

# Qualitative research in criminology

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DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY SCIENCE



ONLY STUDY GUIDE FOR **CMY3708**

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PRETORIA**

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# Orientation

## Dear Student

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the module, Qualitative Research Methodology in Criminology (CMY3708). The purpose of this module is to equip you with the knowledge and skills that you need to conduct qualitative research in Criminology. You will gain knowledge in the use of qualitative methods in social science research, with a focus on how these techniques are used specifically in the context of research in Criminology. You will also be introduced to various qualitative techniques, with the focus on the reasoning process required for their proper use. Apart from gaining knowledge of qualitative research, you will gain skills and basic experience in the collection and reporting of data and research findings.

This module will therefore be useful to students in the Criminological sciences who are required to do research or to understand the research process and its conventions in order to deal with the literature. It is also necessary preparation for those who wish to continue with Criminology at postgraduate level; hence, it is a compulsory module.

At this stage you are probably wondering where you should begin. In the words of the wise king from Alice in Wonderland: “Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop.” Start off by reading systematically through **Tutorial Letter 101** for this particular module. You will find this tutorial letter and the complete study guide under the tab “Official Study Material”. Your assignments are included in the Tutorial Letter 101.

From time to time we will have an online discussion. Click on the tab “Discussion” forum to participate in the discussion. You should also use this platform to ask for clarity when you experience problems.

The tab “FAQ” (Frequently Asked Questions) contains questions and answers about the general administrative and academic issues relating to the module.

Please visit the “Announcement” section regularly. This is where I will post announcements about recently uploaded study material, comments on the content of the module, general feedback on student performance in the assignments, information on the examination, and suchlike.

Please note that only assignments in PDF format will be accepted for this module.

*Follow these steps to submit an assignment via myUnisa:*

- Go to myUnisa.
- Log in with your student number and password.
- Select the module.
- Click on assignments in the menu on the left.
- Click on the assignment number you want to submit.
- Follow the instructions on the screen.

If you experience any problems when submitting your assignment electronically or

problems regarding cancellation, resubmission and so on, please contact the myUnisa Helpdesk at [myUnisahelpdesk@unisa.ac.za](mailto:myUnisahelpdesk@unisa.ac.za)

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## SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Module CMY3708 is aimed at helping you to achieve specific learning outcomes on which you will be assessed.

### *Specific outcome 1*

- Demonstrate well-rounded and systematic knowledge of the design and planning of a qualitative research process in the field of criminology.

### *Assessment criteria*

- Demonstrate a coherent and critical understanding of qualitative research in criminology.
- Exhibit a coherent and critical understanding of the philosophical assumptions, paradigm and interpretive communities/framework in qualitative research.
- Demonstrate the ability to delineate a research problem using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments.
- Solve unfamiliar concrete and abstract problems and issues using appropriate theoretical frameworks, based on a proper literature review.
- Critically analyse the suitability of a qualitative approach using theory-driven arguments.
- Demonstrate a coherent and critical understanding of different qualitative research designs.
- Display well-rounded and systematic knowledge pertaining to the crimino-ethical requirements in qualitative research.

### *Specific outcome 2*

- Display well-rounded information retrieval skills and the ability to critically analyse and synthesise qualitative data.

### *Assessment criteria*

- Demonstrate well-rounded and systematic knowledge of the sampling methods in qualitative research.
- Demonstrate a coherent and critical understanding of data collection approaches in qualitative research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the qualitative data analysis and interpretation methods that apply to the field of criminology.
- Demonstrate a coherent and critical understanding of standards of validation and evaluation in qualitative research.

### *Specific outcome 3*

- Present and communicate qualitative research findings and own ideas and opinions in well-structured arguments, showing an awareness of audience and using academic/professional discourse appropriately.

### *Assessment criteria*

- Demonstrate the ability to use academic/professional discourse applicable to the field of criminology appropriately.

- Demonstrate the ability to present and communicate information and own ideas and opinions in well-structured arguments.
- Adhere to accepted guidelines in preparing presentations according to prescribed formats and, where applicable, use IT skills appropriately.

## Study package

The study package for this component of the study material comprises the following:

- this study guide, which you received from Unisa
- Tutorial Letter 101 for this module

Your journey through this module consists of three phases, which can be broken down as follows:

- **Phase 1 Tutorial Letter 101**
- **Phase 2 CMY3708 study guide**
- **Phase 3 Assignments**

## Phase 1 Tutorial Letter 101

Start off by reading systematically through Tutorial Letter 101 for this particular module. This tutorial letter will guide you through your studies. It is also a valuable source of important information, such as when to submit your assignments. It is therefore imperative that you read through Tutorial Letter 101 carefully before you commence with the material in the study guide.

## Phase 2 CMY3708 study guide

During phase 2 you need to work through the study guide. The guide is constructed in such a manner that each study unit builds on the previous one. You are therefore advised to start at the beginning of the guide and work systematically through it to ensure that you master the content step by step.

We expect you to master the study material in such a way that you understand all the information and arguments set out in the study units and the definitions of words. You must not only understand the information, but also be able to interpret it and discuss it in your own words. Forming only a vague impression of the study material and presenting superficial arguments on it will not be sufficient; you must ensure that you have a thorough understanding of the study material and have mastered the details.

We recommend that you first read through the study guide to get an overview of the content and become familiar with the different topics and how they are arranged in a specific order. Thereafter you should study the subject matter in the study units and assess your progress with the aid of the activities and self-assessment exercises/tasks.

Activities are learning experiences that help you to unlock the study material and to understand it better.

In each activity we explain

- why you should do the activity
- how you should carry out the activity
- how you should record your answer

Every activity is followed by a discussion or feedback that forms part of the learning content. Read the feedback only after you have completed the activity. If you read the feedback first, you will be denying yourself the opportunity to learn from that activity. Furthermore, feedback on an activity may not make sense unless you have actually done that activity. If you find it difficult to do an activity, it means that you have not fully grasped the relevant learning material and you need to work through it again.

