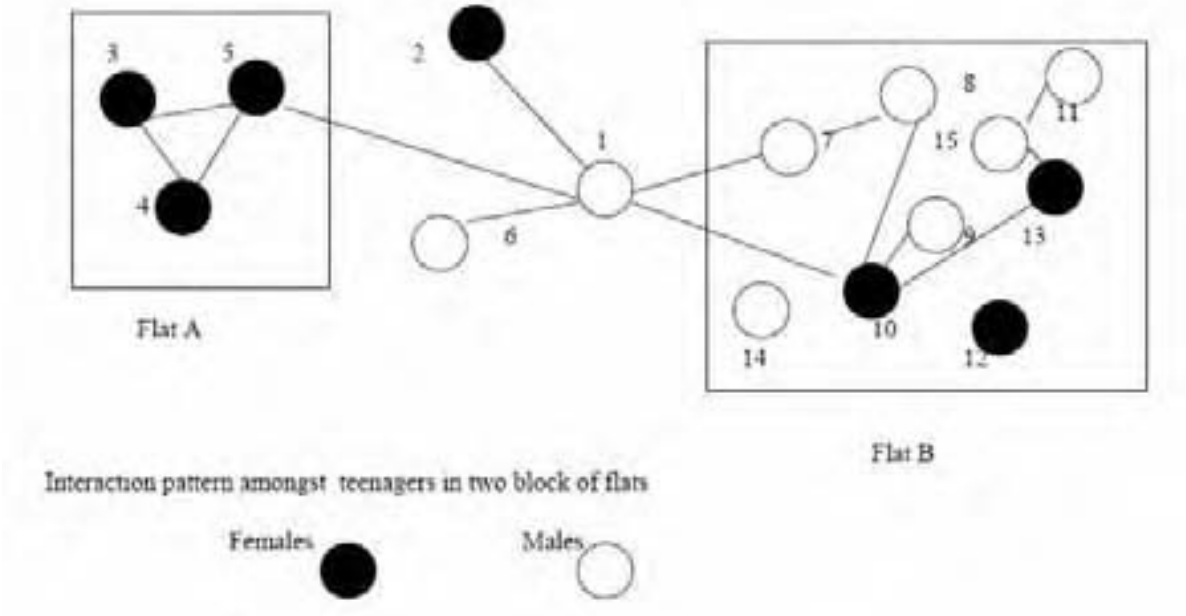


guide to taking field research notes

- Record notes as soon as possible after each period in the field, and do not talk with others until observations are recorded.
- Begin the record of each field visit with a new page, with the date and time noted.
- Use jotted notes only as a temporary memory aid, with key words or terms, or the first and last things said.
- Use wide margins to make it easy to add to notes at any time. Go back and add to the notes if you remember something later.
- Plan to type notes and keep each level of notes separate so it will be easy to go back to them later.
- Record events in the order in which they occurred, and note how long they last (e.g., a 15 minute wait, a one-hour ride).
- Make notes **as** concrete, complete, and comprehensible as possible.
- Use frequent paragraphs and quotation marks. Exact recall of phrases is best, with double quotes; use single quotes for paraphrasing.
- Record small talk or routines that do not appear to be significant at the time; they may become important later.
- "Let your feelings flow" and write quickly without worrying about spelling or "wild ideas." Assume that no one else will see the notes, but use pseudonyms.
- Never substitute tape recordings completely for field notes.
- Include diagrams or maps of the setting, and outline your own movements and those of others during the period of observation.
- Include the researcher's own words and behaviour in the notes. Also record emotional feelings and private thoughts in a separate section.
- Avoid evaluative summarizing words. Instead of "The sink looked disgusting," say, "The sink was rust-stained and looked as if it had not been cleaned in a long time. Pieces of food and dirty dishes looked as if they had been piled in it for several days,"
- Reread notes periodically and record ideas generated by the rereading.
- Always make one or more backup copies, keep them in a locked location, and store the copies in different places in case of fire, theft or other mishaps.

(Source: Neuman WL 2000 Social Research Methods Pearson Publishers USA)

Illustration of a social map used to record interaction patterns amongst teenagers in two council owned block of flats



Example of Spatial Map/Diagram used to record seating arrangements at a meeting

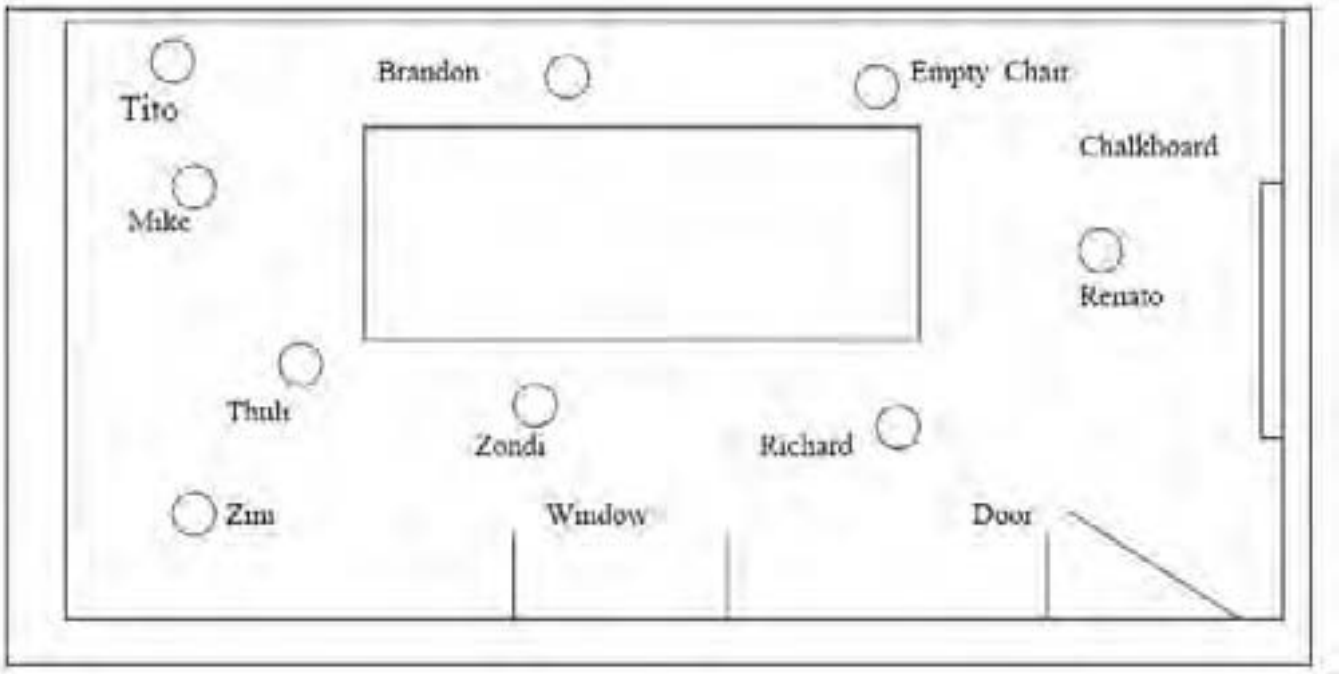


Illustration of a Temporal Map showing pattern of clients visiting a tavern during different hours in the week

Day of Week

Open 10:00	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
5:00	Old drunks	Old drunks	Old drunks	Old drunks	Skip work or leave early	Going to Fish
Close 1:00	Football watchers, mixed crowd	Neighbours, Thunee and Dart club players	Ladies Night Many young men hang out	Young Crowd	Loud Music, Mixed Crowd	Loners and no dates

Some ethical dilemmas in field research

- **Deception** – this can arise in several ways depending on the extent to which the observation is open or covert.
- **Confidentiality** - intimate knowledge or sensitive information may be shared with the researcher. Failure to keep the anonymity of the informer may breach the code of confidentiality.
- **Involvement with deviants** – researchers working with deviants sometime get drawn into illegal activity.
- **Power relationships** - field researchers tend to study those without power in society (street people, poor children, and lower level bureaucracies). Powerful elites can become effective gatekeepers and close the field for researchers. Researchers are criticized by the powerful for being biased towards the less powerful but they are also criticized for ignoring the powerful.
- **Publishing field reports** – the intimate knowledge that a researcher obtains and reports creates a dilemma between the right of privacy and the right to know. A researcher does not publicize member secrets, violate privacy or harm reputations.

chapter 9

data analysis

analysis of primary data

qualitative data analysis

Content Analysis

Content analysis attempts to get at the latent meanings of texts or to contrast the latent and manifest meanings. Many times it is this contrast that is interesting. Take for example Backstage, Yizo Yizo. That is the manifest level of meaning. Any viewing of this or similar network programs will reveal, however that the basic moral messages around which each episode is constructed are very traditional. At this latent level, the programs are very conservative. Be fair, be individualistic, hard work pays off, family comes first, people get what they deserve. This latent message is the same whether the family is a traditional white suburban family (Growing Pains, Family Ties), a minority family (The Cosby Show, Family Matters), a collective (Full House), a single-parent family (Who's the Boss) or simply strange (My Two Dads, Sabrina).

Because latent meaning is by definition, not obvious, it runs the risk of sounding contrived: Aliens are really communists, "liberal" programs are actually "conservative." It may be helpful to think of meaning as occurring at three different levels or as three different types.

When you think about the meaning of a text or of an event, you have to carefully consider whether you mean the factual meaning, the explanatory meaning, or the interpretative meaning.

Frameworks and Content Analysis

The approach involves a systematic process of sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes. In order to analyse the latent content of a text it is only possible by looking at it through some analytic framework. An analytic framework is some system for organising or making sense of data.

From a Marxist perspective, McDonalds can be seen as one of the more blatant examples of corporations undermining authentic culture and turning children into consumers. From a business framework, McDonalds can be seen as an attempt to increase profits and can be evaluated as either successful or unsuccessful.

This use of analytic frameworks makes the analysis of latent content very difficult. In the case of content analysis, this can be extremely difficult if two people are using competing analytic frameworks. The only lesson to be learned from this is that you must be as open as possible in your assumptions, as clear as possible in your conceptualisations and operationalisations, and as persuasive as possible in your writing and data presentation.

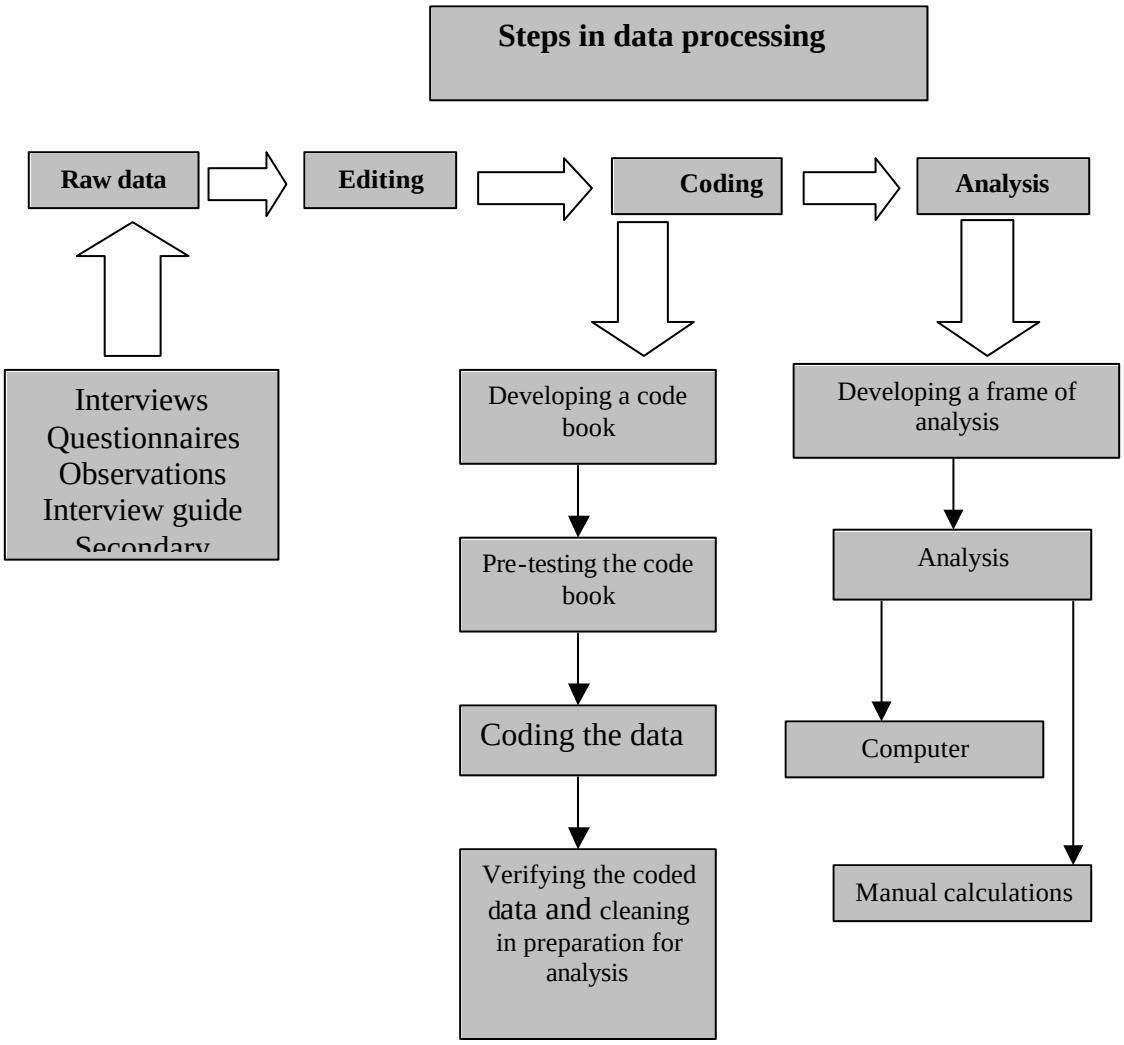
Units of Analysis

The un*it of analysis* in a study is the actual thing you are measuring. The important thing to remember about units of analysis is that you can draw conclusions about things at the unit *level* (and larger, if you are careful), but you cannot draw conclusions about anything smaller than the unit level. An example will help.

You can study businesses in a number of ways, you can:

- Look at business people - their values, motivations, and abilities
- Study individual businesses – the way they are positioned in the market, the types of marketing strategies they use
- Study industries - the conditions under which they grow and decline, the way they are affected by shifts in currency values, the way they respond to labour pressures

In the first case, the unit of analysis is individual people involved in business; in the second, it is individual businesses; and in the third, it is industries. You cannot study businesses and draw conclusions about individuals. General Motors, for example, was best described for years as sluggish, slow to innovate, and top heavy, but this does not mean that the individuals who worked there were fat, dull people with large heads. In the same way, what you can say about the computer industry may not apply to individual companies. The rule about un*its of analysis is* that you must be very careful about what you are actually gathering data about and then *not go beyond your data.*



Visual and verbal analysis

Content analysis generally tend to focus on the print sources of information. Non-print media such as tape recording, CDs, video often difficult to reduce in print like text. Television news, for example, is often analysed using transcripts of what was said, and the visual and audio elements are almost entirely dropped. We know that the expressions that are used and tone of voice employed can change the meaning of a remark in ways both subtle and profound, but it is extraordinarily difficult to operationalise expressions or tones of voices. Think of irony as an example. Only an accompanying ironic expression or tone of voice often identifies an ironic statement. The statement itself is simply a factual remark or an opinion, and it is quite likely that a transcript would lose the irony altogether. The point of the matter is that content analysis of audio-visual material cannot be accurate altogether. The expressive side of the content gets lost.

recording the interview

The advantages of a well-conducted interview are lost if an adequate record is not made either during or immediately after the interview (especially since the informal conversational interview is not conducive to note taking during the conversations). The use of a tape recorder releases the interviewer from elaborate note taking, but consideration is needed before using one with respondents who are unaccustomed to it as it may lead to an unnatural response. Even when a recorder is used, there are several reasons why notes should be written up:

- First, the non-verbal behaviour of the informant may be relevant. For example, if the respondent becomes excited when discussing the working of a participatory organisation, this should be noted, as it will be relevant when interpreting the interview data.
- Second, the interviewer needs to note his own thoughts, which are stimulated by the replies of the informant.
- Third, in the event of a malfunction of the tape recorder, the interviewer can fall back on his notes.

When notes are taken during the interview, only a code or number need note the questions if an interview guide is used. The interviewer should use quotation marks whenever he reproduces the language of the informant. Quotes are helpful for writing reports and making verbal presentations to policy makers, but it is important that they are accurate,

and they should be used very sparingly. As far as possible, the interviewer should develop a system for noting down his/her own ideas, responses, and feelings. Fresh ideas and insights stimulated by the respondent's replies may be lost unless noted at the time. It is advisable to write such comments in brackets in order to distinguish the interviewer's ideas from those of the respondent.

It is generally supported that the interview should be written up as soon as possible - ideally, immediately following the interview. Recall lapses are minimised in this way. Multiple interviews in one location should be spaced to allow the notes to be transcribed after each one.

Transcribing interviews from tapes is very tedious and time-consuming. In any case, the real feel of an interview cannot be captured without substantial editing and adding the interviewer's reactions and impressions. It is recommended that the interviewer listens to the tape, supplement his notes on the basis of the verbatim recording, and then prepare the summary of the interview. This should include a description of the setting of the interview and the respondent's non-verbal behaviour, credibility and knowledgeability.