You will also find self-assessment exercises at the end of each study unit. The aim of these exercises is to help you to test your knowledge and understanding of the study material. So make sure that you can do the tasks (answer the questions). The self-assessment questions will be formulated in the same way as in the assignments and examination (short questions and multiple-choice questions). Therefore the activities, assignments and self-assessment exercises will also assist to prepare you for the examination.

### Phase 3 Assignments

Assignments are an important part of the learning material for this module. As you work through the assignments, study the reading material, discuss the work with fellow students and do research. The discussion forum on myUnisa for this module is one of the methods you can use to engage with other students. By doing these activities, you will be actively engaged in learning. Looking at the assessment criteria given for each assignment will help you to gain a clearer understanding of what is required of you.

To make sure that you know exactly what we expect of you, we give an explanation of verbs or action (“doing”) words below. The terms in brackets at the end refer to the specific level of knowledge acquisition involved.

**Complete**: Whatever is missing to make a full sentence must be filled in (knowledge).

**Name** (mention, list, formulate, give): Memorised learning content, such as facts, terms and concepts, must be rendered in the form of single words or short sentences (knowledge).

**Indicate** (show, identify): Symbols, names, concepts and so on must be retrieved from memory and information about them given briefly (knowledge).

**Describe** (explain, elucidate): The “what” and “how” of a particular topic must be indicated without giving your own comments or arguments. Describing entails merely “sketching an existing picture”. You have to show whether you know what a particular phenomenon looks like or how a particular process proceeds (knowledge).

**Sketch** (give an outline/overview): An existing issue must be reproduced/rendered just as it is, without any change, comment or reasoning (argument). Here the discussion takes place principally under main points or in subsections (knowledge).

**Define**: The instruction or assignment entails pure reproduction of information by knowing and being able to reproduce a pithy, authoritative explanation or description of a concept. A definition consists of three parts, namely, the “term”, “class” and “distinguishing characteristics”. “Term” refers to the thing that is being defined. “Class” is the category to which the term belongs, and here the similarities between the term being defined and other terms mentioned in the same class or category are mentioned. “Distinguishing characteristics” of the term are distinguishing features (knowledge).

**Explain** (make clear/elucidate): An indication must be given that the learning content

has been understood properly, as well as how things are linked (relate to each other), why this is so and not otherwise, and why a specific result follows. The explanation must be illustrated with examples and illustrations, and reasons must be given for statements or conclusions (comprehension/insight).

**Illustrate by using a sketch, diagram or outline** (depict graphically): An explanation must be given with the assistance of a sketch/diagram/outline (comprehension/insight).

**Interpret** (construe): Facts must be commented on and examples given to substantiate/support the comments. Your personal assimilation of information, interpretation or construction must be clearly evident (comprehension/insight).

**Discuss** (argue, give reasons for, debate): The essence(s) of a matter must be highlighted and explained (comprehension/insight).

**Sum up/summarise**: Certain information must be acquired by the application of particular processes or methods (application). Write a brief synopsis capturing the essence of the information (comprehension/insight).

**Demonstrate** (show how): Substantiate information or illustrate it with reference to an appropriate example (application).

**Apply**: Acquired knowledge and understanding (comprehension) must be used by applying it to new and actual situations (application).

**Deduce** (infer, conclude): Logical consequences (effects), with reasons, must be indicated from given information (application).

**Classify** (categorise): Information must be placed in an existing classification system (application).

**Distinguish/differentiate**: A clear distinction must be made between the specific matters mentioned (analysis).

**Compare**: Two or more matters must be weighed up against each other in respect of certain features (analysis).

**Indicate differences and similarities**: A comparison must be made of two or more matters to point out specific similarities and differences (analysis).

**Analyse**: Distinguishing elements (features) must be determined; causes and effects must be identified; and joint/mutual relationships must be determined and indicated (analysis).

**Examine**: Data must be analysed or divided into parts to indicate causes, effects, relationships and so on (analysis).

**Design** (create, develop, compile, combine, formulate, compose, build up): Create or develop a new/original combination or composition of information/data (synthesis).