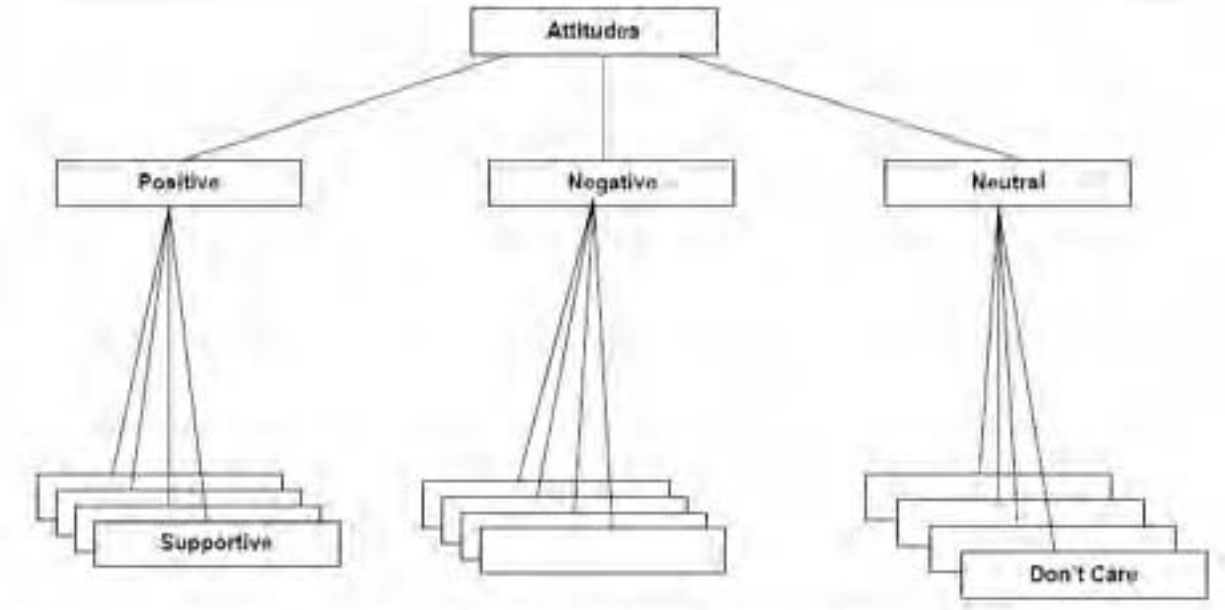
Indexing qualitative data

'Indexing' refers to the process whereby the thematic framework index is systematically applied to the data in their textual form. Although any textual material can be indexed in this way, the method has mainly been applied to transcriptions of individual and group interviews. All the data, not just those selected for review, are read annotated according to the thematic framework. Indexing references are recorded on the margins of each transcript by a numerical system which links back to the index, or by a descriptive textual system based directly on the index heading. Again, applying an index is not a routine exercise as it involves making numerous judgements as to the meaning and significance of the data. For each passage, the analyst must infer and decide on its meaning, both as it stands and in the context of the interview as a whole, and must record the appropriate indexing reference. Single passages often contain a number of different themes each of which need to be referenced; multiple indexing of this kind can often begin to highlight patterns of association within the data. Of course, this process making judgements is subjective, and open to differing interpretations. By adopting a system that explains the textual data, the process is made visible and accessible to others; others can see themselves how the data are being sifted and organized, research colleagues can 'try out' the framework and pool their experiences

Indexes helps to organise data systematically in themes. By grouping data into themes, indexes helps to standardise the wide range of data into clusters. The size of each cluster will depend on the number of groupings the researcher wants to create as a unit of analysis. *(Source: Haberman A M and Mathew B.M 2002 The qualitative researchers companion Sage California)*

Recently several software packages such as Nudist, makes indexing, categorising and classification of qualitative data less tedious and sophisticated in analysis.

Illustration of an index that is just about attitudes is generated through software packages.



(Source: Kelle U (1995) Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Sage Publications London)

Interview transcripts

Interview transcripts are important in highlighting attitudes, beliefs, feelings and more generally the world of the respondent more effectively than numbers do. They are original statements by respondents and used by the researcher to support or refute certain assumptions or describe a research situation.

When and how to use transcript notes is an art developed by each researcher with much painstaking effort. However, as a guide, interview transcripts are

- used to present situations which otherwise cannot be captured in its entirety by statistics.
- When the comment of one person best captures the essence of reality experienced by others.
- When the comment of one person is a major departure from the views held by others to the extent that it introduces new thoughts, ideas and insight into the study.
- When the researcher wants to best describe the reality or the world of his research subjects.

Briefly then, field research allows us to watch people in natural settings and to engage them in conversation, asking them to explain what it is they are doing. One of the reasons that fieldwork is so valuable to researchers is that it is as much about that how people talk as it is about descriptions of their activities. In much of field research, the goal is to understand what people are doing from their perspectives. This makes fieldwork as much a study of conceptualisation as observation. The excerpt on Why do men drop out of school! will illustrate the art of using interview transcripts for analysis and drawing conclusions.

why do men drop out of school!

But for most workers ... school was a period when their self-esteem was under continual attack. (1)

How did they cope with this? Some simply accepted the school's assessment of their intellect. As one, in his late forties, explained:

> *I was a real dummy. When I was in school if we got a question right we moved forward a chair in class and if we got a question wrong we moved back a chair. I was always at the back.* (2)

More commonly men distance themselves from the school's judgement. Sometimes they accept personal responsibility for academic failure but explain that the problem was they did not work hard enough: I was lazy at school, "I fucked up, I didn't study. I wasn't interested. I should have worked harder." Such explanations true or false are clearly easier for a man to accept than is the idea that his intellect is inferior. (3)

But the most frequent way men account for their failure in school is by blaming the curriculum was irrelevant and the teachers. The curriculum was irrelevant and the teachers were inept, malevolent, or exploitative. Consider the following, from a worker in his late forties, a mechanic:

> "What was school like? It was horrible, horrible! Those teachers, they didn't care. One said to me, "You're go ing to end up in a factory anyway, what are you wasting your time here for?"
>
> "They [the teachers] were cuckoos. They gave you Romeo and Juliet to read, and I looked at it and I said, "What is this! What has this got to do with me?" I looked on the flyleaf. "You know, back then they passed books down from one class to the next, so you could see who'd had your book two or three years ago. And I saw Joe Smith's name from three years ago. I knew he was digging ditches now, so I said to myself,: "This book didn't do anything for him. What's it going to do for me?" (4)

(*Source*: Excerpt From *America's Working Man* by David Halle (1984:62)

qualitative data analysis

You have done the planning. You have done the preparation and the fieldwork. You must now begin to analyse your data. Various considerations come into the analysis of data including the issues of sampling the research questions, units of analysis, operational definitions etc. These concepts all determine how you will work with the data you have collected.

One of the first considerations that relate to data analysis whether in a focus group, interview or observational methodology is to decide whether you are excavating the data or constructing it. How you answer this will often depend on your ontological and epistemological positions. Constructing data means that you hold the opinion that meaning is developed through interaction and how you analyse and report the data will emphasise the notion that the data has been constructed. If your position were that the researcher is really irrelevant to the interaction and is simply a miner of facts then this too would be reflected in the reporting and analysis process.

Essentially in the analysis we are trying to make a whole lot of recorded data meaningful and reportable. Thus there are various steps to doing this. The process in qualitative and quantitative research is quite different in this regard largely because of how the data is viewed. Your analysis must be integrated with your sampling techniques and research questions using a systematic method draw out trends or construct emerging theories of the different data. Where your analysis is aimed at proving or disproving an original theory or hypothesis this is referred to as deductive analysis whereas if your data is aimed at new understanding or developing a theory of why something is happening it is called inductive analysis. Your literature reading and the ontological and epistemological positions all play a role in the decisions you make around your analysis. It is also necessary to understand that how you organise your data as it is collected is already part of the analysis process and we will start with this. There is no one single methodology in this but rather a number of techniques that can be applied to breaking down the content into something that is reportable and in some way answers the research questions posses at the beginning of the process you have undertaken.

steps in analysing interview data

1. read through the transcript as a whole making brief notes about what the person is saying about different focus areas of the research. Make marks on the transcript giving page numbers and paragraph numbers (some people use line numbers in denominations of 5 or 10) this is so you can find things in the interview easily again.

2. Make a brief summary of the interview. What did the person say in a nutshell.

3. List out your research questions on a form

4. Go through the interview again capturing the different statements made about each research question area in a block next to the research question. (NOTE these are your original research questions and sub questions) While you are doing this add other areas/themes you came across in the interview either through follow up questioning or information the interviewee offered. Put these down as items and collect the statements made by the interviewee into these categories. (NOTE. You should always make a page number reference at least so that you can find the context of the statement again as well as others who may wish to review your work.

5. Go through what you have developed and now try to place the different issues raised around each broad question or theme into categories by naming a category and counting how many times reference is made in this category of response. If you have too many categories with only one or two references (mentions) in the interviews it means that your categories are too narrow. By making the concepts of these categories of response broader more response items will fall into it.

constant comparative method of coding

This method of coding is used when data are inductively analysed. In other words, hypotheses are inductively analysed. In other words, hypotheses are not generated initially but develop as the study progresses. A brief description of the constant comparative method of coding follows:

- Type the data in ASCII format and save the file to disk.
- Make printouts or photocopies of the data.
- Code each transcript page on the top right hand corner. For example, the code 01FU/1 may refer to person number one that was interviewed, female, university (where the interview took place), and page of the data. In the interests of anonymity, do not name the person that was interviewed. Any number of coding schemes may be used. The codes could include categories that are important to the analysis e.g. gender, age, economic status. Such codes are useful when the data is grouped into categories later on.
- Read through the transcripts in their entirety and identify important themes/concepts/ideas. What are the recurring themes in the data? What are the patterns in the data? These broad themes can change as the research proceeds. Write these tentative themes down.
- Identify units of meaning in the data. This is referred to as *unitising* the data. A data unit may comprise of a word, a phrase, a sentence, one or more paragraphs or larger transcripts. Data units stand by themselves i.e. they make sense. They serve as the basis for identifying larger units of meaning.
- When a unit of meaning is chosen, draw a line across the page in order to separate from the next unit.
- Indicate on the left margin where the unit may be found in the text e.g. 01FU/3. this means that the data unit refers to the interview with participant number 1, female, university, and is found on page 3 of the text.
- Beneath the code write a word or code that reflects the essence of the unit's meaning. For example, if a paragraph reflects a participants selection of university courses the code would read:' 01FU/3 Courses'
- Every piece of writing should be coded i.e. unitised.
- Once the units of meaning have been identified, cut each unit of meaning from the photocopied page using a scissors. Paste codes of the same unit onto a page.
- Compare each unit of meaning with other units. Group similar meanings together into provisional categories. These categories may or may not be similar to those written down in the discovery process. Units of meaning may sometimes be placed into several categories. This would necessitate more than one copy of the data.
- Check that grouped units of meaning are similar to each other. This is an emergent process of categorising the data. Expect the categories names to be altered often.
- When about six units of meaning are placed in a category write a rule for inclusion for other units of meaning to be included in this category. This rule should be a propositional statement that reflects the essential meaning of all the units of meaning or pages in a particular category. These statements are the roughly formed outcomes of the study. Some propositions stand alone while others can be linked to each other. An example of a rule for inclusion could be"students' worries about selecting a major". An example of a propositional statement could be "students are worried for a number of reasons about choosing an appropriate major".
- Develop a code that reflects the meaning of a category and place the code (which is in capital letters and in parentheses) on the top of each data page of unit meanings. This will help you with sorting if the data pages get mixed up .
- Finally, determine if there are any connections between propositional statements. Such connections may enable in-depth interpretations of the data to be made.

At this stage of the research process you have interview transcripts, fieldnotes, unitised data and coded data. All of this combines to form what is known as an audit trail. An audit trail permits your co-researchers and at a later date, other researchers to check the process by which you arrived at your findings and conclusions. Researchers will then determine whether you have made trustworthy or valid interpretations. If there is no audit trail, the scientific community is unlikely to place much value on your findings.

Struwig & Stead (2001)

quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis is often associated with statistics but before we can get to this phase we need to extract the raw data from questionnaires for example and put this in a managable form that we can begin to analyse in much the same way that long interview transcripts needed to be broken down into categories for the analysis. The breakdowns we choose will relate to our research questions, the research puzzle and the way we broke the sampling down. Again these are a set of strategic decisions dictated by the context rather than a set method.

The way we normally go about doing this process of breaking down is through the use of tables. Questionnaires are quite different from interviews for example as much of the coding is done in the design of the questionnaire before the respondent is approached where as the interview data needs to be broken down into such categories after the fact. This is what makes the tabulating of questionnaire data so much easier than the qualitative methodologies.

When you return with armfuls of questionnaires what do you do? After making coffee you begin to tackle the data one question at a time. Let us say for example you have 100 questionnaires and the first question was on gender. The options provided were female and male

Go through all the questions using a table and placing a tick or a mark in the appropriate category for each questionnaire. After you have finished this process you count up all the marks in each category and record the final number. After you are finished you would have a raw data score table that looks something like this. When analysing your sample now you would report that in your survey 68% of respondents were men and 22% were women.

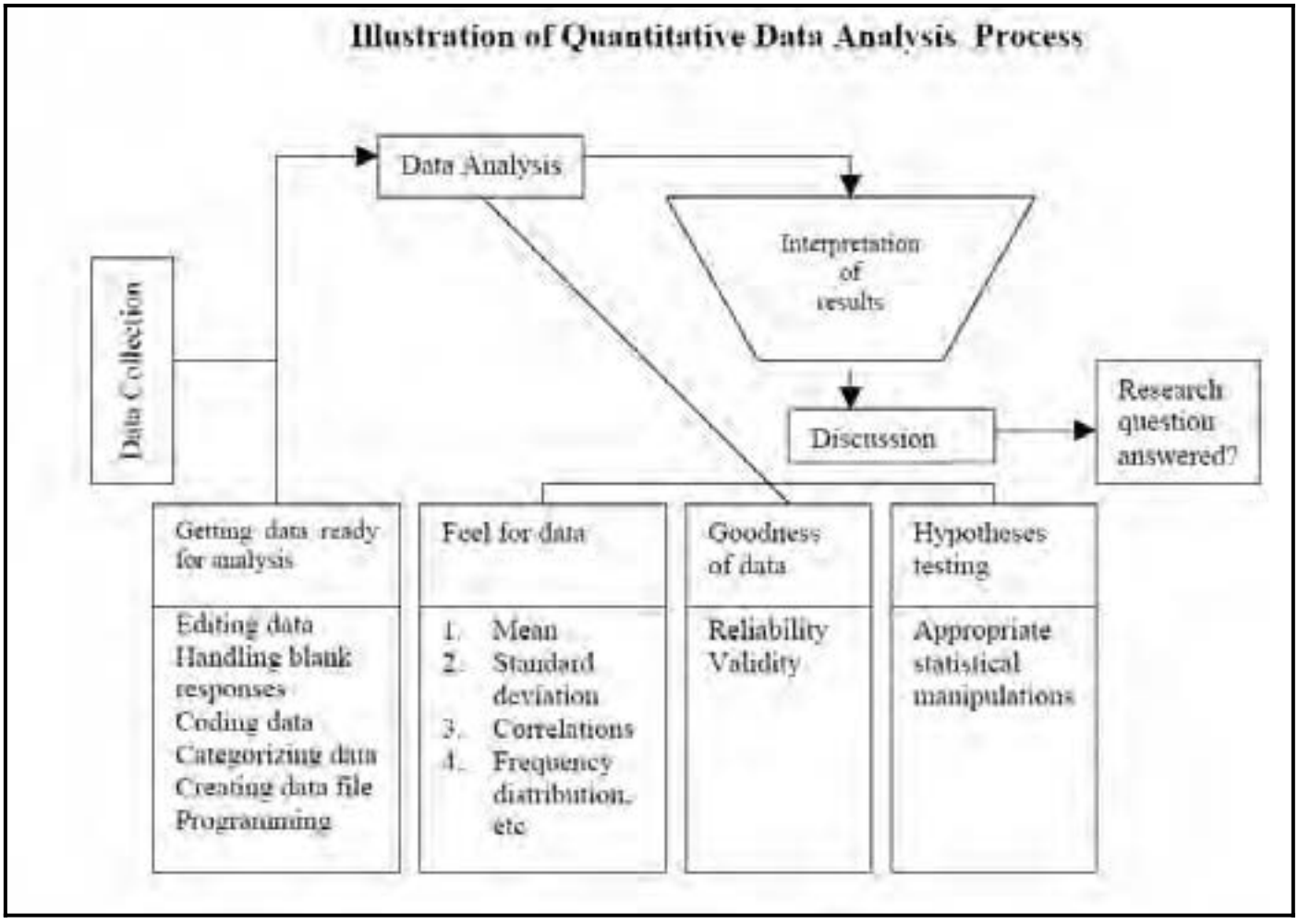
Question 1

male	68	
female	22	I
total	100	

You would repeat this process for each question. Where there was an open ended question without pre coded categories you would simply work through each questionnaire on that question building up categories as described earlier analysing qualitative data and place a mark in the category each time the concept was repeated.

Once you have what are called raw scores for all of your questions in the questionnaire tabulated into tables or other forms given the nature of the question you can begin to analyse the data, by calculating percentages applying tests of central tendency such as the mean median and mode, tests of deviation or correlation. The tests you apply and the figures you generate depend on your research questions, the intellectual puzzle etc.

As you put these processes together you would engage in a set of activities that looks something like the diagram below . The use of statistics in your analysis is detailed in the following section.



chapter

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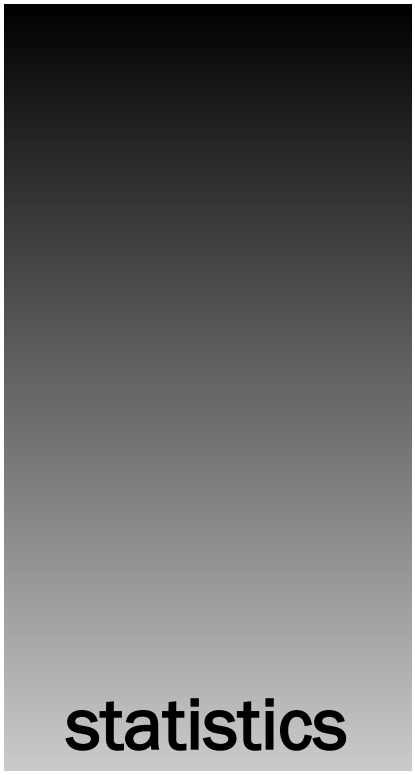
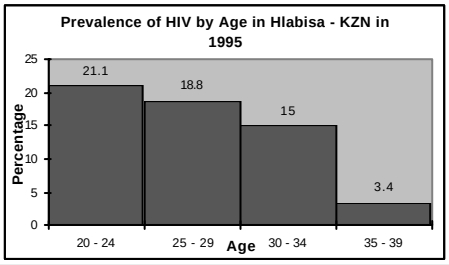


statistics

understanding statistics

Statistical analysis can be conducted on data and research findings that are quantitative in nature (that is, they are or can be represented by numbers). We distinguish between two types of statistics. **Descriptive statistics** are used to organise and describe the characteristics of data about a population or a data set about a sample. This can refer to the population as a whole, in which case it would be a Census, or to any other well-defined population with clear boundaries, such as the Muslim population of Cape Town, the population of Durban, or the student population of South Africa. The most common measure used in descriptive statistics is **frequencies**, which break down the overall data into categories and present them as a percentage of the total. For example, the official racial breakdown of the South African population is that it is composed of Africans (76%), whites (12%), coloured people (9%) and Indians (3%). These figures are the frequencies of the different racial groups in the overall population.



Inferential statistics are used to make inferences or deductions from the characteristics of a sample to the characteristics of the population from which the sample is drawn. In other words, they tell us to what extent the information derived from the sample can be assumed to be valid for the overall population. Another way of putting it is that these statistics tell us whether the relations between variables that was found for a sample, would be found for the population as a whole as well. For example, the extent to which information about the sexual manners and customs of a sample of students at Wits University would hold for the entire population of Wits students can be determined with the use of inferential statistics. The same applies for the extent to which a high correlation between education and income found among a sample of Durban residents would be found for the Durban population as a whole.

The distinction between descriptive and inferential statistics is not related to the techniques used, but to the extent to which the data are definitive (in the case of descriptive statistics derived from a census) or merely approximating the real figures (in the case of inferential statistics derived from a sample). Most social research is conducted on a sample of the relevant population, and the findings are therefore never conclusive. We must always specify the relationship between the findings of the sample and the findings we would expect if the research targeted the entire population. This makes inferential statistics a crucial aspect of quantitative analysis of research findings.

measures of central tendency

The most basic statistical analysis is known as measures or indicators of central tendency, and in plain language as averages. These measures describe the characteristics of the data with the use of one central score or figure. They tell us something about the nature of the data in a concise way that saves us from the need to look at all the data points. With the use of central measures we can reduce a thousand different observations in a survey to one figure, which summarises them. This is huge saving but we must always remember the principle of trade-off. Each summary statistic saves us time but also makes us lose some information in the process. For example, if we are told that the average mark in the class is 65% we learn something about the level of performance in the class as a whole, with the use of one figure. At the same time, if this is all we know, we lose information about the individual marks and each student's performance.

There are three measures of central tendency that are commonly used in statistical analysis. These are the mean, median and mode.

The **mean** is the most common measure, and is what most people refer to in plain language as average. To calculate the mean we add up all the values in the data set, and divide the sum by the number of observations. For example, to calculate the mean height in a

group of people, we add up the individual heights and then divide the sum by the number of people in the group. The mean is the most accurate indicator of the data set's central tendency. It is the mid-point above which and below which half of the total **values** are found. Although the mean represents the data set, it is possible that no single observation in it is identical to the mean. It is perfectly possible that the mean height of our group is 172 cm, and yet no member of the group is of that precise height.

The mean is the most accurate measure and is easy to calculate, but it has one main weakness: it is very sensitive to extreme scores, which are referred to as outliers. For example, in a group of 10 individuals whose heights range between 169 cm and 175 cm, the mean height would be around 172 cm. If a tall basketball player whose height is 216 cm joined the group, the mean height would rise to 176 cm, although all members except for the newcomer are below that height. Conversely if the new member is very short, 128 cm, the mean height of the group would drop to 168 cm, although all members except for the newcomer are above that height.

Another problem associated with the mean as a central score would be familiar to those who follow economic measurements such as the GDP per capita. This refers to the mean value of goods and services produced by each member of the population in a year. For purposes of international comparison countries are classified according to this measure, and South Africa usually finds itself with countries such as Costa Rica or Hungary in the medium-income category. Although countries in this category have similar GDP per capita, income distribution internally varies a great deal. Costa Rica and Hungary are relatively egalitarian and the majority of people create GDP of a value that is close to the mean, while South Africa is highly unequal and most people create GDP that is much higher or much lower than the mean.

This example tells us something important about measures of central tendency. Although they provide essential information about the data (the group or the country), when used on their own they can be misleading. This is why we frequently look at such measures together with measures of internal diversity or heterogeneity (more on this later on).

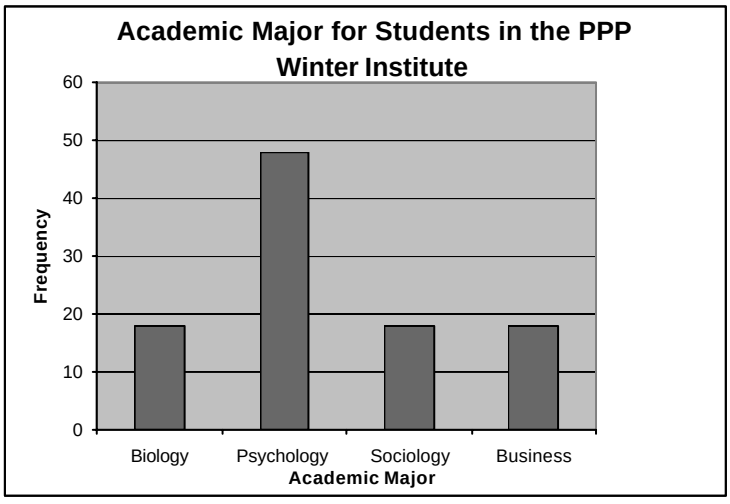
Another central measure is the **median**, which is the mid-point in a set of scores. One-half of the total **scores** fall above it and one-half of them fall below it. To calculate the median, we list all the values in order, from lowest to highest or the other way around, and find the middle point. If the number of scores is even, the median is the average of the two middle scores. The median is equivalent to the 50% percentile.

To take the same example as before, the median height in the group is arrived at by listing all the scores (heights of individuals members) in the group in order from the lowest (169 cm) to the highest (175 cm). We then select the mid-point – in a group of 10 members it would be the average between the 5th and 6th scores. In this particular case the median is likely to be very close in value to the mean.

The median is less accurate than the mean but it is better when there are extreme scores that would skew the results if the mean were used. For example, with the tall newcomer in the group, the median would change from the mid-point between the 5th and 6th scores into the 6th score (a likely increase or no more than 1 cm, and still the mid-point of the group). With the short newcomer in the group, the median would still be the 6th score, but this time it would reflect a likely decrease of no more than 1 cm in value from the previous median. In other words, when people with extreme scores join the group the median would not be affected as much as the mean would under the same circumstances.

The median is a superior measure to the mean in cases such as above, but we must realise that it is preferable only when we deal with small data sets. The larger the group is (the more observations there are in the data set) the less likely the mean is to be affected by extreme scores. In a group of 100 individuals, any additional person, regardless of how tall or short he might be, is unlikely to have much effect on the mean score.

The third central measure is the **mode**, which stands for the most frequent score, the one that occurs more than any other score. Data sets may have more than one mode, in which case they have a bimodal or multimodal distribution. The mode is usually used with data measured on a nominal (or categorical) scale, where the data observations do not have a numerical value (and therefore cannot be added up to calculate the mean) and they cannot be arranged in an order (and therefore the median cannot be identified). For example, in a class of 10 students with six women and four men, the mode is 'women'. In a class of 10 students with four whites, three Africans, two Indians and one coloured person, the mode is 'whites'. Categorical variables, then, call for the use of the mode as a measure of central tendency, while in variables measured on other scales it is an inaccurate indicator of the group's characteristics.



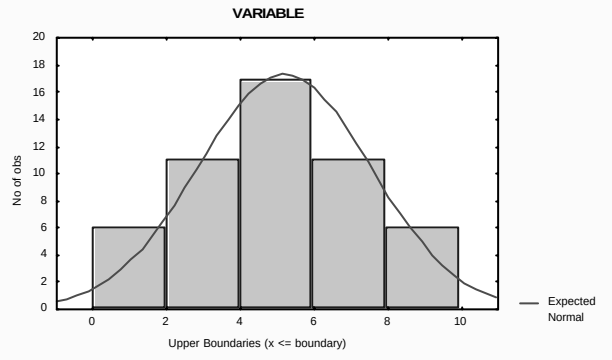
measures of dispersion

Measures of dispersion (also called variability or spread) reflect the extent to which scores in a data set differ from one another. It is a measure of internal homogeneity or heterogeneity, which is used together with measures of central tendency to provide a fuller picture of the data. It serves to distinguish between two data sets, which may have the same mean but very different internal distribution of the values of the data. For example, we may have two groups with 10 members each. The mean height in both groups is 172 cm. In one of them, all 10 members are of the same height. In the other one, five members are 162 cm and the remaining five are 182 cm. Although they have the same mean, it is clear that the groups have different characteristics.

Let us take an example that should be familiar to those who follow economic measurements such as the GDP per capita. This refers to the average value of goods and services produced by each member of the population in a year. For purposes of international comparison countries are classified according to this measure, and South Africa usually finds itself with countries such as Costa Rica or Hungary in the medium-income category. Although countries in this category have similar GDP per capita, income distribution internally varies a great deal. Costa Rica and Hungary are relatively egalitarian and the majority of people create GDP of a value that is close to the mean, while South Africa is highly inegalitarian and most people create GDP that is much higher or much lower than the mean.

We must therefore use a measure of dispersion, such as the Gini coefficient (which measures income inequalities), which would transform the notion that South Africa belongs to the same category as Costa Rica and Hungary. If used on its own, the measure of dispersion would lead us to classify South Africa together with other countries with very high levels of income inequalities, such as Brazil, Jamaica and India. Doing that may be misleading as well. Only when we combine both central tendency and dispersion can we position South Africa meaningfully among its peers.

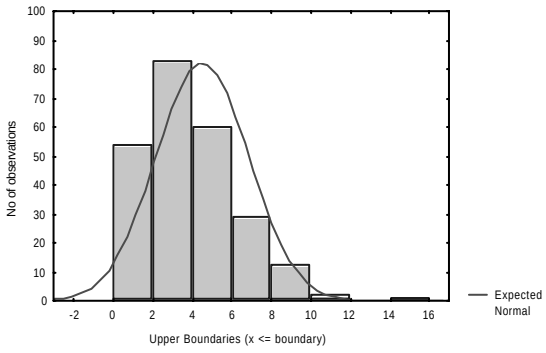
The two most common measures of dispersion are the range and the standard deviation. The **range** is simply the difference between the lowest and highest score. In the example of height above, the range is in the first group would be 0 cm (every one is of the same height), and in the second group is 20 cm (the difference between 162 cm and 182 cm). While useful, the range is limited in that it uses only the extreme values (lowest and highest) and does not tell us much about what is happening between them. We cannot distinguish between a group in which half of the members are 162 cm and half are 182 cm, and another group in which one member is 162 cm, another one 182 cm, and the rest are 172 cm.



A more sophisticated measure, as well as a bit more complicated to calculate is the **standard deviation** (represented by the letter s). It is defined as the average amount of variability in a set of scores, or the average distance from the mean. A large standard deviation means a very heterogeneous population, and a small one means a homogeneous population. Whether the measurement is indeed small or large is relative to the size of the mean, because it is measured with the use of the same units. When applied to the two examples above, the standard deviation of the group where half of the members are 162 cm and half 182 cm is 10.54 cm. The standard deviation for the group where one member is 162 cm, another one 182 cm and the rest are 172 cm, is 4.71 cm. As we can see, whereas the range gave us the same result for both, the standard deviation allows us to distinguish between them.

Another measure of dispersion is the **variance**, which is derived from the standard deviation. It is standard deviation squared. However, the variance is difficult to interpret because it does not use the same units as the data, and is therefore less useful. The term variance is frequently used interchangeably with variability to indicate spread or dispersion.

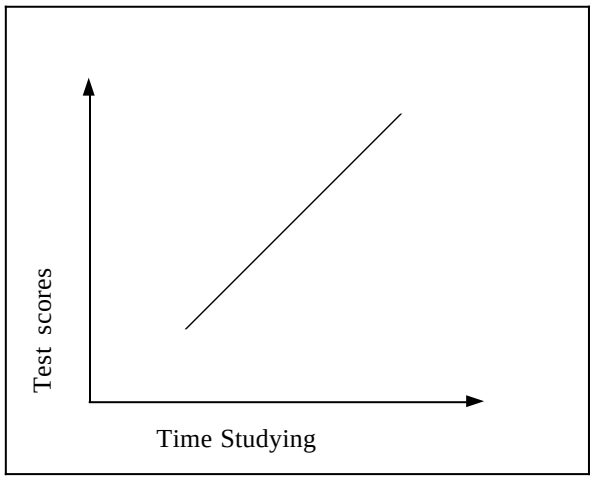
Fig. 4 Histogram of Variable Q014A (Diepkloof Dataset)



measures of association

Most social research is about the relationship between variables, or how the value of one variable changes together with the values of other variables. The extent to which two variables are related is called **correlation**. The coefficient of correlation (represented by the letter r) is measured on a scale of –1 to +1. It reflects the amount of variability that is shared between two variables.

Correlation can be positive: both variables change in the same direction, up or down (for example, higher education is correlated with higher income, or lower investment levels are correlated with lower rates of growth). In such cases the correlation will take a value between 0 and +1. Correlation can be negative: both variables change in opposite directions, one of them move up and the other moves down (for example, higher tax levels are correlated with lower saving levels, or lower economic growth levels are correlated with higher unemployment levels). In such cases the correlation will take a value between 0 and –1.



The closer the correlation coefficient is to 1, the stronger it is. Generally speaking a correlation between 0 and 0.2 is regarded as non-existent to very weak, correlation between 0.2 and 0.4 as weak, correlation between 0.4 and 0.6 as moderate, correlation between 0.6 and 0.8 as strong, and correlation between 0.8 and 1 as very strong. All this holds in either direction (regardless of the sign, plus or minus).

The usual way of calculating a correlation is based on the assumption that it is **linear**, which means that whatever relationship between the variables we identify, it tends to be consistent. However, variables frequently are correlated differently in a **curvilinear** way. This means that they stand in a certain relationship to each other up to a point, beyond which the relationship may be reversed.

An example can illustrate the point. The relationship between education and income is not linear. Up to a point both move in the same direction. People with MA degree usually earn more than people with BA degree, who in turn earn more than people with high school degree, to say nothing of people with primary school education. At the same time, people with a PhD degree and above tend to earn less than people with MA degree.

The explanation for this relationship is that when people move from the education system into the labour market, they are usually rewarded for the time they spent studying because they have acquired skill and increase their capacity to operate successfully in the world of work. However, people with PhD degree and above tend not to leave the education system and not to enter the (non-academic) labour market. They stay at academic institutions where salary levels are lower than at other sectors, and as a result earn less than their former colleagues who have moved on.

A related measure of association is the **coefficient of determination**, which is the percentage of variance in one variable that is accounted for or 'explained' by variance in another variable. Its value is that of the square of the correlation coefficient (known as r square). Because the correlation coefficient is a fraction (between 0 and 1), its square (coefficient of determination) is always smaller than it. For example, a medium-strong correlation of 0.6 between education and income would result in a coefficient of determination of 0.36, which can be interpreted as the proportion of variance in income that is accounted for by the variance in education. In less technical terms we can say that people's education levels explain 36% of their income levels (or simpler still, education explains 36% of income).

This notion means, at the same time, that 64% of the variance is income levels are **not** explained by education. This figure of unexplained variance is called the coefficient of alienation (or also coefficient on non-determination). The ratio of explained to unexplained variance, gives us an indication of the explanatory power of a model. The more of the variance on the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable(s) the more powerful the model is. The most common way of specifying and testing a model and its power to explain variance on the dependent variable is regression analysis, to which we now turn.

Once you have finished using the questionnaire the data you have must be collected into a useful format and summarised for reporting and, more importantly, for use in the different processes of the advocacy/campaign activities. Statistics are meant to help us achieve this. Analysing data will often result in some kind of statistics.

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chapter 11

reporting

report writing

getting down to writing

Once you have reached this point you are well on the way in your research and should feel justifiably proud of what you've achieved so far. Just think of the abundance of work you have undertaken and what you have already accomplished from those tentative beginnings. You have:

- identified your research area,
- decided on aims or possibly a hypothesis to test,
- looked at various research styles and methodological approaches,
- read around your topic,
- kept records,
- carried out original data collection through interviews and/or questionnaires, and
- analysed the findings.

Now you have to bring all the above elements together, but where do you start? You will find that different books will give you divergent advice on how to go about writing up and presenting your findings, but there really is no single correct way of ***'getting it all right'.***

Certain examining boards, academic departments, organisations or workplace supervisors may have clear expectations about some of the essential features that they require, but there is often a degree of flexibility about its format. The contents of your research document is the most important part of the research, it is where you are going to communicate your findings with others and your ability to write a clear and accurate picture of what has taken place is the more important feature. Your report should be sufficiently detailed to permit someone else to replicate your study without them having, to contact you to ask questions about it.
If you bear this advice in mind, your finished report should give the reader all the information needed.

Before writing the first draft

You will be very tempted at this stage to rush into writing by immediately committing your thoughts to paper. In the long term this could be costly on your time. When you realise the need to emphasise some areas, write to a set number of words, change the order and redraft. It is far better, to spend a little time initially sorting out exactly what you want to say. Clarify your ideas, possibly talk about them with your tutor or supervisor, and then jot down a plan of what comes where, possible report headings and some idea of how much emphasis you want to place on various areas. Importantly, as you sift through the mass of data that you have gathered, try to be clear in your mind that you are writing for and what you are trying to achieve. Without this goal your writing could become diffused and undisciplined.

Length of the report

When you have been told that your report must be of a certain length, you need to make some rough allocation of words or pages to each section of your report. This of course will be revised as you write, but unless you discipline yourself at the outset by giving more space for the important issues, you might find that you have written 2000 words on describing exactly how you decided what to research but only 300 words on the findings, in which case your emphasis would be wrong.

Availability of time

Writing up a research report is a very time-consuming business and you need to allocate a regular amount of time for the purpose. It is no use spending three whole days writing and then doing nothing for three weeks, as you are likely to have forgotten what, you have already written and will have to reread the whole lot or fall into the trap of repeating information again. Also your work is more likely to appear disjointed if you divide your writing periods with long gaps of inactivity and the rhythm of your writing will be lost.

Set deadlines

You have been working to certain deadlines throughout your research and now is not the time to stop. Armed with your possible draft chapter headings, set yourself a deadline by which certain sections will be finished or better still ask your supervisor or advisor to set you a deadline. Aim to write a minimum number of words at

each session. Even if you believe that you have got ***'writer's block'*** before you sit down to write, you will surprise yourself how the words will come if only you will make a start.

Writing by hand

If you are in the unfortunate position of handwriting or typewriting everything, remember to leave plenty of space between lines for eventual correction or rewording. If you write paragraphs on separate pages, it can get very messy with lots of separate pieces of paper and crossed out page numbering details. Writing on one side of the paper only can be helpful. At least you can then physically cut out a paragraph with scissors and staple it where better suited. Most institutions now demand that reports be word-processed.

What to write

You don't have to write the report in the order in which it will eventually be read. In fact some sections are better left until the end. For example, the abstract or outline of the research undertaken, which usually appears at the beginning, is far better written when the main body of the report is completed. This enables you to reflect on what has been written, and pull together more accurately a picture of the research.

Be structured and logical

Imagine that you are going to read a research report written by someone else. Certainly you would appreciate it if it were organised in such a way that it presented you with a structured view of what had taken place. You would find it more interesting if the researcher painted a picture for you of why it was undertaken in the first place, what it was hoped would be gained from the research, how they went about doing it and what their results; and conclusions were.

Not all researchers agree on the order or structure to be used for writing research findings, and if you have not been told exactly how your research is to be formulated, look at the following suggested outline.