**Propose/advise**: Expert knowledge must be provided in the solution of a problem (synthesis).

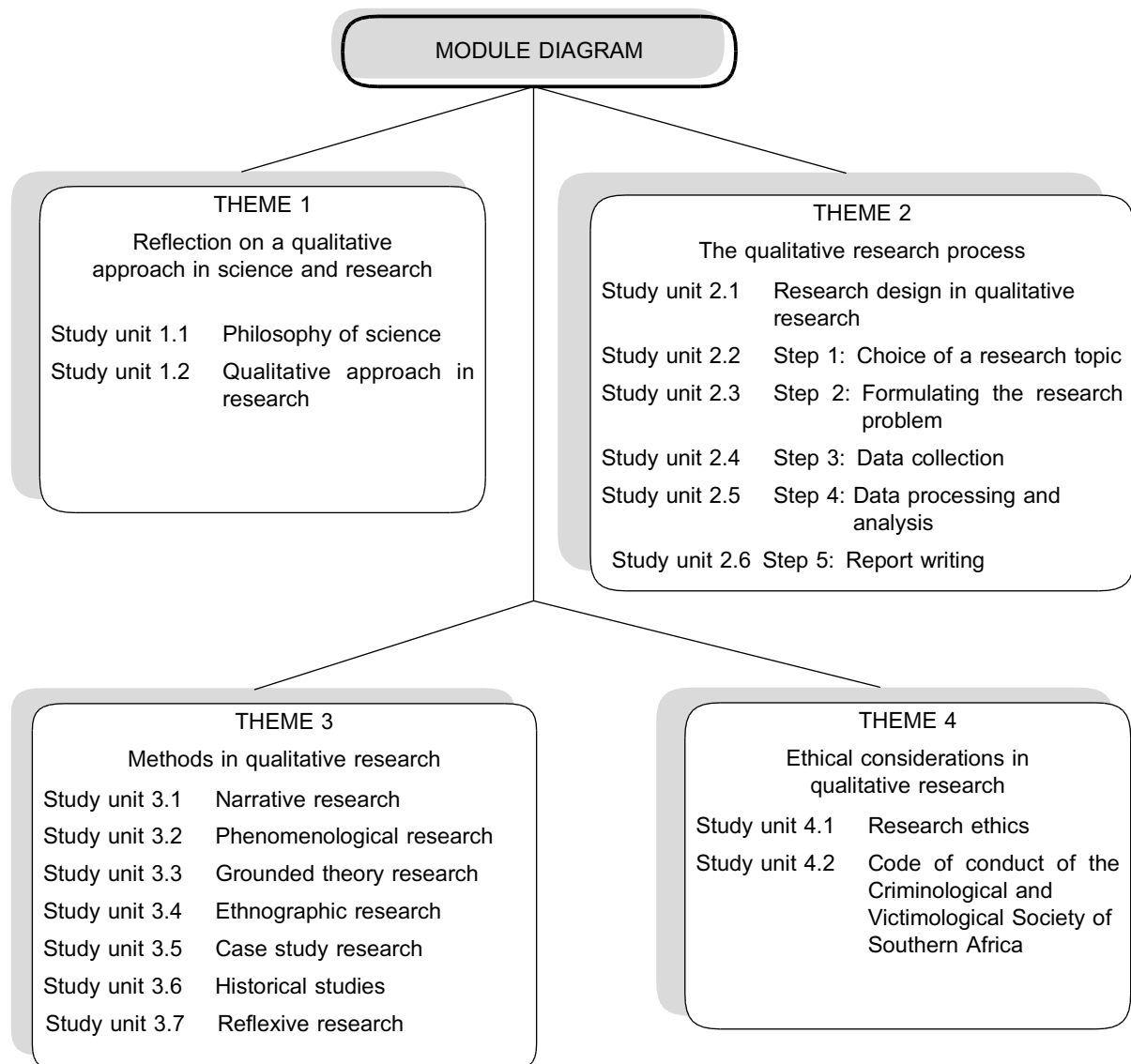
**Criticise/judge** (give an opinion on, account for, justify, take a stand on, evaluate/assess): A value judgement must be made on the basis of particular points of departure, assumptions or criteria (evaluation).

## Assessment plan

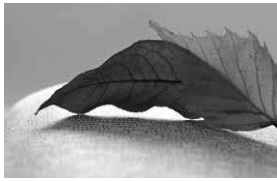
*Formative assessment* will consist of two compulsory assignments. Assignment 01 will consist of essay-type questions and Assignment 02 multiple-choice questions. Together, Assignments 01 and 02 will comprise 20% of the year mark.

The *summative assessment* will be a written examination of two hours, consisting of long (30-mark) and short (15-mark) essay-type questions. This final assessment will contribute 80% towards the final mark and will be moderated by external moderators.

A final mark of fifty per cent (50%) is required to pass this module.







## Reflection on a qualitative approach in science and research

Learning outcomes for this unit:

In this unit you should master the following:

- Describe the concept of “philosophical assumptions” in your own words.
- Explain the five philosophical assumptions in qualitative research that will influence the design of the study and how the research study is conducted and indicate how each one influences the researcher’s perspective on his/her life-world.
- Define the term “paradigm” and explain what a paradigm shift is.
- Write notes on the practice of research in criminology.
- Define the concept of “qualitative research” in your own words.
- Discuss the characteristics of qualitative research according to Ross and Rallis.
- Write notes on the purpose of qualitative research in criminology.
- Examine the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

### Introduction

Every research methodology and approach is grounded in the nature of the information and knowledge it pursues. The philosophy of science is an umbrella term for the different ways in which science and scientific research are approached from a philosophical point of view. It is concerned with the impact that the philosophical assumptions, paradigms and methods used in research has on the generated knowledge.

Research in social sciences originated in various long-established arguments about science and knowledge. Throughout the ages, philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle explored and wrote about the origin and characteristics of science and knowledge. This debate literally tried to answer the questions: How do we know what we know and how do we know what we know is accurate? It may appear foolish to ask such questions, but consider, for example, if one person tells you that the earth is flat and another that it is round. Who are you going to believe? But even more importantly, why are you going to believe a specific opinion? In order for you to come to a conclusion, you will have to decide whose viewpoint is the truth. This will most probably involve assessing whether the method used to acquire the knowledge is scientific, or only based on speculation.

The arguments about the origin and nature of knowledge resulted in the development of the scientific idea. The scientific idea represents the researcher’s beliefs and the goals pursued by him/her in the search of knowledge.

This has a direct influence on the approach that a researcher will follow in a study. Against this background, we wish to introduce you to the different philosophical assumptions and paradigms that influence how researchers think about the social world and knowledge in general. In this theme we also explain how this worldview will influence a researcher's decision to undertake qualitative research.





helps the researcher to realise that there are different perceptions that should be considered when planning research projects.



## Epistemology

If ontology deals with the objects and behaviour that are studied, then epistemology deals with how we think about the objects and behaviour that are being studied. The word “epistemology” is derived from the Greek words *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (explanation). According to Thomas (2009:87), epistemologists ask questions such as:

- What is knowledge and how do we know this?
- Are there different kinds of knowledge?
- Are there good procedures for discovering knowledge?
- Epistemology is concerned with analysing the nature of knowledge and the means of acquiring knowledge. Various academic disciplines have different assumptions about what constitutes scientific knowledge and how it is acquired.

For example, in a study where a qualitative approach is followed, the researcher will be required to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Methods such as observation, interviews and case studies will be used to collect data. In contrast, studies that use a quantitative approach will follow a different approach to collecting data. Here the researcher will make use of questionnaires, experiments and other methods that will result in numerical and statistical data. It is therefore important for the researcher to decide on the epistemological approach in a study because it is fundamental to the formulation of a study’s rationale and choice of research methodology. Once a researcher understands the relationship between epistemology and methods in a study, the study will make much more sense.

## Axiology

Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics in research. Traditionally, scientific researchers seek research that is value-free and unbiased. In contrast, qualitative approaches acknowledge the value a researcher brings to a study. In this case values are viewed as part of the basic beliefs that affect the entire research process, such as the choice of the research problem, research paradigm, data collection and analysis strategy, and so forth (Klenke 2008:17).

According to Creswell (2007:18), qualitative researchers position themselves in the study. This is reflected in the method of data collection and analysis, as well as in the

presentation of the research. This is illustrated in the following extract from a study on female victims of marital emotional abuse.

**Reasons given for remaining in abusive relationships:**

*The professional women in this study were asked direct questions in order to find out why they stayed in their abusive relationships. The following reasons were given:*

*Most of the respondents who had children stated that they remained in their relationships in order not to subject their children to the trauma of separation and divorce and felt strongly that their children should grow up with a father figure in the family home. One respondent stated, “I did not want my children to be caught up in ‘the battle of the broken home’, and subjected to all the labels that go hand in hand with that” (Barkhuizen & Pretorius 2005:18).*

From this example, the researcher’s presence is apparent in the research process. The questions/themes are formulated by the researcher and the interpretation of the dialogue and the presentation thereof represent the researcher’s understanding of the interview.

## Rhetoric

Rhetoric refers to the ability to use language effectively and persuasively in order to capture the essence of a phenomenon. In qualitative research, specific rhetoric related to qualitative research has developed over time. For example, instead of using quantitative terms, such as internal and external validity, qualitative researchers will refer to the validity of a study in terms of its credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Creswell 2007:18). In both instances the terminology refers to the scientific soundness of a study. Qualitative researchers also tend to refer to people who take part in a study as “participants”, as opposed to the term “respondents”, which is used in quantitative research. The rhetorical approach in research therefore also represents the philosophical assumptions of a study.

## Methodology

Each research approach has a unique methodology, which is rooted in the philosophical assumptions of the study. A qualitative study is characteristically inductive and shaped by the researcher’s collection and analysis of the data. The researcher follows a specific approach to data collection and analysis that is unique to qualitative research.

The research design process in qualitative research therefore begins with the philosophical assumptions resulting in the researcher’s choice to do a qualitative study. The researcher thus makes a conscious decision to follow a qualitative approach which, in turn, is represented in the philosophical assumptions of the study.

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is for you to review information on the different philosophical approaches. Study section 1.1.1 and write brief notes on each philosophical approach. If you completed the activity correctly, you should be able to understand the difference between each philosophical approach.

Philosophical assumption	Characteristics	Question relevant to the assumption
<b>Ontological</b>		<p><i>Focus on the characteristics and answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is it that we are studying?</li> <li>● What are we looking at?</li> <li>● What is the nature of reality?</li> </ul>
<b>Epistemological</b>		<p><i>Focus on the characteristics and answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is knowledge and how do we know things?</li> <li>● Are there different kinds of knowledge?</li> <li>● Are there good procedures for discovering knowledge?</li> </ul>
<b>Axiological</b>		<p><i>Focus on the characteristics and answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is the role of values and ethics in the study?</li> <li>● What approach to values and ethics is followed in the study?</li> </ul>
<b>Rhetorical</b>		<p><i>Focus on the characteristics and answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Which style of “research language” is followed in the study?</li> <li>● What does the research language tell us about the study?</li> </ul>
<b>Methodological</b>		<p><i>Focus on the characteristics and answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Which data collection approach is being followed?</li> <li>● What does the data collection approach tell us about the study?</li> </ul>

## 1.1.2 Paradigms or worldviews

From the previous discussion we can conclude that the philosophical assumptions are a reflection of the particular stance a researcher takes in choosing a qualitative approach. After making this choice, the researcher further shapes the study by choosing a paradigm or worldview for the study (Creswell 2007:19).

A paradigm is a model or framework for observation or understanding. It shapes how people see and understand their life-world (Babbie 2007:32). Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of science, used the word “paradigm” to refer to a fixed set of assumptions about the way a study should be done (Thomas 2009:73). His idea was adopted by social scientists and applied in the field of research as we know it today. Paradigms represent the shared ideas prevalent in a specific research community. A paradigm shapes the way a researcher thinks about a research project and it might change if the paradigm is found to be inappropriate (Thomas 2009:72). This is referred to as a paradigm shift. Researchers might also make use of multiple compatible research paradigms.

Positivism was the dominant paradigm for many years and was later challenged by another framework of thinking called interpretivism. We are now going to explore each of these paradigms briefly.

### Positivism

Positivists believe that scientific methods are the best approach to study both natural and human phenomena. For positivists, sensory observation, experimentation, testing and generalisation of knowledge (findings) are the only accepted way to obtain objective and scientific knowledge. Similarly, they assume that human behaviour and experiences can be observed, described, explained, predicted and controlled in the same way as natural phenomena. The researcher is detached from – or uninvolved – in these facts, observing them objectively or neutrally.

The concept of value-free knowledge is important in this approach and it is believed to be possible by means of effective research methods, namely, by making use of valid (standardised or tested) research instruments, such as a standardised questionnaire. The information is processed statistically and presented in a numerical format. The reliability of the questionnaire is calculated in terms of statistical tests.

### Interpretivism

Interpretivism is also referred to as the anti-positivistic, or humanistic, approach. This approach acknowledges the differences between natural and human phenomena and claims that natural and human phenomena cannot be studied in the same way. Interpretivists argue that people do not live in an empirically observable reality, but in a world where they interact with each other and where their life-world is constructed through experiences, perceptions and interactions with other people. They therefore propose that the only way to study human phenomena is for the researcher to immerse himself/herself in the research context. In other words, the researcher needs to interact with the people being studied, as well as observing their behaviour and the way they interact with one another and their environment.