Suggested Structure of Report	Description of Content
1. Abstract or outline of the research	The why, how and what. This is meant to be a solid bite of how you researched, and what you found. It is usually a very short summary of the research aims, the methodological avenues explored and the results.
2. Setting the scene and setting out the aims	A more in-depth explanation of how and why you came to choose your research topic, which would include definitions and explanation of the research aims, and the setting of a hypothesis if applicable.
3. Review of other similar work	Any historical background, current happenings, different approaches, or reviews of previous research would be included in this section. Your background readings and literature searches will prove beneficial now.
4. Methodology	Outlines of the various research methods that could have been used and the evaluation paths that they would have entailed in your research. Reasons why you chose particular methodological approaches. Any limitations or problems encountered, and what you did about them.
5. Your unique procedures	How you went about doing the actual research. Reports on the procedures used (that is, interviews, questionnaires, videos and so on). Detailed description of the when and where. The problems encountered, the rethinks, and any measurements or tests used.
6. The research findings	Analysis of the data gathered and the procedures adopted for that analysis. This is a very important area of the research, which should highlight significant findings.
7. Discussions on research and findings	What went right, what went wrong. Any deficiencies in the research design, whether you would do it in the same way again. Did your research findings test the aims or the hypotheses (if applicable)? What does your evidence suggest? It is also important that you relate your findings to other research in this topic area here.
8. Conclusion and summary	This should not be a long section but should summarise briefly and clearly what conclusions have been drawn from the evidence. *Source: Coombes H 2001 Research using IT Palgrave Publishers New York*

some practical considerations on writing a research report

The following guideline will give some idea of how your research report should be structured.

A title page

This should give the following information:

- the title of your research report,
- your name,
- name of the organisation that is submitting the report, and
- the year.

The title should explain what your report is all about, but don't be afraid to use a subtitle if necessary.

Thanks and acknowledgements (optional)

It is nice to be able to thank people who have given you their time and help and if you would like to do this a separate page inserted after the title page is the place for thanks and acknowledgements. However, you do not have to do this, it is your choice.

Table of contents

A separate page is devoted to a list of content contained in your research report. This is a list of the headings, the paragraph subheadings (which may or may not be numbered) together with the appropriate page number.
The content list is an aid to the person reading your report. It enables them to turn quickly to an area of interest and also to see the substance of your work in a summarised format. The list is usually one of the last things to do because it is likely that the page numbers and subheadings for the various topics will change as the report evolves. Don't forget to add a list of any appendices to the contents.

The main body of your work

It is at this point that your report is presented. This section should set the scene (i.e context, reason and motivation for the study). It should contain a review of literature in which the key concepts and issues are discussed. Thereafter the methodology and unique procedures used in the research is presented. This is followed by a discussion on the main research findings, a conclusion and summary of the report.

Appendices

You should include a blank copy of any research documents used, such as interview questions and questionnaires, together with schedule lists, tables of results and so on and each individual document should be clearly referenced (for example Appendix A) and included in the contents.

Bibliography

A list of the books and articles that you have read which are relevant to the research is essential at the end of your report. Also relevant Web sites visited need to be listed. The bibliography should not include items that you ought to have read but haven't.

The list of references at the end of a paper provides the information necessary to identify and track each source used in the preparation of the paper. Consequently, all references cited in the text must appear in the reference list; conversely, each source in the list must be cited in the text. Sources are listed in alphabetical order according to the authors' surnames.

A book with one author:
Vella, J. (1994). Learning to listen, learning to teach: The power of dialogue in educating adults. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A book with two authors:
Wlodkowski, R.J. and Ginsberg, M.B. (1995). Diversity and motivation: Culturally responsive teaching. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
A **book with more than two authors:** Vella, J, Berardinelli, P., & Burrow, J. (1997). How do they know they know? Evaluating adult learning. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

An **edited book:**
Thorpe, M., Edwards, R., & Hanson, A. (Eds.). (1993). Culture and processes of adult learning. London: Routledge.

An **encyclopaedia or dictionary:**
Tuijnnian, A.C. (Ed.). (1996). International encyclopaedia of adult education and training. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier.

A **chapter in an edited book:**
Myles, H., and Tarrago, I. (1996). 'Some good long talks': Cross-cultural feminist practice. In S. Walters, & L. Manicom (Eds.), Gender in popular education: methods for empowerment (pp. 181-201). Bellville: CACE.

An entry in an encyclopaedia:
Mulder, M. (1996). Program design: Effectiveness. In International encyclopaedia of adult education and training. (vol 3 pp. 519-529). (2nd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier.

A **group collective author (e.g. government department:**
Department of Education. (1997). A national multi-year implementation plan for adult education and training: Provision and accreditation, October 1997. Pretoria: Author.

Note: When the author and publisher are identical, list the name of the publisher as the author.
An **article in a journal:**
Brown, A.L. (1994). The advancement of learning. Educational Researcher, 23(8), 4-12.

An unpublished doctoral dissertation:
Burger, M.M. (1998). A model for implementing adult basic education and training in the developing regions of South Africa. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

References to on-line (electronic) information:
A standard for referencing on-line information (e.g. from the Internet) has not been set yet. However, as with other citations, one should aim at crediting the author and enabling readers to find the information.

You should include, the following:
Author, I. (date). Title of article. Name of journal [On line], xx. Available: Specify path.
Author, 1. (date). Title. In Title of complete work or title of site [On line].
Available: Specify path.
Note: "Path" refers to the Internet address.
e.g. Brown, I. (1999). Entrepreneurship success stories: Implications for teaching and learning. In ERIC Clearinghouse, Adult Career and Vocational Education [On line].
Available: httpllericacve.orgldocs/pab00012.htm.

Writing the conclusion

Experienced researchers often find it difficult to write the conclusion to their study. They will work their way through the structure of the research without too many difficulties, but bringing it all together in a conclusion is sometimes problematic. A useful way to organise a conclusion is to begin by referring back to the beginning where the problem and hypothesis was stated.
When the research produces a negative or inconclusive result, the problem of writing a conclusion is made worse. All researchers feel sure that their hypothesis is right, but if the research results point clearly against this being the case, they must say so; and if their results are inconclusive (not pointing decisively in one direction or the other), it would be wrong to write a biased conclusion that tilted towards the researcher's own feelings. It is difficult to achieve this impartially because most inexperienced researchers become emotionally attached to their topic and find it difficult to be open minded when the research ends.

Addressing questions such as those below will add to the findings of the research:

- How efficient was the design of the research method?

- How far (did the achieved sample of respondents differ from that intended initially?
- What weaknesses occurred during the research process?
- What to do about new ideas at a late stage

What is the purpose of the conclusion?

The purpose of a conclusion is to provide a thoughtful and attentive end to a piece of writing; it is not just a summary of' what has happened. A good conclusion will:

- Summarise what was learnt and point out the direction for future research.
- Evaluate the benefits, rewards, actions, and applications and so on of the research.
- Discuss the weaknesses and assess how these could affect the findings.

There are several general points that a researcher should bear in mind to help them to write a good conclusion:

- Never introduce a new idea in the conclusion.
- Do not focus on a minor point in the research.
- Never, try to cover up incomplete work but be honest.
- Do not apologise for your view by saying things such as 'at least this is what I believe' - you are dealing with the facts of your research.
- Do not repeat yourself.

technical presentation and layout of the report

Grammar, correct words and abbreviations

We are often unaware of why we write in a certain way, we often do not know the rules of grammar but we know when something sounds wrong. 'The examiners is happy' would jump out of the page, screaming at you that is should be replaced with 'are'. The rule behind this knowledge is probably long forgotten. One or, two of the more common areas for grammatical error may be worth checking when you proof-read your finished report.

It is possible to instruct your computer to check your documents for grammar and spelling errors either as you proceed or at the end of keying in your work. However, allowing the computer to check your work is no substitute for doing the job yourself by proof reading it. The computer does a marvellous job but it is not able to differentiate between the meanings of words, for example it does not know the difference between "their", "they're" or "weather" and "whether", and so on. The same is true of grammatical errors; it doesn't alert you to all errors, so use these very helpful aids in addition to proof-reading, not as a replacement for checking things personally.

If you are using Microsoft software you may notice a red or green squiggly line under some words as you type. This is Word alerting you to a possible errors. The red colour indicates a spelling mistake, while the green alerts you to a possible grammar error. You have the choice when this happens of either.

- ignoring it until you have finished the whole document and then checking all the spelling and grammar errors in one go, or
- looking at each error as it is flagged up

Most software have very similar checking systems and if you consult your on-screen help facility using the words 'spellchecker' and/or 'grammar checker' you should be presented with detailed instructions on operating that particular system.

Some people find that it interrupts their flow of thought if they stop frequently to correct errors, and they prefer to leave this task until the end of their work or at least until the end of the particular working day. It is easy to do this by simply clicking on the spelling icon (icon) on the standard toolbar, and answering the screen prompts as appropriate. The computer will check the document from the cursor point onwards.

Quotations

If you are quoting only a short sentence or a few words, indicate the quotation by inserting double quote marks (invented commas) in the main text, with the source in brackets. Occasionally some educational establishments will request that you use single quotes, so you would be wise to check this before you start.

chapter 12

policy and advocacy

introduction

Research forms the fundamental basis for advocacy work as well as policy intervention. Throughout the process of defining our advocacy work, key questions have to be asked and in order to answer them we have to seek knowledge and information that will allow us to answer these questions. This seeking of knowledge and information is what research is all about.

In order to assist us with finding information for our policy and advocacy work, we need to work through a series of questions that fit into the research process we identified earlier on in this manual.

- **What do you want to change?**
- **Who needs to change their behaviour?**
- **How do you want these people to change their behaviour?**
- **What can you do to make them change their behaviour?**
- **What information do you need to help you make them change their behaviour?**
- **How do you get this information?**
- **How do you use this information to get the change?**

what do I want to change? defining the issue

The first step in any campaign is to define the issue. It may be the environmental hazards to residential areas caused by industries or the level of child maintenance benefits that you wish to campaign for or against.

The process begins by identifying issues that can be addressed by the actions of institutions and individuals representing these institutions (i.e. those that require policy action). In addition, there may be issues that need to be dealt with quickly and effectively or it may be an issue that is strongly bound in policy action and therefore take a longer time to work through. Either way, it would be strategic to define the issue both in terms of a campaign (media, information, action) and in terms of policy intervention.

Issues for action can be identified using techniques ranging from spontaneous generation of ideas to the cautious and deliberate study of issues. Refugee interest groups, for example, may highlight a crisis and call for urgent policy action, while economic research institutes might ponder a situation thoroughly before offering a policy proposal.

Regardless of the techniques used, concentration counts. Difficult as it is, it is vital to focus on just one issue. It is the only way that policy advocates can successfully marshal their resources and ultimately prevail in the tough environment they will face in any policy battle. This is similar to the research process where you were forced to narrow your focus to one issue to make your research effective.

An advocacy objective aims to ***change*** the policies, programmes or positions of governments, institutions or organisations.

Your advocacy objective is ***what*** you want to change, ***who*** will make the change, by ***how much*** and by ***when***.

developing a problem statement

The same process for developing a research problem should be used when developing a problem statement for your advocacy work. In addition, the work that your organisation is organising around should also be factored into the problem statement. It will also be strategic at this point to try to identify the policy that pertains to your problem.

defining the objective

The next step is to define the objective of the campaign. It is essential to have a clear objective in order to determine the appropriate advocacy strategy and to be able to assess the progress of the campaign as it unfolds. It may be to prevent the closure of the local hospital, to persuade government to raise the level of child benefit grants, or to persuade government to impose economic sanctions against Nigeria.

Be as specific as possible so that you can develop an effective strategy to reach your goal. You must know the target institution and decision makers to identify an effective course of action to influence the institution's decision-making

process. The advocacy objective should be specific and measurable, so that you will know whether or not you have attained your objective in the time frame you have specified. If your objectives are properly defined they will make your work much easier. If your objectives are unclear, you will waste resources trying to achieve them.

criteria for selecting objectives

Criteria are questions or standards that are used to select a goal or compare different objectives. The purpose of the checklist of criteria is to help you make an informed choice about what advocacy objective to pursue. If you have already identified an objective, this tool can help you recognise areas that need special attention or can be strengthened. A feasible objective will meet many of these checklist criteria, but not necessarily all of them. Even if your objective only meets three or four of these criteria, it should not be dismissed. By testing your advocacy objective using these criteria, you will gain valuable information about what you can expect to encounter if you choose a particular objective, and which areas might need improvement or special attention during the advocacy process.

- **Does qualitative or quantitative data exist to show that achieving that objective will improve the situation?**

Good data (such as research information or statistics) about an issue is essential. Knowing the true extent of the problem will help you choose an advocacy objective that is relevant and specific. If data is not available or is insufficient, collect your own or obtain research from other sources before you choose an advocacy objective. The effectiveness of an advocacy effort can be verified subsequently by collecting data on the change in incidence or prevalence of the problem after the objective has been achieved.

- **Are the objective achievable? Even with opposition?**

The problem and its solution must not be so large or so remote that you or your organisation will become overwhelmed. In addition, people or groups will be more likely to join your effort if they see from the start that there is a reasonable chance of success. Also consider that opposition to your advocacy effort might arise. Ask yourself whether you can still achieve your objective in the face of this opposition.

- **Will the goal/objective gain the support of many people? Do people care about the goal/objective deeply enough to take action?**

The more people there are who support an advocacy objective, the more likely decision-makers will be willing to act. People must be interested in, and supportive of the goal or objective and care enough about it to act.

- **Will you be able to raise money or other resources to support your work on the goal/objective?**

Is your goal one that donors, private agencies or individuals would be interested in funding? If many people care about the goal, could you develop a self-financing mechanism to sustain your advocacy efforts, such as membership fees? Would other organisations be willing to make in-kind contributions of staff time or resources to sustain the advocacy effort?

- **Can you clearly identify the target decision-makers? What are their names or positions?**

The 'target' is the person or persons who have the decision-making authority to approve your objective. These decision-makers are the primary audience for an advocacy effort. If you cannot clearly identify the decision-makers you may need to narrow your objective so as to target your audience.

- **Is the goal/objective easy to understand?**

A good goal should not require a lengthy technical explanation. If you need to explain, can you keep the explanation clear and short?

- **Does the advocacy objective have a clear time frame that is realistic?**

Some time frames are internal, i.e. the organisation or people involved in the advocacy effort set them. Other time frames are external; e.g. they are set by the date on which Parliament will discuss your issue or by the meeting schedules of organisational leaders. If you plan to have an impact on a decision that will be made on a certain date, can you get organised quickly enough? If there are no external time frames, set your own clear and realistic time frame to achieve your objectives.

developing a campaign strategy

Sometimes an objective can be achieved in the short term, but more often, the campaign will have a longer-term objective. It is worth defining both a long term and short term strategy. Things rarely go perfectly to plan, so good campaigning includes being flexible. Draw up a fall back strategy when you draw up the plan.

There is a huge range of possible campaign strategies. Some are more drastic and more confrontational than others. The choice of strategy will tend to reflect the nature of the issue and the type of decision-making body or process and resistance you are facing. For instance, the struggle against apartheid required drastic action – that was the only way to fight the government of the time.

The conditions under which you are organising and often the resources available to you will determine the kind of campaign strategy you would use.

It is very valuable to always try to link your research activity with some kind of campaign strategy, be it an information campaign, media campaign or some action campaign. It could even include some policy intervention. In this way, you are continuously bringing your research to life (as opposed to merely publishing reports) and you are always taking it back to the community you are researching.

Campaign Strategies

- Produce a newsletter that sets out the various options facing government.
- Monitor the appropriate structure for your cause, e.g. local council or provincial parliament.
- Form an alliance with a network of community organisations.
- Attract the interest of an international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc.
- Send out press releases.
- Do media interviews.
- Produce a campaign newsletter.
- Write to an MPL or your local councillor(s).
- Ask a portfolio committee to convene a public hearing.
- Send a written submission to Parliament.
- Sell T-shirts supporting a campaign.
- Ask for a private meeting with the relevant decision makers.
- Get the support of a coalition of other organisations.
- Place a newspaper advert.
- Organise a mass picket or boycott.
- Organise a one-day strike in support of a campaign.
- Civil disobedience - break the law in order to attract attention to your cause.

When developing a campaign strategy:

- Set clear objectives.
- Get a clear mandate from your own constituency/network.
- Gather facts and statistics on an issue.
- Develop literature to support your policy.
- Engage your partners in outreach - there is strength in numbers.

It is important to remember that change does not just come about as a result of campaigns, etc. but can be spontaneous, for example community responses to an eviction or water cut-off. What is real change? Changing policy may be one progressive step but it takes a lot of time and resources. Sometimes you may need a quicker result and so you may have to balance your strategies out more.

who needs to change their behaviour? a review of policy structures

As organisations we need to consider what we are trying to do, how we are trying to do it, and the obstacles/forces we need to overcome in order to achieve our aims.

To help you work through this stage of your campaign activity, here are a few guiding questions :

- Who needs to change their behaviour?
- What structures or forces do you engage with?
- How do you engage with them?
- How are these structures or forces organised?
- Whose interests do they represent?
- How do these agencies or forces go about achieving their aims or entrenching the status quo?

It is important to identify the key decision-makers. Politics is about power and power resides in individuals as much as institutions. The key players are the people who have to be persuaded. They are the targets of the campaign. They may be MPLs, local councillors, key ministerial or departmental advisors or the Premier or President himself. Key players may also include other structures and organisations, e.g. banks, Chamber of Mines, pharmaceutical companies, NGOs, CBOs, etc.

It certainly helps to know individual MPLs or legislators. What are their interests? What are their backgrounds? What is their record of support? What positions do they hold in the Legislature? Who is the chair of the committee that will consider your proposal? Who is the chief spokesperson for the position?

Some Key Players

- **the policy makers**: in the department and the ministry and, most importantly, in the majority political party caucus, as this is the channel through which every substantive policy decision must pass;

- **other relevant institutions of governance**: for example the Function Committee and the Budget Committee, in terms of the budget process;

- **the relevant minister or MEC**: identify which department is developing the policy under dispute and raise your concerns at the highest level;

- **the key advisors**: don't try and by-pass them; they often have the 'ear' of the minister or other key players;

- **opposition parties**: depending on their strength, they can exert pressure in parliamentary committees in particular, towards changing policy approach;

- **the relevant parliamentary committee chairperson(s)**: in the new South African parliamentary committee system, they yield considerable power, often dependant on their personality and their relationship with the minister or MEC they are shadowing;
-
- **the most influential legislators on the relevant committee(s)**: they have both the expertise and the influence to achieve substantive policy changes in the committee: and

- **Private sector institutions** :for example, banks, pharmaceutical companies, multi-national companies like Engen, Mondi, McDonalds, Shell. These private sector institutions may also be the cause of some of the problems in your community and therefore should be taken into account when putting together your targets. The people in Wentworth have been engaged in a long battle with Engen, which is located in the center of Wentworth. Their battle has been over pollution as well as working conditions of those residents who work in Engen.

Knowing the Key Committees and How They Work

Without doubt, the political epicentre of the new parliamentary democracy in South Africa is built on the foundation of the evolving parliamentary committee system.