In terms of research, paradigms represent the researcher’s opinion on what is the best way to think about and approach a study. As stated previously, there are two distinct approaches in research, namely, quantitative and qualitative research. It is often assumed that positivism resulted in quantitative research and interpretivism in qualitative research. In this regard, however, it should be noted that scientists differ on

the division of paradigms and that the division between these paradigms is not set in stone. For example, a researcher who conducts a qualitative study may follow a positivistic approach if he/she is of the opinion that the phenomena can be studied best by means of sensory observation and/or experimentation (Creswell 2007:20). Similarly, a researcher might make use of a mixed-methodology approach, where a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is used to study a phenomenon.

### 1.1.3 The practice of research in criminology

Nearly everybody has an opinion on what causes crime in South Africa and how we can prevent it. The difference between these explanations and criminological explanations is that criminologists study crime and criminal behaviour by making use of scientifically rigorous research. In this regard, criminology is viewed as a specific approach to the discourse and inquiry about all aspects of crime that has developed from empirically grounded scientific study. This viewpoint therefore acknowledges the important role that research plays in the development of the criminological field.

Criminology's approach to the study of crime is unique because it follows a multidisciplinary approach. In this regard, Noaks and Wincup (2004:5) refer to criminology as the meeting place for a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, social work and legal studies. Criminology, as an academic subject, encompasses all aspects of crime.

As is the case with other social sciences, a researcher's philosophical perspective on reality and on the appropriate role of the researcher influences the paradigm followed in a criminological study. A criminologist following a positivist philosophy will strive to advance scientific knowledge. Consequently, he/she will seek to develop scientifically validated knowledge about crime as a phenomenon. Positivist research is structured and aimed at testing empirical realities without becoming personally involved. Research is carried out systematically and with scientific rigour (Bachman & Schutt 2011:73–74). For example, where a positivistically oriented researcher undertakes a study on bullying, the purpose of the investigation will be to establish the prevalence of bullying behaviour in South African schools. The information is collected from a group of school children who are a representative sample of children exposed to bullying behaviour in South African schools. The aim in choosing a representative sample is to make the findings of the project generalisable and therefore applicable to all the schools in South Africa. The researcher makes use of a questionnaire and statistical methods to collect data. Graphs and tables are used to present the findings. The researcher's conclusion is deemed to be valid knowledge and can be used to inform policy on bullying in South Africa.

Studies in which an interpretivist philosophy is followed aim to understand the meaning people give to reality and how their reality is shaped and influenced by their perceptions and interactions with others. The researcher actively participates in the research process by making use of interactive methods to collect data, such as interviews and observation. The purpose of the study is to make assumptions about the nature of people and society and the relationship between people and society (Bachman & Schutt 2011:74–77). If the same example is used, an interpretivistically oriented researcher who undertakes a study on bullying in schools will aim to explain the effect of bullying behaviour on the victims of bullying. The information is collected by means of personal interviews and the sample is collected by making use of a sampling technique where participants are chosen on the basis of their knowledge or

experience of the topic being studied. The researcher makes use of narrative analysis to identify themes associated with victimisation as a result of being bullied. The researcher furthermore observes children during breaks to understand the interactional relationships between the school children. The researcher writes a report and the findings are used to write a support programme for the victims of bullying.

An integrated philosophical approach is also used in criminological studies. In this instance the researcher integrates aspects of both the positivist and interpretivist philosophy in a study (Bachman & Schutt 2011:77–78). For example, the researcher might explore the impact of bullying behaviour on the victims by making use of structured questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions. In this instance the researcher is not personally involved – hence the positivistic approach. The data are analysed using narrative analysis and statistical techniques, thus integrating positivistic and interpretivistic methods.

In the quest to answer questions about crime, criminological studies also follow an empirical and theoretical route. Empirical studies rely on theoretical explanations of crime to inform the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Similarly, theorists draw upon empirical research as a method to test theories and to develop new theories (Noaks & Wincup 2004:5).

The debate on which philosophical approach is the most appropriate in criminological research is ongoing. Both approaches have contributed to enrich criminology's empirical and theoretical knowledge base. In conclusion, the choice of philosophical approach depends on the researcher's philosophical perspective, as well as the appropriateness of the philosophy in terms of the research goals.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is for you to think critically about the philosophical approach you would prefer to follow if you had to do research.

Read the examples used on bullying in schools and write down what you like and dislike about the positivist, interpretivist and integrated philosophy. Lastly, write down which philosophical approach you would choose if you had to do a study on bullying in schools. Give reasons for your choice.

### F e e d b a c k o n A c t i v i t y

There is no correct or incorrect answer to this activity. Different researchers tend to favour different philosophies (positivist, interpretivist or integrated). It might also happen that the research topic is more suited to a specific philosophy. Whatever the case, the purpose of this activity was to help you to analyse the different philosophical approaches in research critically.

## Summary

In this study unit we introduced the philosophical assumptions that will influence the design of the study. We also explained how each of these assumptions influences the researcher's approach. In the next study unit we will focus on the qualitative approach to research.

## Self-assessment exercise for study unit 1.1

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Choose the most correct answer:

1. Quantitative methods are usually numerical and can be ordered, while \_\_\_\_\_ methods are usually written or spoken words or observations that do not have a direct numerical interpretation.
  - a qualitative
  - b explanatory
  - c exploratory
  - d descriptive
2. Which of the following refers to the role of values and ethics in research?
  - a ontology
  - b methodology
  - c axiology
  - d epistemology
  - e rhetoric
3. Which of the following refers to the ability to use language effectively and persuasively?
  - a ontology
  - b methodology
  - c axiology
  - d epistemology
  - e rhetoric
4. Each research approach has a unique \_\_\_\_\_, which is rooted in the philosophical assumptions of the study.
  - a ontology
  - b methodology
  - c axiology
  - d epistemology
  - e rhetoric
5. Which of the following deals with how we think about the objects and behaviour that are being studied?
  - a ontology
  - b methodology
  - c axiology
  - d epistemology
  - e rhetoric





## A qualitative approach in research

### 1.2.1 Defining qualitative research

It is quite difficult to explain what qualitative research is. Although the research process for quantitative and qualitative research is the same, the method and approach used to collect, analyse and present research findings are different. There are numerous definitions of the term “qualitative research”, some comprehensive and others quite specific. We are now going to explore some of these definitions.

According to Lichtman (2010:5), qualitative research is a general term that represents the way a researcher collects, organises and interprets information that has been acquired from humans, using their eyes and ears as filters. According to Lichtman, this often involves in-depth interviews or the observation of humans in their natural environment and social settings. In this regard qualitative research differs from quantitative research, which relies on hypothesis testing, cause and effect, and statistical analysis. In accordance with this definition, the purpose of qualitative research is to examine the participants’ understanding and views of their social environment. Emphasis is placed on the researcher’s direct involvement in the research process. The researcher plays a fundamental role in the collection and interpretation of the data. The fundamental differences between a qualitative and quantitative approach in research are also highlighted.

Dantzker and Hunter (2006:67) define qualitative research as “an examination and interpretation of observations as expressed by the researcher’s words rather than by numerical assignments”. This definition also emphasises the researcher’s participatory role in the research process. In terms of the presentation of the data, it is in a verbal format, as opposed to the numerical format used in quantitative research.

Bachman and Schutt (2011:16) focus on the methods of data collection and presentation used in qualitative research. According to them, qualitative research makes use of methods such as observations and in-depth interviews in order to capture social life as participants experience it. The data are mostly in the form of written or spoken words or observations, which do not have a direct numerical interpretation.

#### Activity

The purpose of this activity is for you to formulate a definition of qualitative research methodology.

Study the preceding paragraphs. Write down the three parts of the definition:

Term

.....  
.....  
.....

Class

.....  
.....  
.....

Distinguishing features

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**F e e d b a c k**

The term is “qualitative research methodology”. In the space next to “Class”, you must state clearly that we are dealing with a method of data collection, interpretation and presentation that differs from quantitative research. The distinguishing features are as follows:

- Qualitative research is a general term that represents the way a researcher gathers, organises and interprets information.
- The researcher plays an active and participatory role in the collection and interpretation of the data.
- Specific methods such as observations and in-depth interviews are used to capture social life as participants experience and perceive it.
- Data are mostly in the form of written or spoken words or observations that do not have a direct numerical interpretation.

Qualitative research can therefore be defined as an umbrella term for a research approach that aims to study participants’ experiences and perceptions of their social world. The researcher plays an active and participatory role in the collection and interpretation of data. Research data and findings are mostly in the form of written or spoken words or observations that do not have a direct numerical interpretation.

## 1.2.2 Characteristics of qualitative research

The above definitions help us to form an idea of the characteristics of qualitative research.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is for you to identify the characteristics of qualitative research.

Study the definitions of qualitative research and write down the characteristics.

Characteristics of qualitative research:

### F e e d b a c k

In general, qualitative research is characterised by participatory research where the researcher plays an active role in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. The data reflect participants' experiences and perceptions of their life-world. Research data and findings are mostly written or spoken words or observations.

Ross and Rallis (in Creswell 2007:181–183) discuss the characteristics of qualitative research in more detail:

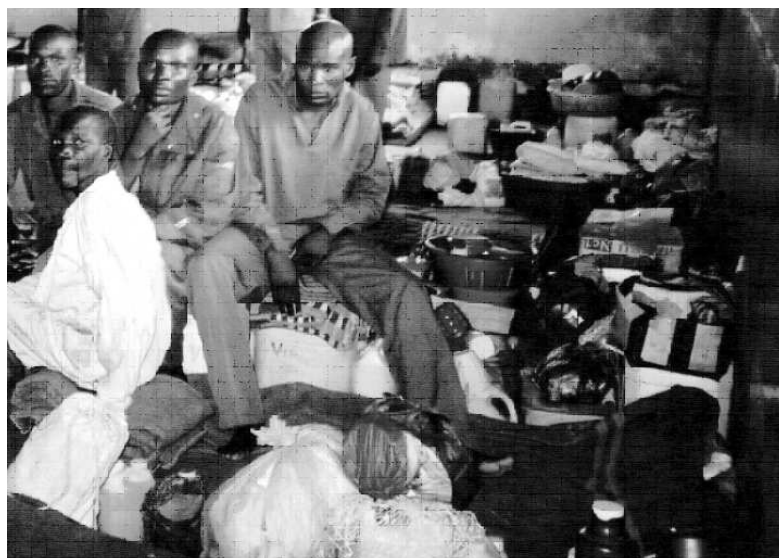
- Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting. This implies that the researcher will often go to the site where the research takes place and actively participate in the research process. The study that Sudhir Venkatesh conducted in Chicago on a crack-dealing gang is a good example of qualitative research and the role of the researcher in the process. During the study, Venkatesh befriended a gang leader named JT and spent seven years studying the gang under JT's protection. He documented what he saw and experienced from his privileged position of access. He observed JT and the rest of the gang as they operated their crack-selling business, as well as how they interacted with each other within the complex organisational structure of the gang and the community in general. You can read more about this study in the book Venkatesh wrote, entitled *Gang leader for a day: a rogue sociologist takes to the street* (2009).

As can be seen from the above example, the qualitative researcher is able to develop an understanding of the participants and their environment. This is primarily because the researcher is directly involved and interacts with the participants and personally experiences the environment in which they function.