Although each committee is different - their powers and functions remain fluid and uncertain - most are developing the skills to have a significant impact on policy. Thus understanding the dynamics and keeping abreast of the way in which particular committees operate and are developing is essential.

Knowing the System; Knowing the Process

As an advocate, you need to become totally familiar with the decision-making process that you are attempting to influence. The more you know about the process, the more power you will have to influence it. It is important to know the formal rules, procedures and protocol of the decision making process.

Using the formal process has several important benefits. The policy or programme change is official, 'on record' and more permanent. The decision making process is also likely to be more participatory and open to your ideas and proposals in the future, thanks to your efforts.

In order to fully understand the process you are trying to influence you need to find the answers to the following questions:

- What organisation or policy-making body will make the decision you are trying to influence?
- What is the formal decision-making process for this institution? What are the steps in the formal process? When will each step take place?
- What are the informal workings 'behind the scenes' actions for the decision making process?
- Who is/are the key decision maker(s) at each stage?
- Which steps are open to outside input? Which stages in the process can you influence? How can you influence these stages

It is essential to understand the decision-making process. The more familiar the process, the more likely it is that the right strategy will be chosen. Knowing the right moment to intervene and the key person to address is essential.

policy and legislation

Understanding the difference between policy and legislation is a vital part of any advocacy or lobbying campaign. Policy and legislation have different aims and goals, and follow different processes. Both are an important part of a framework setting up the environment in which government will operate.

Policy

A policy document outlines the goals and aims a ministry and department hope to achieve, and the methods and principles they will use to achieve these. It is a statement of intent. A policy document is not a legally binding contract. To enable government to put in place the necessary institutional and legal frameworks to achieve these aims, policy documents will often identify a need for new legislation.

Examples of policy statements:

- All South Africans should have access to 15 litres of water for free each day.
- Companies that pollute water should pay for the clean up operation.

Legislation

A law sets out standards, procedures and principles that must be followed. If a law is not followed, those responsible for breaking the law can be taken to court.
An example of a legislative statement is:
"The National Government, acting through the Minister, has the power to regulate the use, flow and control of all water in the Republic." National Water Act

How do they relate to each other, and which is more important?

Policy sets out the goals and planned activities of government. However it has no value if there are no laws to implement the policy.

Legislation has legal value, but is often drafted up within the limits of government policy. Therefore, when a law is drafted it will be guided by the current policy.

major policy processes

When a new policy is needed to direct and guide the governance of a particular issue, a Minister will initiate a policy process. Key issues, such as Environmental Management or Water Resource Management, will require major policy processes. While there is no set path, most major policy processes have four main stages.

1. Government decides it needs a new policy.

2. Identifying Key Issues – The department will need to ensure it has identified all the relevant key issues. They achieve this by researching the issues thoroughly, and consulting people who work in the field. The public is often asked to contribute by attending workshops or sending in written comments.

3. Exploring Options – Once the department has identified the key issues, it will compile a document outlining them and suggesting a range of alternatives for solving them. This document is often published as a Green Paper, which is distributed to the public for comment.

4. Finalising the Policy – The Department and Ministry will look at all the issues and options, decide which issues are important, and how they intend to solve them. Cabinet will then be required to approve the Government's final policy positions. The policy is then published as a White Paper.

What are Green and White Papers?

Green Paper

When government publishes a Green Paper it is presenting its preliminary thinking to the public and all interested stakeholders. At this point, it has not necessarily made up its mind. After it has received written or oral submissions from the public and consulted with the relevant stakeholders, the government will go back and revise or elaborate on the Green paper.

White Paper

The result of this revision or elaboration is the publication of a White Paper, which is, in effect, a statement of intent. It is a detailed policy plan that often forms the basis of legislation.

minor policy processes

Policy decisions are often required on smaller specific issues, such as the allocation of fishing quotas. In these cases, the Minister will decide that a major policy process including Green and White Papers is not required, and that a smaller, quicker policy process will be used.

There is no set path for these processes and they will vary from issue to issue, and from department to department. In most cases the department will draw up a draft policy, often in consultation with the key stakeholders. The draft policy will then be released to the public for comment. Once the department has received input from the public, it will consider the options and make a final decision. The policy may need to get political approval from the Minister and Cabinet before it will become an official policy.

POLICY STAGE	INSTITUTION INVOLVED
1. Government decides it needs new policy.	Government Department Cabinet Committees Minister Advisors to the Minister
2. Government begins to identify key issues.	Government Departments Departmental Task Forces Advisory Committees
3. Government starts exploring its options.	Government Departments Departmental Task Forces Advisory Committees
4. Finalisation of Policy	Minister Government Department (upper level officials) Minister's Advisors

key institutions

Cabinet

Provides general political initiative and guidance. The final step in having policy accepted.

The Ministry

Hands on political input. Leads the Department.

The Department

Manages the process and undertakes the work involved. Can appoint consultants or members of civil society.

Members of the Public

Can be appointed to help manage processes as representatives of civil society. Provide comments in direct consultation or written input.

the initial drafting of legislation

The task of drafting legislation is most often undertaken by Government Departments. In accordance with the political policy of the ruling party or coalition, the Ministry may decide that new legislation is required to achieve its objectives and implement its policy or to provide for the smoother operating of departmental activities. The Ministry will then mandate the Department to draft new legislation. In many instances the department may also initiate the process and approach the Minister to support new legislation that the Department believes is important.

The Department, or a legal consultant hired by the department, will begin initial planning on a draft Bill by identifying

key aims and principles. The key principles and mechanisms in the proposed Draft Bill will be put before Cabinet. If political support is given, the department will continue the drafting of the Draft Bill by adding detail in consultation with key role players and other government departments.

The Draft Bill may then be released for public comment. Once comment has been received, the department and ministry will make any changes they think are necessary as a result of public input. Before being tabled in Parliament, the Draft Bill will return to Cabinet to ensure that it has kept within the agreed aims and principles. The Draft Bill will subsequently be sent to the State Law Advisors for legal approval, and the Minister will then table the Draft Bill in Parliament. Once tabled, the Draft Bill will be given a number, and then be released as a Bill.

the law making process

The minister tables the Bill in Parliament. The Bill will then be given a number, for example Bill 14 of 2000.

Bills that don't affect the Provinces (Section 75 Bills)	Bills that affect the Provinces (Section 76 Bills)
Bills can only be introduced in the NA.	Bills can be introduced in either the NA or the NCOP.
Members vote as individuals (there are 90 possible votes).	There is one vote per provincial delegation (9 possible votes).
There is no formal mandating by Provincial legislatures, as Members vote according to their parties' support for a Bill.	Provincial legislatures must give their delegation a formal mandate on how to negotiate and vote on behalf of the province as a whole.
When there is disagreement between the two houses, the NA can effectively ignore the NCOP and can pass a Bill with a simple majority.	When there is disagreement between the two houses, the Bill goes to a mediation committee. If the mediation committee cannot facilitate agreement the NA can still pass the Bill on its own, but only with a two thirds majority.

A step-by-step summary of how a bill moves through Parliament follows.

1. Parliament, with the help of legal advisors, will look at the contents of the Bill and decide whether it is a Bill that will affect the Provinces. The Legal Advisors will review the constitution to determine if the issues in the Bill fall under the scope of both the national and provincial governments (**Section 76 Bill**), or that of the national government alone (**Section 75 Bill**). If the Bill deals with issues that affect the provincial government, the National Council of Provinces will play a different role in passing the law. The Bill will be sent to the National Assembly (NA) who will then refer it to the appropriate Portfolio Committee. Before the Portfolio Committee start scrutinizing and changing the Bill, they may ask for comments from the public.
2. The Portfolio Committee will then deliberate on the Bill, which often includes public hearings. Once they have reviewed the Bill, made changes and asked for clarity, they will send a report on their deliberations to the National Assembly.
3. The National Assembly will consider the report on the Bill before voting on the Bill with any of the changes the Portfolio Committee may have made.
4. The Bill will be passed on to the National Council of Provinces. The relevant Select Committee will consider and debate on the Bill. If the Bill contains issues that affect the Provinces (Section 76 Bill), each province will have an equal say. If the bill does not affect the provinces (Section 75 Bill), each member will vote according to their political party.
5. If the Bill affects the provinces (Section 76), the members of the Select Committee will go to their respective provinces to review the Bill and formulate a provincial mandate from their Parliaments. The provincial Parliaments will then decide if they support the Bill as it stands, or will recommend changes to be made. The representatives of the provinces will then return to Cape Town and report back to the Select Committee on each provincial decision. The provinces will then negotiate a final version of the Bill. They will send a report on their decision and any suggested changes to the National Council of Provinces.
6. The National Council of Provinces will then consider the report before voting on the Bill. Once again, if the Bill affects the Provinces (Section 76), then each province will have one vote. If the Bill does not affect the provinces, each member of the National Council of Provinces will vote according to their political party. If the NCOP makes changes to the Bill, it will need to go back to the NA for approval.
7. Once both houses of Parliament have agreed to a final version of a Bill, it will be sent to the President. The President will then sign the Bill, and it will become an Act and law in South Africa.

PROCESS STAGE	INSTITUTION INVOLVED
1. Bill tabled in National Assembly.	National Assembly Minister
2. Referred to the Portfolio Committee, who hold public Hearings.	Portfolio Committee Department The Public
3. Committee Deliberates on the Bill, possibly making amendments. Refers Bill to National Assembly for debate and voting.	Portfolio Committee Department Ministry The Public
4. Debate and Vote on Bill.	National Assembly
5. Bill Referred to National Council of Provinces, and the Select Committee. The Select Committee is briefed on the Bill.	National Council of Provinces Select Committee Department
6. Provincial delegates return to their provinces to discuss the Bill. May hold hearings in the Provinces. Delegates bring negotiating mandates from the provinces. Select Committee refers the Bill to the National Council of Provinces for debate and vote.	Select Committee Provincial Parliaments Department Minister The Public
7. Vote in the National Council of Provinces.	National Council of Provinces
8. Bill sent to President's office for signature.	President's Office

A summary of the policy and legislative process for the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), 1998

The timeline involved in the development of policy and legislation is clearly illustrated by the NEMA process. One can see the complexity of the task as well as the multiple opportunities for participation available to the public if they are aware and informed.

DATE	EVENT
May 1995	Start of environmental management policy review. Technical Study Team appointed
August 1995	Consultative Conference on National Environmental Policy (CONNEP I) At the conference a process to develop a new policy consultatively, the Consultative National Environmental Policy Process (CONNEPP) was agreed upon
November 1995	Management and Advisory Team (MAT) established.
February 1996	Experts start on a discussion document.
April 1996	*Towards a New Environmental Policy for South Africa* published.
April to July	Consultative workshops in the provinces.
October 1996	*Green Paper on an Environmental Policy for South Africa* published
January 1997	Deadline for comments.
24-25 January 1997	CONNEP II
June 1997	Cabinet approved the broad policy principles of draft White Paper.
28 July 1997	*The Draft White Paper on Environmental Management Policy* published.
12 August	Press release
29 August	Deadline for written submissions
October	Portfolio Committee and Select Committee briefed on the Draft White Paper.
October	The Portfolio Committee held public hearings.
October to May 1998	Draft White Paper was amended and adapted.
6 March 1998	Governmental interdepartmental meeting to discuss co-operative government
March and April	Interdepartmental Bilateral talks
Early May	Cabinet approves final draft of the White Paper
15 May	*White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* published
15 May	Copy of the draft Bill sent to the various national government departments.
27 May	Portfolio Committee briefed on the draft bill
28 May	Media briefing on the draft
3 June	Portfolio Committee meeting to clarify issues. Set dates for hearings in August
1 July 1998	*Draft National Environmental Management Bill* published
28 July	deadline for comments on Draft Bill to Department
Early August	changes were made to the Bill
28 August	deadline for written comment to the Portfolio Committee
31 August, 1st and 2nd of September	Public Hearings in Parliament
7, 8, 9 and 14 of September	Portfolio Committee deliberations
14 September 1998	Portfolio Committee agrees to refer the bill to the National Assembly
17 September	Select Committee briefed on Bill.
21 September	National Assembly passes the Bill
29 September	Select Committee refers Bill to National Council of Provinces.
8 October	National Council of Provinces passes the bill with amendments.
4 November	Portfolio Committee agrees to amendments, and refers the Bill to the National Assembly
6 November	National Assembly accepts the changes
27 November	President Mandela signs Act 107-98 and it is published in the Government Gazette.

the budget

The annual government budget is a plan of what money the government expects to receive in taxes against how much it expects to spend over the coming financial year – the period beginning on 1 April and ending on 31 March.

Why is the Budget Important?

Budgeting is part of everyday life. Every day we make choices and trade-off alternative ways in which we can spend a limited amount of money. We plan how much we are able to spend against how much income we expect to earn over a certain period of time. In the same way, the annual government budget is a plan of how to balance expected tax revenues (government income) against expected expenditures over the coming financial year.

The budget is also important because it reflects the government's policy priorities, i.e, how the government feels taxpayers' money should be spent. Thus the government's budget decisions affect our everyday lives and our future. Government budget decisions will affect our choice of home, our personal safety, whether we have clean water and sanitation and electricity.

the legislative process

The presentation of the budget on budget day takes place at a national level in March and provincial legislatures follow shortly thereafter. This initiates a three to four month review process in the national and provincial legislatures.

Immediately after the budget presentation, the Bill is referred to the national and to each provincial Finance Portfolio Committee. The role of the Finance Portfolio Committee is to hold hearings on the budget and present a report to the entire provincial Legislature. At national level, these hearings are open to the public and public input in the form of submissions is encouraged. In most provinces, the hearings are open and public input is possible, but it is usually very limited.

In the National Assembly, the Finance Committee has only seven days to consider the budget and present its report. The time for the finance committee hearings varies across the provinces. Once the Finance Committee has submitted its report, the broad debate in the Legislature is initiated and lasts approximately a week.

At national level and in some provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and North-West, portfolio committees are able to hold their own hearings to examine each department budget. These committee meetings are usually open and public input is possible. Where there is no allowance for individual portfolio committee hearings, a process exists for the Finance Committee to collate the questions of the portfolio committees (Western Cape) or for committee representation during the finance hearings, which happens in KwaZulu-Natal in addition to the portfolio committee stage.

After the portfolio committee hearings, there is a detailed debate in the full legislature on each Department's budget. Where sector portfolio committee hearings do not take place, the detailed debate follows the broad debate in the legislature.

The Constitution grants Parliament and committees strong powers to hold open hearings and to call government officials and other experts to give evidence, but they do not yet have the right to suggest changes to the budget. In theory, a committee can recommend that the entire budget (or specific votes) is rejected in total, and this could lead to a no-confidence motion or force the government back to the drawing board. In practice, however, this is unlikely to happen.

After the National Assembly process, the Bill is referred to the NCOP for consideration. According to the Constitution, this process should be the same as for ordinary bills not affecting the provinces. In theory, the NCOP could reject the entire budget and force the National Assembly to vote again, but this has yet to happen for any Bill, let alone a money Bill.

intervening at key points in the decision making process

Generally speaking, the earlier the intervention the better, so it is important to be alert to policy changes. Try to influence the process as soon as government starts to consider an idea. By the time the matter gets to Parliament it is hard to get it changed in any real way because the majority party will already have made up its mind on the subject.

Government 'thinks aloud' by publishing policy papers and discussion documents. White Papers are statements of government policy. They may be preceded by Green Papers (draft White Papers) for discussion. This is the time to undertake serious research, formulate an alternative position, make a submission to government, plan a media campaign, ask the Minister responsible for a meeting and begin networking with like-minded individuals and organisations.

There are always key moments at which it is best to intervene, for instance, the South African budget process is an 18-month cycle so it is critical to plan ahead for the longer term. Act now for effect in 18 months time, but keep the pressure up throughout the budget cycle. Policy-making is a complex process. Power resides in a number of places, including:

Policy Task Force

Sometimes the government sets up a special team of people to explore options. This team often includes academics and other experts, as well as key people from the government department. This provides a very important opportunity for advocacy. Clearly, government has not made up its mind at this point so there is a good chance that you can influence things. Make an appointment to see the Policy Task Force, write to them with a submission, invite them to come and visit your community, or your institution or organisation.

Cabinet Sub-committees

Ministers often meet in small groups. In the case of the Cabinet, which is the highest policy-making entity in government, there are three permanent sub-committees dealing with social affairs, defence and intelligence, and economic affairs. The Deputy President currently convenes and chairs all three committees.

Government Departments

Departments and ministries have different ways of reaching policy decisions. It is important, therefore, to try and find out how things work in the ministries and departments that affect the issue that you are concerned about. In some departments, the Minister is very strong and involves him or herself in every policy matter. In other ministries, the Minister may tend to leave the details to his or her special advisors, or to civil servants. Invariably, especially on important policy matters, the Deputy President's office is involved and needs, therefore, to be lobbied.

Committee Process

When a Bill is tabled, a public hearing is normally sought, in which the parliamentary committees dealing with the issue hear public submissions. This is a key moment – probably the last chance – to get the law or policy changed. In preparing a submission, it is important to be familiar, not just with the committee as a whole – especially its style and way of doing things – but also with who the key people within the committee are. Most of the parliamentary committees have an inner group of experts who are particularly interested in the committee's portfolio. It is essential to open communication lines with them so that they, if no one else, are entirely clear about your arguments and proposals.

National Council of Provinces

The role of the NCOP presents both an opportunity and a massive challenge. Bills that affect the provinces now have to be debated by the provincial legislatures. At the point at which the draft law is with the provincial legislators there are nine lobbying opportunities – one in each province – but it also means that pressure groups must keep track of the process so that they know exactly how things are developing.

Parliamentary Debates

Snap debates also offer a unique point of intervention. Parties that want a snap debate on a current issue may ask the Speaker to allow this. Any MP may introduce a motion (or subject) for debate in the House. A good example is the debate on the activities of the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad) group in the Western Cape. Such debates are a useful instrument in attracting public and media attention to an issue.

Parliamentary Questions

Asking Ministers questions or summoning them to appear before committees can be a powerful way of keeping them accountable. Advocacy organisations should use MPs to ask Ministers questions about their portfolios

advocacy during the legislative phase of the budget process

- The committee stage of the budget process offers the most direct opportunity for civil society input into the budget process. The option of making an input to the Finance Portfolio Committee exists at national level and in each province, although it may take a little persuasion in some of the provinces where this is not the norm. Where the opportunity for separate committee hearings exists, such as portfolio committee budget hearings on education, health and welfare, these present an ideal opportunity for specialist or stakeholder input.

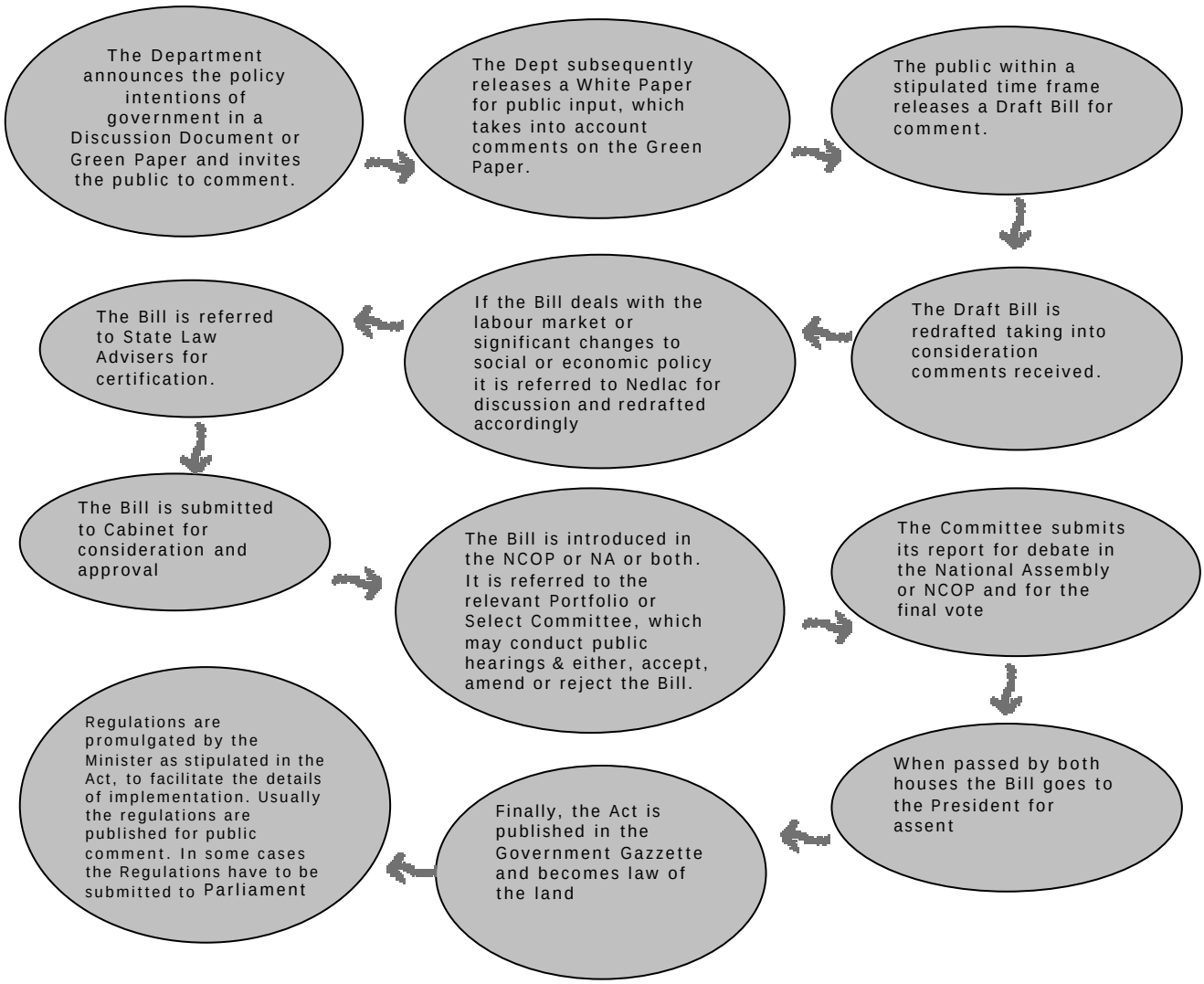
- Because currently the budget cannot be amended, inputs by civil society and the Legislature itself are minimal. We expect a national debate soon on whether to include these amendment powers. The Constitution grants national and provincial legislatures this right. It is therefore important to try and influence the extent of these powers.

- The limited time that committees have to consider the budget is a further constraint of the current budget process. It is difficult to develop a substantive evaluation of the budget in a week when the budget takes 18 months to produce. In many countries there is a time lag between budget presentation and the committee hearings that allows time for deep analysis. This allows both the Legislature and civil society to intervene effectively.

- At least at present, the shortage of research capacity in the legislatures also provides an opportunity for civil society input. While committees have to consider several bills simultaneously, groups can add value to the debate by presenting information on their particular area of expertise at public hearings.

Policy and Legislation Chain – a guide on how laws are made

* In theory this is the procedure to be followed. However, in practice legislation is sometimes introduced before the policy process is complete.



intervention strategies

This section contains some ideas of how to get your target group to change their behaviour. This is not a conclusive list and is open to any other creative ideas you may come up with.

write to key decision makers

The simplest, and often most effective, method of applying pressure is a letter-writing campaign. There must, however, be sufficient numbers to attract the attention and concern of decision-makers.

The main points to remember are: **be brief, be clear, be accurate, be persuasive, be timely, be persistent,** These common sense principles apply whether you're lobbying by telephone, by letter, or face-to-face. The only strategy that may be difficult at first is to identify the most strategic stage at which to intervene.

When you write, keep your letter or fax to a single page – literally. If you need more space, include an attachment that elaborates on that one page summary. Be absolutely sure you spell the name of the person to whom your letter is addressed correctly, have the correct title, and get the address right. If you don't, he or she will wonder how credible the rest of your letter is! And of course, always personalise your letter. Get the facts from your organisation, but use your own words.

Some Optional Enhancements

- Enclose an article that has a bearing on the policy or legislation in question.
- If you have any personal association with the policy maker, let her or him know. For example, nothing is more effective in getting an elected official's attention than being able to tell him or her you've worked on his or her campaign.
- Write or call a second time. Follow-up letters have a much stronger impact than an initial communication. Thank the legislator for taking a stand you agree with or ask a question about unsatisfactory answers.

Once you have had a meeting with your MPL or after she or he has supported your issue or done something else to help your cause, send a thank you letter.

create networks

What is a Network?

A network consists of individual organisations willing to assist one another or collaborate towards a mutual objective.

Who Should Be on Your Network?

You will want to get to know people and organisations that are working towards the same objective as you are. You will also want to include people who can influence decision-makers and, if possible, the decision-makers themselves. Finally, keep your eyes, ears and mind open for anyone else who could help you.

How Do You Meet Potential Network Members?

It is important to build an open and trusting relationship from the beginning. Here are a few ways to start this process:

- collaborate on projects of mutual interest;
- help bring attention to others' work;
- assist other organisations with special projects;
- share information with them;
- attend their meetings and invite them to yours.

How Do You Get Other Organisations Interested in Your Advocacy Objective?

As you get to know other organisations, discuss your ideas and objectives with them. Be open to their suggestions and ideas; it is helpful when others feel that they have some ownership of the idea. People will generally be much more supportive of an initiative they have helped to shape.

How Can They Help You?

When you are ready, ask other organisations to do something *specific* to help you reach your objective. Start small, for example, "Could you mention to the director that you heard about this idea and think it has merit?" As your relationship is strengthened, you can ask them to do more, for example, "Could you arrange for us to meet with the director and present the proposal together?" But remember, the relationship should work both ways – the more they do for you, the more you should do for them.

Writing Effective Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an easy way for you to voice your opinion to policy-makers and to educate people in your community about issues that concern you. You can use letters to correct or interpret facts in response to an inaccurate or biased article, to explain the connection between a news item and those issues, or to praise or criticise a recent article or editorial. Without exception, the letters section is one of the most read sections of newspapers (and magazines - don't forget magazines).

The following tips will increase your chances of getting published:

Know the letters policy: Find out the publication's policy for printing letters. Some have length limitations, some want letters to be typewritten and almost all require you to include your name, address and phone number.

Be timely: Responding to a recent article or editorial will increase your chances of getting published. Be sure to mention the name of the article and the date it was published. You can also capitalise on recent news events or anniversaries. For example, you might use the anniversary of Earth Day as an opportunity to write about important environmental issues. Or you can write to inform citizens how their legislators voted on a recent environmental issue.

Keep it simple: Keep your points short and clear, stick to one subject, and try to keep your letters to three or four paragraphs. Make sure your first sentence is short, compelling and catchy. Don't be afraid to be direct, engaging and even controversial.

Get personal: Editors are more likely to publish a letter if it has local relevance.

Use local statistics: For example, a letter on the Clean Water Act should point out how many rivers and lakes are unsafe for swimming in your community or province.

Use personal stories: If you or someone in your family has become ill from drinking contaminated water, say so in a letter about the safe Drinking Water Act.

Build Coalitions

The organised coalition is another option for your advocacy effort. Coalitions require far more work than networks, but the results can also be much greater.

What is a Coalition?

A coalition is a group of organisations working together in a coordinated fashion toward a common goal. Coalition-building should strengthen, not replace your existing networks. Before you decide to join or start a coalition, consider the advantages and disadvantages of working in coalitions:

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Enlarges your base of support; you can achieve together what you cannot achieve alone.	Distracts you from other work; can take too much time away from regular organisational tasks.
Magnifies existing resources by pooling them together and by delegating work to others in the coalition.	May require you to compromise your position on issues or tactics.
Increases financial and programmatic resources for an advocacy campaign.	May require you to give in to more powerful organisations. Power is not always distributed equally among coalition members; larger or richer organisations can have more say in decisions.
Enhances the credibility and influence of an advocacy campaign, as well as that of individual coalition members.	You may not always get credit for your work. Sometimes the coalition as a whole gets recognition rather than individual members. Well-run coalitions should strive to highlight their members' contribution as often as possible.
Helps develop new leadership.	If the coalition process breaks down, it can harm everyone's advocacy initiatives by damaging members' credibility.
Assists in individual and organisational networking.	
Broadens the scope of your work.	

Strength in numbers is a useful approach in campaigning: the more individuals and organisations that support a particular objective, the more likely it is to succeed. Networks and alliances must, however, be strategic, that is to say they should not be entered into simply for the sake of numbers. In this, observe the five commandments of advocacy:

- Never promise more than you can deliver.
- Listen as well as lobby – so that you understand the political dynamics at work.
- Co-opt and do not seek to bypass staff and advisors.
- Don't spring any surprises when creating political alliances and extracting political commitments from politicians.

These are important in building and sustaining alliances. Otherwise they will not stand the test of time and pressure.

policy, advocacy & lobbying

This section will introduce you to advocacy, policy skills (including basic skills that will enable you to conduct your own policy analysis). You will learn how to use research to develop criteria for policy evaluation and assessment and gain a better understanding of the policy making cycle (i.e. formulation, implementation and monitoring). You will be introduced to skills that will allow you to design research for advocacy and use existing research to develop campaigns.

What is Advocacy and Lobbying?

A fully functioning democracy allows people a say in the drafting of laws and policies that affect them. Wherever change needs to occur, advocacy has a role to play. Advocacy can be seen as an act of giving support to a cause.

What lawyers do in a court of law is *advocate* or promote their clients' interests. By persuasion, they try to convince the judge about their clients' point of view. This helps in resolving the conflict between clients and their opponents. This technique of solving a conflict or a problem has come to be known as advocacy. It is not restricted to lawyers. Anyone who attempts to resolve a problem in a non-violent way by negotiation, persuasion, perseverance and convincing the other party about a particular point of view, is practicing advocacy.

One way of doing this is by voting – giving your support to a particular person or party. Another way is to shape government policy affecting your community. This often takes the form of persuading government to spend public money in a particular way, e.g. more money on housing, less on weapons. This could include policies on rural development, water management, environmental management and gender equality. It is about making a difference in the way government uses public power to make decisions that affect the public.

It can be seen from the table below that there are similarities and clear differences between advocacy and lobbying. One key difference is that while advocacy involves promoting a specific cause, lobbying involves the strategies that one can use to plead such cause.

Lobbying is one of the most common methods civil society uses to influence public policy and put pressure on government to listen to the voices of its citizens, take up their interests and support their causes. This is done through various activities such as meetings, phone calls, media campaigns or writing letters. Citizens sign petitions as part of lobbying campaigns to convince lawmakers to vote a certain way on a proposed law.

Most constitutional democracies recognise lobbying as a legitimate way for citizens to have their voices heard. However, critics of lobbying say that wealthy people and corporations are better able to influence public officials than ordinary citizens because they can afford to hire lobbyists and spend money on high-profile campaigns.

Citizens can take many forms of action to lobby for change. These include:

- holding community meetings to raise people's awareness about issues;
- printing and distributing leaflets calling for action;
- appearing on television and radio to call for popular support;
- getting citizens to sign petitions calling for government action;
- organising marches, demonstrations and other protest action;
- boycotting and striking.

ADVOCACY	LOBBYING
• includes lobbying; • related to specific cause/issue; • group/collective effort; • aimed at several stakeholders, both inside and outside government; • aimed at common good • influencing the public's attitudes; • organizing campaigns; • maximizing public exposure to an issue; • arguing your case to anyone who will listen • verbal support of a cause or policy; • the function of an advocate.	• influencing government decisions; • related to specific legislation; • may be individual or collective; • aimed specifically at legislators and government officials; • aimed at specific interest; • meeting government representatives; • sending communication to government; • petitioning government.

The more people organise around an issue and gain support, the more likely it is that those in authority will listen to them. Of course, it is not always possible for large groups of citizens to have direct access to decision-makers. For this reason, organised groups generally agree to allow certain of their members to represent them and give them a mandate to speak on their behalf. To make the needs of their constituency known, representatives do things like:

- call press conferences;
- issue press statements;
- address decision-makers at specially arranged meetings;
- attend negotiation forum meetings; and
- stand for election to bodies like town councils.

To lobby on changing or developing policy, citizens should:

- identify the policy and motivate for why it should be changed;
- offer an opinion on what the new policy should be;
- join with others who share their view;
- gather relevant information, such as research or statistics, to support their view;
- bring on board people who might be able to influence policy;
- identify organisations who both support and oppose their views; and
- draw up and carry out a plan of action.

These are all examples of how citizens can *organize* themselves and become *directly involved* in persuading others to take certain issues seriously. There are often, however, very difficult trade-offs involved in the course of policy and law making. Government has options – usually a great number of them – and advocacy and lobbying is all about influencing the choices government makes.

lobbying government

The verb 'to lobby' has come to mean the attempts by citizens to influence public officials at a high level of decision-making. Every part of government can be the target of lobbying – local councillors, MECs and Director-Generals, extra parliamentary bodies, etc. However, people and organisations often don't lobby because they don't think they know how to do it. They are staunch supporters of their cause, they recognise the importance of lobbying, and they know it pays off, yet they hold back in the mistaken belief that lobbying is only for experts.

Like anything else, the more you know about how to advocate and lobby, the better. But, again, if you can make a phone call or write a letter, you can lobby. All you need to be an effective lobbyist - are three things:

1. a few basic facts;
2. belief in your cause; and
3. common sense.

The single most important thing a lobbyist needs to know is his or her subject. What is the substance of the legislation you are proposing (or opposing)? Why is it so important? What will happen if it is passed? What will happen if it is not passed? How much will it cost to take the necessary action?

There are particular points in the legislative process that are ideal for lobbying. This would be at the green and white paper stage, as well as when portfolio committees hold public hearings on draft bills. To make meaningful submissions at any of these stages, lobbyists need to be well organised. Proper analysis and research is required.

The Lobbyists and the Receivers

Parliament really values input from civil society. The information and experience it provides legislators is critical to their attempts to make informed decisions in the development of relevant and effective policy and legislation.

The following information is drawn from interviews with individuals experienced in Parliamentary lobbying. Their experiences can help us understand how the theory holds up in practice i.e., what has worked, what should be avoided and strategies to maximize your public participation opportunities.

Tip #1
Successful lobbying is a combination of diplomacy and dedication: it is not hard work that will achieve results; it is hard, smart work that will make the difference.

For both informal and formal lobbying, focusing your efforts on the Portfolio Committees is probably your best bet. It is their responsibility to hear what the public has to say and to incorporate those views into legislation. They also have the processes in place to gauge public opinion, such as hearings and written submissions.

With respect to formal lobbying the name of the game is information – you must be prepared to properly investigate the facts surrounding the issue you are concerned with to avoid being caught unprepared in Parliament. Study the legislation and write submissions and speeches carefully: A great presentation can be undermined by a single factual error.

Oral presentations

- Be sure to get your name to the Committee early. This will ensure that you are put on the agenda and given a set time to speak.
- Submit a document to which you will speak. This can be in the form of bullet points which the members can follow along from or, if necessary, the full text. If possible get your written document to the Committee (via the Clerk) a week beforehand. This gives the members time to read through your submission and formulate questions beforehand.
- Arrive at Parliament well before the hearings are scheduled to begin. If you have equipment such as Powerpoint or overheads, arrive even earlier and make sure that your equipment works properly. Have a backup plan in case your equipment does not work.
- Before the meeting introduce yourself to the Chair and the Clerk.
- The key to formal presentations is to keep things short and sweet.

Tip #2
Most members have limited knowledge of the issue, so keep your presentation simple. Focus on the one or two points that are key to your organisation.

If you feel that the written submission absolutely has to be long, make sure that you provide an executive summary. Use appendices to focus your main draft – attach any case studies you may have found as appendices as well. This will allow interested members to refer to your paper if they need additional information.

Tip #3
It is unlikely that a significant policy change will be made after a Bill has been tabled in Parliament. Focus on what you would like changed rather than on what is wrong with the legislation.

Remember that it is easy to criticize, but much more difficult to offer alternatives and solutions. If possible, focus on specific clauses and bring alternative wording with you. This will present the Committee with a quick solution if they agree with you.

Members are in Parliament to represent citizens. Try and relate your discussion to how the issue affects their constituents – the people – and how your solution will benefit these same.

Don't expect Members to be experts in the area but don't talk down to them. Try not to include too much technical detail in your presentation and explain scientific, legal or technical terms. Do not assume that MPs know them.
Use overheads and visuals (such as maps and pictures) to give your presentation more punch.

Tip #4
Be ready to answer questions from the committee. They will ask! Practicing and preparing for possible questions can make the difference between a presentation that makes an impact on members and one that is quickly out of mind.

Some other simple speaking tips are:
- Address the Committee. Do not read from your text!
- Be audible and use pauses to emphasise key points.
- Rehearse beforehand, timing yourself.
- Make eye contact with members. This will allow you to see who is interested and who is sympathetic to your point of view. It will also help you to gauge how your presentation is being received and allow you to change the focus if necessary.

Tip #5
Convince like-minded organisations to articulate your argument to the Committee. Presenting a united front can give the members the feeling that the public is behind your opinion and elected officials can be very receptive to ideas that will benefit their constituents.

Written submissions

The same rules apply to written submissions – keep it simple! Choose your strongest points and make them precise. Be alert to developments. This will allow you time to research and prepare strong submissions – on time. Try to avoid late submissions if possible.