- Qualitative research is interactive and humanistic and makes use of multiple methods to collect and analyse data. Qualitative researchers actively participate in the research process and seek to build rapport and actively involve the research participants. Researchers are sensitive to the rights of participants and make an effort not to disturb the research site. As stated previously, multiple methods are used, including intensive interviews, focus group interviews, observation and literary sources such as bibliographies and diaries. The data are in text format of, although sometimes images and sound clips are included.

In a book exploring the use of media in research, Dicks, Mason, Coffey and Atkinson (2005:78) are of the opinion that multimedia has the potential to open up the field of meaning to the researcher, thus enriching the researcher's understanding of the research topic. For example, in a needs assessment report of Zambia's Prison Service, it was found that overcrowding in prisons aggravates and precipitates the increasing indignities and suffering on the part of inmates (Tkachuk, Kriel & Clack 2005:9). The researchers observed that prisoners sometimes lacked adequate clothing, bedding and – in some instances – even adequate space in which to lie down or sit. In this instance, photographs – such as the one below which was taken in Kabwe Maximum Prison in Zambia – were used as data to show the extent and impact of overcrowding.



Although the photographs were used only during data collection, they could also have been used in the report itself to increase the readers' understanding of the research findings.

- Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured; it tends to unfold as the research process progresses. This implies that aspects of the research may develop or change during the process, for example the research question may change or the researcher may realise that a different method of data collection or analysis would be more suitable for the study.
- Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. This means that the researcher interprets the data by using various methods to analyse the data, such as the identification of themes or categories. The researcher then interprets the data or draws conclusions about their meaning from a personal and theoretical perspective. The researcher's personal interpretations are thus part and parcel of qualitative data analysis.
- Qualitative researchers systematically reflect on their role in the research process and are mindful of their personal biography (preconceptions) and how this can influence and shape the study. This process of introspection and acknowledgement of personal biases, values and interests is characteristic of qualitative studies. Merter (in Creswell 2007:182) is of the opinion that the "personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self". The result is that it brings honesty and openness to the research study.
- The qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically. Qualitative research follows a broad approach and is concerned with all facets of the phenomenon being studied. For instance, in the example of prison overcrowding in Zambia, it is not sufficient in a qualitative study to determine only that overcrowding is a problem in Zambian prisons; for the purposes of such a study, the researcher will most probably also be interested in exploring the impact of overcrowding on the prisoners' physical, emotional and social functioning.
- The qualitative researcher uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted, interactive and simultaneous. This characteristic reflects the researcher's approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation. The reasoning in qualitative research is largely inductive. Inductive reasoning is based on the assumption that if we observe or experience many of the same themes or behaviour patterns, then we can assume that a general principle is involved. For example, if all the prisoners that were interviewed in the Zambia Prison Service study admitted to being depressed because of the overcrowded cells, it can be assumed that overcrowding in prisons causes depression. According to Creswell (2007:183), the thinking process in qualitative research is interactive and consists of a process whereby the researcher's thought processes will switch between data collection and analysis and the reformulation of the research problem. The data collection and analysis and the writing up of the data thus all happen simultaneously.

We can therefore conclude that the researcher plays an active role in the research process and that data analysis and interpretation are done through the researcher's interpretational lens. The research process itself is more flexible than in a quantitative approach and it emerges during the research process and is shaped by the process. The research participants' experiences and perceptions of their life-world are central to qualitative research.

### 1.2.3 Purpose of qualitative research in criminology

A pertinent question when we explore the purpose of qualitative research is: Why do we make use of qualitative research in criminology? The most logical answer to this question is because the specific research question can best be answered by following a qualitative approach. However, Corbin and Strauss (2008:13) are of the opinion that this is not necessarily the case. They propose that committed qualitative researchers tend to structure the research question in such a way that the only way to answer it is by following a qualitative approach.

Qualitative researchers differ from quantitative researchers in that they are more interested in discovering “new” knowledge than in testing variables.

They tend to have a natural curiosity about people and their life-world, which drives them to study social phenomena first-hand. Furthermore, qualitative researchers generally enjoy playing with words, creating order in the midst of seeming disorder, and thinking in terms of complex relationships (Corbin & Strauss 2008:13). Earlier in study unit 1.1, we concluded that a researcher’s choice of which research approach to follow reflects how the researcher thinks about the social world and knowledge (research). We can therefore assume that the purpose of qualitative research is to allow qualitative-orientated researchers to explore social phenomena from an interpretative and less structured methodological approach.



Qualitative research strives to explore the inner experiences of participants in order to determine how meanings are formed during interaction between people, as well as through cultural influences. The purpose of qualitative research, therefore, is to describe or understand the phenomena that are being studied from the participants’ perspective. Qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of how the

collected data influences – and is influenced by – the research participants. It therefore facilitates the understanding of experiences, perceptions and processes within a specific context and from the perspective of those being studied.

**For instance, did you know that the definition of crime is based on the perceptions of the people who formulated the definition? For example, abortion is classified as a crime in Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Malta, while it is deemed to be legal in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada. In South Africa, abortion was made legal only after the implementation of the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1996. Before that law was passed, abortions were viewed as a crime in this country.**

Discussion on abortion:

Read the above paragraph and answer the following questions:

1. Is abortion a crime in South Africa?
2. What does the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1996, state about abortion?
3. Name five countries where abortion is a crime.

The example above indicates that what is perceived as a criminal act is therefore not static and may differ from country to country. In this regard, Lösscher (2000) is of the opinion that the analysis of crime and criminal behaviour is concerned with the interpretation of situations and actions. The definition of crime is based on the definition of the situation (how we understand it) and the perceptions of different parties (offender, victim, witness, police officer, judge, etc.) in the process of social interaction. Because the study of crime focuses on people's perceptions and their interactions, such analysis is not possible from a quantitative paradigm (Lösscher 2000). This is because files, data and statistics relating to crime do not represent the "reality of deviancy".