It is a good idea to include alternative wordings to the existing legislation. Use strikethrough to indicate what you would like to be removed and then include the changes you would recommend in bold. If possible try and use 'legal language' that will allow the members to use your wording directly in the legislation. Parliament does not have their own drafters like the Departments so it is helpful to them if the wording fits with the rest of the document.

Other strategies include:

- Parliamentarians like to hear from organisations that represent constituencies. If you have members or represent a particular community or interest group, state quite clearly who you represent and what your organisation does at the top of your submission.
- Politicians love scientific studies and data; if possible use studies and statistics to back up your view.
- Chase your submissions – phone the clerk to see if it has arrived and to see whether you need to bring 40 copies or whether the clerk will be photostating them for you.
- Use an executive summary if your written submission is lengthy and make sure to keep 10 extra copies for the media.

Tip #6
Follow up oral presentations and written submissions to give your organisation and your viewpoint a face.

Finally, there are many publications that give advice on making effective presentations. If you are an inexperienced presenter try and get information on this.

informal lobbying

Informal lobbying is about finding what works best within your own personal framework. Many people try and use strategies that have worked for other people only to find that these do not fit their personality. Develop methods that will work for you.

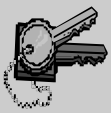
Tip #7
Become part of the furniture: attend as many meetings as possible and make yourself indispensable. This takes time and commitment.

Arrive early for meetings and observe the members as they arrive. If you arrive late for a presentation you are fifty points down before the game has even begun. Another good reason to arrive early is to observe the members as they enter the committee room: Who's friends with who? What are the interpersonal dynamics? It also allows you time to introduce yourself to members (the tea table and the lunch break are also great ways to do this) if you feel comfortable doing so, and talk to other people who are attending the meeting. In committee meetings they are often restrained by party lines but they are often more vociferous one on one. Also try and build a relationship with the Committee Chair. This will ensure that you know what is going on and keep in touch with the debate.

Alternatively, try and sit in on the meetings of your committee for a couple of days prior to your presentation. This will give you the opportunity to gauge the dynamics of the committee, what kind of questions they are asking, etc. Try and

Tip #8
Find the Members who are trying to 'sell' the same viewpoint as you are and see if they want to 'buy' ideas from you.

find who the strongest members of the committee are and which ones support your position.
Find the most vocal and involved members on a certain issue. What takes place could be described as a 'market in viewpoints' – members looking to sell an end goal need to buy ideas that will support their end goal. You can provide them with these ideas.



Key Point
NGO's are critical in providing Parliament with research, information and experience that legislators have neither the time nor capacity to collect themselves. The information you provide is vital in enabling Parliamentarians to make informed decisions.

Take brochures with you; this is a marketing opportunity for your viewpoint and your organisation. Provide information to all political parties – party study groups are often an effective way to disseminate important information.

If possible, try and be there (or available by phone) when the Committee deliberates, so that you become a resource that the Committee will turn to when they need information.

Outside the Parliamentary Committees there are other ways to improve your lobbying capacity. Try and develop a relationship with the committee clerks – they can often provide you with important information that no one else can. For example the clerk of a Portfolio Committee would be able to provide you with information about important but unscheduled meetings.

Another point of attack is government officials. This is a much harder route because there tends to be only one or two people involved and they are not mandated to consult with the public. As a result, many are not receptive to approaches. Yet it is still worth trying to influence as many people along the chain as possible.

If you are going to approach a Member, whether at tea break, at lunch, or in their office, have something meaningful to say. Ask a pertinent question about something discussed in the meeting. Pay attention during the meeting and ask members about something that relates to you. People are constantly approaching them so try not to waste their time. They will appreciate it.

Tip #9
Build a relationship with the media. Publicity will give your submission more strength and force members to listen more carefully.

It can be useful to alert the press to the issue you are pushing, thus creating the need for Parliamentarians to listen to the issue you are addressing. Build a relationship with the media so they see you as someone who will give them strong information. Tell them what you will be saying, where and when. The media is dependent on tips to find newsworthy issues and will appreciate the information – but don't expect them to always use it.

Consider lobbying the political parties as well as the Parliamentarians. It is often the party that makes the decision on policy and legislative direction.

Tip #10
Try and build relationships with the various study groups, particularly those of the ruling party.

See yourself as a resource for Parliament, someone who can provide them with information they may be lacking due to lack of time and capacity.

Effective lobbying of the department involved is the first prize in advocacy. This is a great way to influence decisions before the issue becomes political. Often politicians agree with you but can't support you in public due to the prevailing political situation. While the department is the most effective of all lobbying arenas it is also the most difficult as it is not easy to find out what is going on in most departments.

proactive lobbying

The Portfolio Committee doesn't always have the most effective oversight ability. While its structure provides it with the organisational capacity to do so, the politics often don't allow the Committees to criticize the government. This means that when dealing with issues of implementation you have to be creative. One way is to give the requisite information to an individual member who can exert influence on a government official. But make sure to follow up as people are busy and things get left behind if not pursued.

Tip #11
Sometimes providing people with information is all it takes to change their minds.

The Committees do not have researchers; they need the information and experiences that NGOs can provide them. Sometimes, basic information dissemination is all that is needed. Make the information available in an accessible and short format and be passionate about your issue.

Tip #12
Build a relationship with the committee.

If you are interested in promoting an issue proactively to the committee there are some steps that should be followed. First, go to the meetings and find out which members are interested in the issue you are dealing with. If the members are inclined, they can bring up the issue in a meeting or discuss it with the chair. If you have established a relationship with the committee you can propose the topic to the chair for discussion. Giving the chair a written document to hand out at a meeting is also a good way to raise an issue with the committee. Another route is to get the issue discussed in the party study groups (of all the parties). Even if you do not have an 'established' relationship, any individual or organisation can bring a matter before the committee or Chairperson. It is at the discretion of the Chair and committee as to how they deal with that matter.

The Asbestos Case in 1997 is a good example of proactive lobbying. This lobbying brought about the National Asbestos Summit in November 1998.

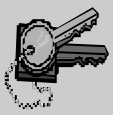
At the last committee meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs and Tourism of 1997 a discussion arose about an article in the days Cape Times about an Asbestos case in the Northern Province. During the discussions Peter Willis of the Environmental Monitoring Group, suggested to the Chair that it might be helpful for the committee to establish a sub-committee to examine the issue more thoroughly. (He had spent a lot of time with this committee and had developed a relationship with many of the members, including the Chair.)

A sub-committee was subsequently established which, some months later, gave a proposal to the Portfolio Committee recommending that it should sponsor a Summit on the issue, bringing together stakeholders from government, industry, affected communities, labour and the NGO sector. Willis was appointed to the working group delegated to organise the Summit, which included representatives from all stakeholder groups. The Summit was a success, bringing together interested stakeholders from all over the world.

We can learn from this experience. One is that working with Parliament takes a lot of effort. Whether it is establishing relationships with members and clerks or giving presentations, getting these committees to move is a challenge. One must realize that one is dealing with what is in many ways a dysfunctional organisation – it is not hard to get MPs to share with you their frustrations with the whole style of working at Parliament. On the other hand, Parliament can be a great forum of change that you can use to further your cause. Because of its newness there are opportunities to be creative. Unlike other Parliamentary democracies, the members are very accessible and the norms of conduct are still being formed. This is a definite advantage for groups looking to influence legislation.

Things to Avoid

- Don't unnecessarily antagonize the Chair or the Members of a Committee.
- Be careful about lobbying the opposition in isolation. It could alienate the ruling party who at the end of the day make the important decisions.
- Be careful of using the media to criticize Government, especially in the middle of the process. This could also alienate important decision-makers.
- Be careful who you give information to – some politicians may use your information to legitimise political agendas that you don't agree with and in the process do damage to your organisation's credibility.
- Try not to talk politics in the committee or argue with the governing party in public – being diplomatic ensures you will not burn important bridges.



Key Point
Assume that Members are listening but understand that they are dealing with a wide range of pressures and opinions.

In conclusion, try to use the Portfolio Committees as much as possible. Approximately three quarters of the time the Committee will agree to your suggestions as long they don't fundamentally compromise the goals and vision of the legislation. So get into Parliament, present your case and be heard by those who are elected to represent you. It will go a long way towards developing relevant and effective legislation and a culture of participation and openness in the new South Africa.

knowing how to use the media

Attracting the attention of the media is a key part of any advocacy campaign. Most decision-makers in government take note of what the media is saying about an issue. Getting the support of opinion formers like the editor of a national or local newspaper, issuing press releases, writing letters and articles for publication and giving radio interviews are possible components of a media campaign.

Foster contact with key people in the media over a period of time. This will enable you to ask for exposure when the right moment comes. The key to this is having a flexible strategy and the skills to accompany it. For example, learn to use press releases and media briefings effectively, offer opinion piece articles to editors and develop radio and television presentation skills.

Policy advocates can use the media in a number of ways to further their goals:

- Monitor the media coverage on your issue and determine, for each newspaper, TV or radio station, etc:
  whether they have taken an editorial position on the issue;
  which journalists are covering the issue;
  what kind of coverage they are giving;
  whether they are supportive of the issue;
  who they have already spoken to and quoted on the issue.
- Monitor the type of arguments that are being advanced on your issue so that you can prepare responses to them or use them to strengthen your position.
- Compile a file of coverage supporting your issue and refer to it in your contacts with legislators and other decision-makers, providing them with copies of particularly strong articles.
- Develop personal and/or organisational relationships with journalists who have an interest in your issue.
- Provide press releases to the media based on any submissions or testimony you have made to legislators or committees.
- Provide the media with qualitative evidence in support of your issue in the form of a good story, or arrange media interviews with people directly affected by the issue.

Two things you should remember are:
- the media usually only pays attention to issues that are newsworthy; and
- the media has inflexible deadlines.

If you have done your preparation well, you should be able to respond at short notice to media requests for information or to invitations to appear on radio or television debates. If you are not able to respond before a deadline, your window of opportunity will close.

Hints on Media Relations

Find out which reporters cover your issues. Develop a good relationship with them by contacting them and sending them information regularly. For example, contact a reporter whenever you are launching a new initiative, issuing a new study, or hosting an important official at your programme site. Be sure to know and follow the hierarchy of a media organisation.

- Become familiar with your local and national media offices before you contact them. Know the kind of stories they follow and the type of spokesperson you should send to capture their attention.
- Always respect journalists' deadlines and time constraints. Show interest in their work.
- If a reporter or Editor is subject to government censorship, respect their limitations and work with them to find a way to tell your story.
- Prepare several catchy sentences that summarise your message ('sound-bites') and use them in interviews with reporters.
- Do not try to answer a question if you don't know the answer. Never bluff. Tell reporters that you will get back to them with the information right away. Always keep your promise to call back with the information.
- When talking to a reporter be sure to give your key points first and then the background. The interview may not last as long as you expect.

knowing how to anticipate and pre-empt the opposition...

Thinking ahead and identifying those who will oppose your cause is key. You need to start sounding them out and trying to persuade them, as well as prepare arguments to counter their claims.

...and knowing how to create alliances

We all have networks of friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances that we call on for support from time to time. An advocacy network is similar, except that it is built consciously and deliberately to help you reach your advocacy objective. Networking both within and outside your organisation is therefore essential to meeting your goal.

Because networks are informal and fluid, they are quite easy to create and maintain. There are no rules for building networks because each will be tailored to the situation at hand, the relationships between organisations and the resources they have available.

monitoring the campaign

The most carefully designed campaign takes on a life of its own once it starts. If it is not monitored in terms of how it is unfolding and its responsiveness to new challenges emerging, it could be going off course (remember the campaigns of civil society ahead of the WSSD like Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, LPM, etc). It is thus worthwhile to consider the following in advance:

- What kind of attacks may be made on the campaigners and what forms could these attacks take?
- What will the appropriate defence be in this case?
- Is there a need to change the sequence of some of the planned actions to pre-empt a hostile response?

If monitoring mechanisms are in place it will be possible to build on the issues that emerge. It is important to see from the start that there is no way to anticipate all of these issues – there needs rather to be *the organisational ability to reflect on the unfolding campaign and adjust plans in tune with its needs*.

An important aspect of monitoring is observing *the effect of key people in the campaign*. Is there need for the 'leadership of ideas' to change in order to widen the constituency? Remember that it is the issue that is important; it is not necessary to keep the 'public face' identified with one set of actors; new people can take the lead if they are moving towards the same ends.

policy analysis

policy advocacy

The term "policy advocacy" means research that ends in the direct advocacy of a single policy or of a group of related policies. This connection of research with the decision network may be very direct or less direct. It may be aimed at policy makers or it may serve to challenge existing policies and appeal to rival groups or public opinion at large.

In some cases activists may argue a case based on their finding towards a particular conclusion. They may do this through recommendations. In other instances, activists may use their findings to support a case they are making. Their findings may predate the research and they may be strongly committed to a particular course of action. In this case, information is gathered and organized in order to make or sustain the point.

Information for Policy

The researcher's task is to provide policy-makers with information and advice. It assumes a case for action through either new policy or the revision of an existing one. This research may be based on the provision of useful data for consideration in policy making or it could go further to suggest definite policy options.

Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

This takes the form of *post hoc* analysis of policies and programmes. Monitoring and evaluation can be aimed at providing direct results to policy makers about the impact and effectiveness of specific policies.

Post hoc review of policy impact may be used for feasibility analysis in future policy design through a specific and feasible set of actions. The object of policy analysis is to inform policy makers of the limits of possibility.

Analysis of policy determination

This is based on the inputs and transformational processes that go into the construction of public policy. To analyse these policy processes one would have to familiarize oneself with the explicit and implicit models of the policy system.

Sometimes external forces such as the socio-economic, political environment may drive the policy system or it may be affected by internal objectives and goals and by internal perceptions of the external environment.

Analysis of Policy Content

This category of activity includes many studies which have been carried out, within the social administration and social policy field, of the origin, intentions and operation of specific policies. These are normally descriptive accounts given by academics in particular policy areas such as housing, education, health and social services. The aim of this analysis is not always to inform policy making but rather to advance academic advancement as opposed to public impact.

Assumptions about the policy Process

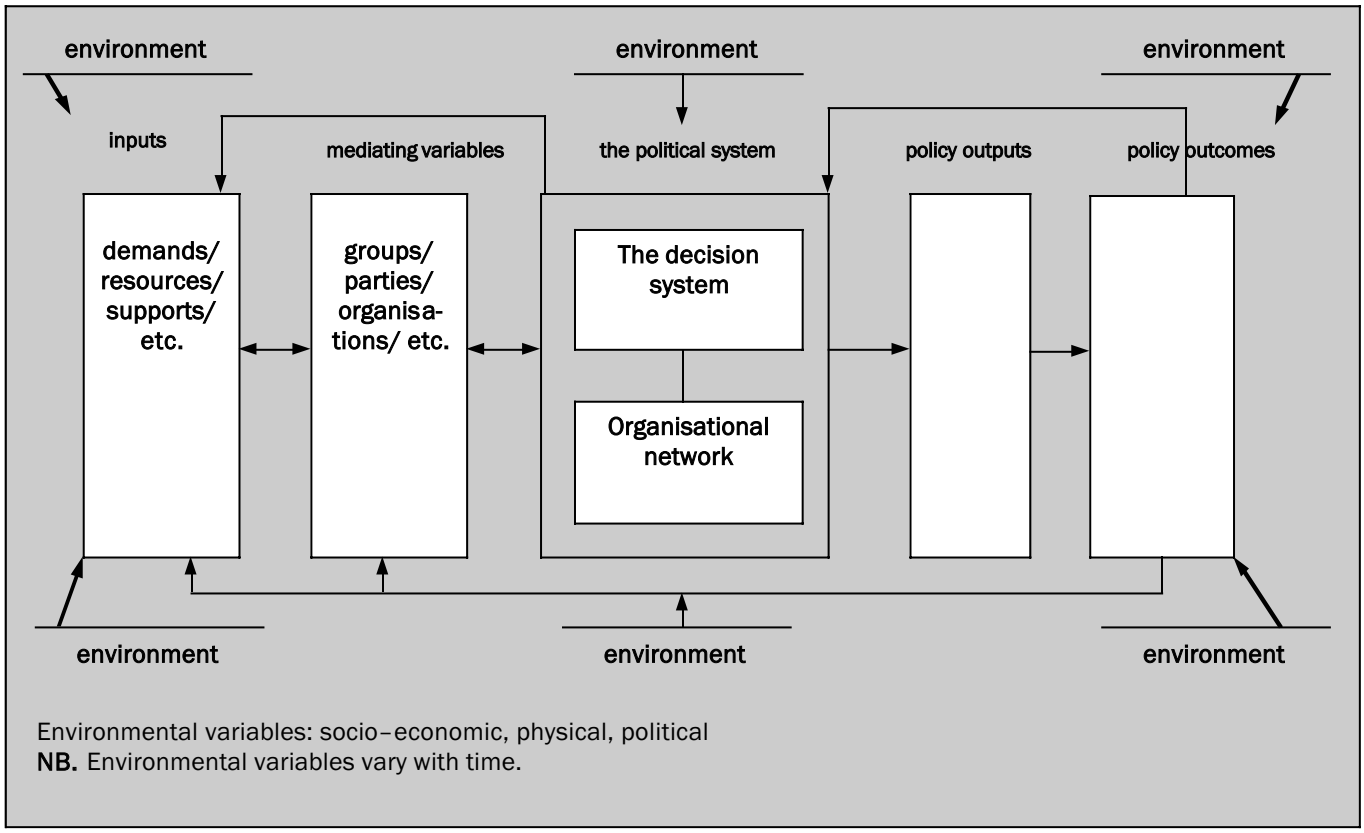
The common threads in 'policy' studies can be seen to include some interest in the content of government activity, some concern for its outcomes and an assumption that this activity has a purpose.

Some may assume that policy making is a rational process based on the classic steps from problem formulation and evaluation of alternatives through to implementation. When conflicts arise in this scenario they are admitted but they are assumed to result in stable and determined outcomes which do not interfere with the consistency of the system's operations.

On the other hand, policy making may be seen as an inescapably political activity into which the perceptions and interests of individual actors enter at all stages. Here implementation becomes a problematized activity rather than something that can be taken for granted.

Policy is seen as a bargained outcome, the environment as conflictual and the process itself is characterized by diversity and constraint.

Systems model of the policy process



The environment is defined broadly in socio-economic, physical and political terms. The environment is not structure-less. It is made up of individual, groups and organizations with values and interests, operating alone or together over time. The strength of environmental influences may vary with their proximity to the political system. This environment is a continuous presence in the policy making process, hence policy making is a fluid territory, ever-changing to meet the demands of the environment. Out of the environment, demands, resources etc. emerge. These are taken up by groups, parties, organizations which act as the mediating variable between society and the political system. The demands are presented to the political system by these organizations. This system is defined by the interaction between the decision system and the organizational network. This interaction is perceived to be a vibrant one that is based on equal partici-pation. The outcome of this interaction would be in terms of a policy output. Through implementation and its results the outcomes of the policy can be assessed. This is again weighted against the discussions held in the political system as well as against the initial demands raised from the environment. A change in the environment as a result of the policy outcome will still create an enabling environment for more demands and more policy changes and implementation. This process is on going and fluid and the terrain open for contestation.

advocacy assessment

To assist you in consolidated your organisational advocacy campaign, here are a few guidelines :

- Develop a problem statement
- Develop a campaign objectives
- Identify who needs to change their behaviour
- Identify points of Intervention
- Identify how to change their behaviour

Now assess your advocacy campaign using the following checklist:

Using the information you gathered :

- Put together a list of objectives.
- Identify the stakeholders.
- Identify points and targets of intervention.
- Identify methods to change their behaviour.

advocacy objective

- Is your advocacy objective moving smoothly through the process or have you encountered obstacles? What are the obstacles and how can they be overcome?
- What else can you do to move your objective forward? Would building new alliances or increasing your media outreach help?
- If your objective does not seem achievable should you alter it? What would be achievable? Could you achieve part of your objective by negotiating or compromising?
- How much does the policy or programme change reflect your objective? Did you win your objective entirely, partly or not at all?
- Can or should you try to achieve the rest of your objective during the next decision making cycle or should you move on to an entirely new advocacy objective? What are the advantages and disadvantages for each decision?
- Did the policy or programme change make a difference to the problem you were addressing? If you achieved your objective wholly or in part, has it made the impact you intended?

Message Delivery/Communications

- Did your message(s) reach key audiences? If not, how can you better reach these audiences?
- Did your audiences respond positively to your message(s)? Which messages worked? Why? Which did not work and why? How can you alter the messages that were not effective?
- Which formats for delivery worked well? Which were not effective and why? How can these formats be changed or improved?
- Did you receive any media coverage? Was it helpful to your effort? How could media relations be improved?

Use the above self-assessment questionnaire every 6-12 months to chart your progress and improve your activities.

consolidating the research and advocacy activity

The following guidelines will assist you in developing a strategy that will enable you to formulate a research plan as well as a campaign strategy to bring it to life.

part 1

Aim
What is your organisation trying to achieve by lobbying on policy and legislation processes? This should not be a repeat of the mission of your organisation in general, but should focus specifically on why your organisation wants to become involved in lobbying on policy and legislation.

Role Players
Who are the decision makers and role players involved in the policy and legislation environment related to the focus of your lobbying aim? Be specific where possible. If you do not know who all the role players are, suggest ways that you can try to find out.

part 2

Now that you have identified what it is you are trying to achieve and the key people and institutions you will need to lobby, you need to start identifying key tasks and activities. For this exercise, identify activities for the following three focus areas:

1. Keeping Informed (on current and new policy and legislation initiatives and the key debates in parliament and government)
2. Building Relationships (with parliamentary and government institutions, and any other key role players)
3. Getting Involved (in government department and parliamentary policy and legislation processes)

Begin
by brainstorming all the activities that your organisation can undertake for each of these focus areas. Include as wide a range of activities as possible, even if they are not realistic given the resources available to your organisation.

Next
go through the list of activities that you have identified for each focus area and indicate the level of resources required for each activity, using the 'Resource index' outlined below.

* (one star)	few resources required
** (two stars)	beginning to need dedicated resources – time, materials, planning
*** (three stars)	major resources required

Finally, using the three focus areas as headings, write the various activities onto the large sheets of paper to present to the other workshop participants. Indicate your star rating next to each activity.

part 3

Begin by brainstorming and writing down all the possible resources that an ideal lobbying strategy would need. List all the resources you can think of, even if your organisation does not have access to all the resources.

To help you in this task, try grouping the resources into different categories – for example: Information resources, Skills resources, Time resources, Financial resources and Other resources.

On the paper provided, draw up a list of the resources to present to the other workshop participants. Make a mark next to the resources that are currently available to you.

part 4

The next step is to begin looking at the activities and selecting those that are possible for your organisation. These then need to be analysed in terms of which activities will be most productive.

1. From your three lists of activities, select those that are practical and realistic given the current resources and priorities within your organisation. Underline these activities.
2. From those underlined, begin prioritising which will be most effective (Get input from your trainer). On a separate piece of paper re-organise the selected activities under the headings 'Most important', 'Important', and 'Fine Tuning'.
3. In the short term, your strategy can now be built around these lists. Suggest ways in which these activities can be allocated and built into your staff's work plan.

   Example 1: John will keep track of media debates once a week.
   Example 2: Nqaba will meet with the key department officials every six months to help build relationships. These meetings will not focus on particular issues, but the general activities of both parties, focusing on the human side of the work.
   Example 3: Nopinki will ensure we are informed when the hearings in parliament will be held. She will then co-ordinate our networks input.

part 5

Long Term Planning

If the organisation is committed to a long-term lobbying and advocacy strategy, the following part of the exercise helps to identify the long term planning needs.

Return to your original poster listing all the activities possible under the three headings. (Refer to Part 2.) Consider the activities that are not practical or realistic for you at present in terms of resources. Begin thinking how you can plan to increase your resources

appendix 1
the internet as a research tool

Search Engines

There are literally hundreds of search engines available and they all search differently. Before we start searching the World Wide Web (www) lets look at four main types of search engines:

1. Directory Search Engines

These search engines operate in the same way as a library card catalogue. You search for a word (or term). The websites included in the directory have been studied and put into various topics. Two well known directory search engines are:

Yahoo: http://www.yahoo.com/
Altavista: http://www.altavista.com/

2. Robot/Spider Search Engines

Most search engines today use a technology in which a robot or spider searches the World Wide Web or the various search engines' databases (e.g. Yahoo) to find what you are searching for. The World Wide Web is huge so you can imagine the large amount of information that is brought back to you, the searcher. It's not possible to go through all the information provided and in fact much of it will not be useful.

Tip: useful search engines that are not directories such as Yahoo, nor are they as big as AltaVista:

Lycos: www.excite.com
HotBot: www.hotbot.com
Google: www.google.com/

3. Meta Search Engines

Meta search engines search a number of search engines at the same time. This simplifies the work of the searcher and also allows for comparisons between search engines on a particular topic. One of the most popular meta search engine is:

DogPile: http://search.dogpile.com/texis/search

4. Specialised Search Engines

Specialized search engines search for websites in a specific area only such as medicine, education, health or sites originating in a particular country or using a particular language. Some good examples of these specialised search engines which you may find useful to explore are:

News Trawler: www.newstrawler.com/nt/nt_home.html
Education World: www.educationworld.com/help/guide.shtml

Let's look at local and international search engines and learn how to use them as a tool to help us do research

Tips for searching on the Internet

Read the search tips and help pages of the site you have chosen. It is no use entering a string of words to search for if the engine requires `and' between words e.g. `truth and reconciliation' or `truth, reconciliation' or `truth reconciliation'. We'll practise this later.

Spell the words or phrases you are searching for accurately as the search engines generally look for exactly what you've typed in, for e.g. `reconcilation' and `reconciliation'. Some search engines, e.g. Google will correct your mistakes and check with you if that's what you asked for. This is pretty useful if you don't spell well or if English is your second language.

When you enter a search term/word/phrase, the first 5-10 sites are usually the ones that you will need. Don't waste time going through all 20 or 200 or even 2000 pages brought back to you. A lot of it is simply rubbish. Rather keep refining your search terms. We'll practise this.

International Search engines:

WebCrawler:	http://www.webcrawler.com	AltaVista:	http://www.altavista.com/
Lycos:	http://www.excite.com/	Google:	http:www.google.com/
HotBot:	http://www.hotbot.com/		

Local search engines:

www.ananzi.co.za	www.aardvark.co.za	www.mweb.co.za	www.iafrica.com

appendix 2
research jargon

Source: http://www.areers.mmu.ac.uk/tim/sfll/res-50.htm

account for:	Explain the reasons for, giving an indication of all relevant circumstances. Not to be confused with 'give an account of' which asks only for a detailed description.
analyse:	Study in depth, identifying and describing in detail the main characteristics.
argue:	Put forward a proposition, then illustrate it, discuss its significance, and defend it against possible counter-charges, maybe for and/or against some given point of view.
assess:	Examine closely, with a view to 'weighing up' a particular situation. Consider in a balanced way the strengths and weaknesses or points for and against a proposition. In conclusion, state your judge ment clearly.
comment:	State clearly and in moderate fashion your opinions on the material in question. Support your views with reference to suitable evidence or explanations.
compare:	Identify the characteristics or qualities two or more things have in common – but probably pointing out their differences as well.
contrast:	Deliberately single out and emphasise the differences and dissimilarities between two or more things - but possibly pointing out any similarities as well.
criticise:	Give your judgement about a statement or a body of work; explore its implications, discussing all the evidence which is available. Be specific in your examination.
define:	Set down the precise meaning of something. Be prepared to state the limits of the definition. Take note of multiple meanings if they exist.
describe:	Give a detailed and comprehensive account of.
discuss:	Investigate and examine by careful argument. Explore the implications and the advantages or disad vantages. Debate the case and possibly consider any alternatives. This is probably the most common instruction term. It is inviting you to say something interesting in response to the topic in question. You can usually choose your own approach.
enumerate:	List some relevant items, possibly in continuous prose (rather than note form) - and perhaps describe them as well.
evaluate:	Make an appraisal of the worth of something in the light of its truth or utility. Emphasise the views of authorities as well as your personal estimation.
explain:	Make plain. Account for. Clarify, interpret, and spell out the material you present, giving reasons for important features or developments.
how far:	Similar to questions which begin 'To what extent...'. You are expected to make your case or present your argument, whilst showing an awareness that alternate or even contradictory explanations may exist. Careful assessment and weighing of evidence are called for.
identify:	Pick out what you regard as the key features of something, perhaps making clear the criteria you use in doing so.
illustrate:	Make clear and explicit by the discussion of concrete examples.
interpret:	Clarify or explain something, perhaps indicating how the thing relates to some other thing or way of looking at things.
justify:	Show adequate grounds for decisions or conclusions. Answer or refute the main objections likely to be made against them.
list:	Like enumerate, but possibly even in note form and probably without any need to describe.
outline:	Give the main features or the general principles of a subject, omitting minor details and emphasising structure or arrangement.
prove:	Demonstrate the truth of something by offering irrefutable evidence and/or a logical sequence of statements leading from evidence to conclusion.
relate:	Show how things are connected, and how they possibly affect, cause, or resemble each other.
review:	Make a survey of, examining the subject critically.
state:	Present the main points of an idea or topic in brief, clear form.
summarise:	Give a concise account of the main points of a matter, omitting details and examples.
trace:	Identify the connection between one thing and another either in a developmental sense over a period of time, or else in a cause-and-effect sense. May imply both describe and explain.

Bill
A Bill is introduced to Parliament for its consideration and approval. It can accept (pass) or reject a bill. Once a Bill has been passed by Parliament, the President signs it and it then becomes an **Act of Parliament**.

Policy
refers to the framework that directs government action. If new policy is adopted it sometimes requires new laws to be drafted to implement it. Policy is developed through a process of consultation. Usually a **green paper** or discussion document will be produced and government will ask for comment on the green paper from all interested parties. Government should take into account all the comment received before deciding on policy. Government then publishes a **white paper**, which is a formal statement of government policy. White papers sometimes suggest that a new law is needed or that an old law should be amended;

Parliament
is made up of two houses - the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP)

Data
this concept refers to information that is used for purposes of description and analysis of reality. It is always in the plural (the singular *datum* is rarely used). Physical data such as temperature and weight refer to information about the nature of physical reality or the natural world. Social data refer to any information that tells us something about social reality, such as demographic information, economic indicators or political values. For example, data from the CASE *Youth 2000* include information about living conditions, educational aspirations, job situation, musical tastes, policy preferences and opinions of youth about a range of issues.

Research design
a plan that outlines the elements of the research, and how they are related to each other. It is an overall scheme, which usually consists of four elements:

- The research question (for example, how to identify and understand the conditions of young people in South Africa today)
- The data needed to answer the question (data about living conditions, opinions, attitudes, and policy preferences)
- The methods suited to collecting the relevant data (such as survey, focus group discussions, interviews), and
- The analytical techniques used in order to allow the data to answer the question. This may include an analysis of the relationship between demographic characteristics of youth and their living conditions and views through quantitative techniques applied to the findings of a survey, in-depth analysis of textual material, and integration of both.

Research method
the manner in which the elements of the research design can be executed or implemented. Frequently this concept specifically refers to the ways through which the relevant data are gathered. For example, the CASE youth survey used a national sample survey, focus groups discussions, and in-depth interviews as data-gathering methods.

Research instrument
the specific tool used by each method in order to collect data. In survey research the instrument usually is a structured questionnaire; with focus group discussions it usually is a discussion guideline and moderating instructions, etc.

Variable
this is probably the most common term used in rigorous research design. A variable is a characteristic of a population that can be measured and that can take on different values. For example, height is a variable because individuals can be measured on it and have a numerical value assigned to them, ranging from low values for new-born babies (50 cm) to high values (220 cm in unusual cases). Monthly income is a variable because it varies (differs) between individuals, and can range from R0 for people with no income to hundreds of thousands of Rands for very high-income earners.

A variable is distinct from a constant, which has a fixed numerical value. For example, the distance between Johannesburg and Cape Town or between South Africa and England is a constant. The territory and population of South Africa are constants, because they are fixed for **a given point in time**, though they may vary over time. However, the population of the member countries of the United Nations is a variable rather than a constant because each country takes on a different value (in this case, country population is the variable, and each specific country's population is the value that the variable takes on in that instance). The distinction between variables and constants is important in social analysis, since as a rule **constants cannot explain variables**.

- **Measurement scales:** variables can be measured on four different scales, depending on the nature of the data. The scales are categorical (or nominal), ordinal, interval, and ratio.

- A **categorical scale** is used with variables whose values cannot be organised in any order (from bottom to top). Race and sex are examples of such variables, because the values (black and white, or men and women) do not stand in any particular order in relation to each other. The numerical values assigned to them are arbitrary. We may designate men as 1 and women as 2, or the other way around, without it affecting our analysis.

- An **ordinal scale** is used with variables whose values can be organised in an order (from bottom to top), but the distances between the different values cannot be measured precisely. For example, we measure education on this scale when we use value categories such as primary, secondary and tertiary education. Class can be measured with an ordinal scale using lower, middle and upper class categories. We know that one value is higher than another, but we do not know exactly by how much.

- An **interval scale** is used with variables whose values can be ordered and the distances between the different values can be measured precisely. For example, we measure education on this scale when we use the number of years of schooling. However, the interpretation of distances between values in an interval scale is not straightforward. A person with eight years of schooling cannot be said to be exactly twice as educated as a person with four years of schooling. Interval scales usually use **discrete** values (meaning they can only take value measured in whole numbers, without fractions).

- A **ratio scale** is similar to an interval scale, with the main difference that the values are **continuous** (which mean they can take any value, including fractions) and the interpretation of the distances between values is easier. Income is an example of a variable measured with a ratio scale: a person with an income of R5000 earns exactly twice as much as a person with an income of R2500.

The scales used to measure different variables are important in deciding which statistical techniques will be used in the analysis. Different scales call for different techniques.

Indicators
these are the concrete tools used in measuring variables. They are generated in a process known as **operationalisation**. Indicators direct us to observable and measurable data that give concrete form to the theoretical definition of a variable. For example, in the CASE youth survey we use the concept of 'resources' in our analysis and provide a definition of it. In addition we need to provide a concrete means of measuring it. This is done through measuring income, jobs, the facilities available in people's area of residence, the skills they have acquired, their educational attainment (measured in years of schooling), etc.

It is crucially important to outline the precise indicators used in the research, because projects that use similar concepts may choose very different indicators to measure them, making the task of comparing findings between different research projects difficult. If our study uses income and another study uses property to measure resources, we cannot compare their findings.

Validity
this concept refers to the extent to which the conclusions of the study can be supported by its design. Validity has internal and external aspects. **Internal validity** refers to the logic of the research design. A research design that isolates the effects of all the variables used in it, so that each one of them can be measured separately, is internally valid. A research design that does not isolate them properly suffers from lack of internal validity.

For example, a study of academic staff at the University of Natal has found that on average women receive lower salaries than men do. On the basis of this finding alone, the conclusion that the University practices discrimination on the basis of sex is **not** valid. The reason is that other factors such as rank, length of service, and departmental affiliation may also affect salary levels.

A valid design must allow us to isolate the effects of these other factors before we can reach conclusions about discrimination. A valid design would examine the salary differences between men and women employees, who have served for the same time, have identical ranks and belong to the same departments. If, after setting up the study in this way we still find salary differences between men and women, then we can validly conclude that sex discrimination is indeed a reason for the differences.

Of course, there are always many other factors that can potentially account for salary differences, and no research design can take all of them into consideration at the same time. However, the more alternative explanations we are able to eliminate in this way, the stronger our confidence in the validity of the conclusions.

External validity
is the extent to which the findings derived from one study can be generalised and assumed valid for other cases and situations (in other times, different locations, etc). The more representative of other sites our research site is, the more confident we can become that its conclusions are externally valid. In the case above we can be fairly confident that the conclusions are valid not only to the University of Natal but to tertiary education institutions in South Africa and perhaps further afield. However, if we studied a new private university, which is a branch of a commercial Australian institution, and therefore is not representative of tertiary institutions in South Africa, we would have less confidence in the external validity of our conclusions.

Reliability
unlike validity, reliability refers to the quality of the measurement rather than to the conclusions. A reliable measure shows the same results every time it is used, assuming no change has taken place. For example, asking people about their policy preferences is a reliable measure of their political attitudes, if we get the same response every time we use this measure (assuming their attitudes have not changed in the meantime). If we consistently get survey results that indicate that the majority of blacks wish government to focus on job creation and housing, whereas the majority of whites wish government to focus on crime prevention, we can be confident that we have in the survey a reliable measure of people's attitudes. However, if each study reached different conclusions when examining the issue, the reliability of the measure would be in doubt.

Face validity
essentially a fairly commonsensical, subjective judgment as to whether or not a common thread you are looking for runs through all the items. If in your project you are dealing with a subject area you are unfamiliar with, it would be a good idea to get someone with greater expertise to check your survey for this face validity.

Content validity
is a similarly subjective measurement, but adds to the requirement that a common thread should be covered that this thread should also be covered in its full range. Again, if you are investigating an area it would be a good idea to consult an expert in an attempt to ensure content validity.

Predictive validity and **concurrent validity** are concerned with how well the measure can predict a future criterion and

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Civil Society
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conceptual design, layout
and facilitation partners:
civil society research and
support collective
tel/fax: +27 31 764 1760
email: labrat@dbn.stormnet.co.za

centre for civil society
university of natal durban
tel: +27 31 260 3577
fax: +27 31 260 2359
email: ccs@nu.ac.za