Tewksbury (2009:38) concurs that the advantage of qualitative methods is that they provide a more in-depth understanding of crime, criminals and the justice system than would have been possible if only quantitative research was used. This is because the knowledge gained through qualitative research is more informative and richer and offers better understandings compared with those which can be obtained by means of quantitative research. Qualitative research is well suited to criminological research because it focuses on the meanings, traits and defining characteristics of events, people, interactions, settings/cultures and experience. In this regard qualitative methods are ideal for gaining true understandings of the social aspects of how crime occurs and how formal structures (police and the justice system) and informal structures (communities) react to this threat. It also explains crime in culturally grounded contexts (Tewksbury 2009:38).

Tewksbury (2009:54–57), in a discussion on the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, identified the following additional purposes of qualitative research in criminological studies:

- Qualitative methods focus on depth rather than breadth, thus focusing on the quality of the data rather than the quantity thereof. The value of qualitative data lies in the ability to "deeply learn" about the subject and to understand its complete context. Its purpose, therefore, is not to create generalisable findings.
- Qualitative research aims to collect data in a naturalistic setting and to take the environment in which the phenomenon occurs into consideration. Qualitative research therefore provides a more thorough, although less generalisable, understanding of the studied phenomenon in its natural environment.
- The focus of qualitative research is primarily on micro-level issues and it explores a wide range of aspects associated with the perspectives and functioning of the person(s), group(s) or setting(s) in order to create a holistic understanding of a phenomenon. In contrast, quantitative research methods in the social sciences are broader and often address issues at the macro societal level. Such methods draw on multiple aspects of what the researcher believes is important about the person(s), group(s) or setting(s), but do not paint a picture of how all these facets come together. Quantitative studies tend to point out and illuminate some connections and parts of "the picture", but they cannot determine which colours, shapes and textures are necessary in order to "paint a meaningful picture". In contrast, qualitative research, by focusing on micro-level issues and concepts, is able to incorporate all the necessary colours, shapes and textures – including shadings and uses of alternative brush strokes – into "the painting". While a quantitatively informed painting may allow the viewer to know the subject of the painting, some areas of the canvas will be left blank; colours are also unlikely to be correct (and may even be misleading) and textures will be uniform and flat. The qualitatively informed painting, however, will be complete, including colours, shapes and textures that are blended and varied, and the painting will be nuanced and show

depth. Quantitative research therefore fails to account for the full set of potentially influential factors that may be important for understanding how experiences are constructed.

- Qualitative researchers build and advance theories. Quantitative methods offer some information and understanding about criminology and criminal justice.

This is not to say that qualitative methods are better or more useful than quantitative methods. Many scholars of criminology and criminal justice will probably be able to justify why quantitative and/or mixed methodology (a combination of quantitative and qualitative research) methods should be used in criminological studies. Nevertheless, it should be noted that qualitative methods have a definite role to play in studies where an understanding of experiences, perceptions and processes – in context and from the perspective of those being studied – is required.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 1.2

Fill in the missing words.

Qualitative research strives to explore the \_\_\_\_\_ of participants in order to determine how \_\_\_\_\_ are formed during \_\_\_\_\_ between people, as well as through \_\_\_\_\_ influences. The purpose of qualitative research, therefore, is to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ the phenomena that are being studied from the participants' \_\_\_\_\_. It provides a thorough understanding of how the collected data influences, and is influenced by, the research participants. In this way it facilitates the \_\_\_\_\_ of experiences, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ within a specific context and from the perspective of those being studied.



## THEME 1: SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Describe the concept of “philosophical assumptions” in your own words. (15 marks)
2. There are five philosophical assumptions in qualitative research that will influence the design of the study and how the research study is conducted. Write down these philosophical assumptions and indicate how each one influences the researcher’s perspective on his/her life-world. (15 marks)
3. Define the term “paradigm” and explain what a paradigm shift is. (15 marks)
4. Write notes on the practice of research in criminology. (15 marks)
5. Define the concept of “qualitative research” in your own words. (15 marks)
6. Discuss the characteristics of qualitative research according to Ross and Rallis. (30 marks)
7. Write notes on the purpose of qualitative research in criminology. (15 marks)
8. Examine the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. (30 marks)

### Answers to self-assessment exercises in theme 1

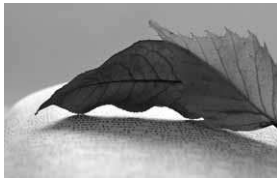
#### Study unit 1.1

1. a
2. c
3. e
4. b
5. a

#### Study unit 1.2

Qualitative research strives to explore the inner experiences of participants in order to determine how meanings are formed during interaction between people, as well as through cultural influences. The purpose of qualitative research, therefore, is to describe or understand the phenomena that are studied from the participants’ perspective. It provides an in-depth understanding of how the collected data influences, and is influenced by, the research participants. It therefore facilitates the understanding of experiences, perceptions and processes within a specific context and from the perspective of those being studied.





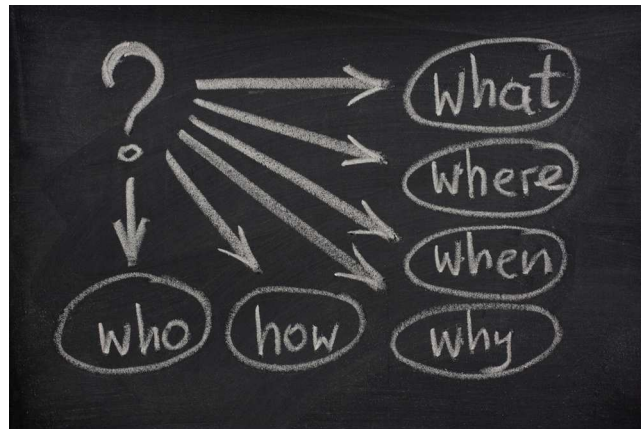
## The qualitative research process

“Research is to see what everyone else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.” *Albert Szent-Gyorgyi*

### Introduction

When starting any project, there are specific steps you need to follow before you can commence with the venture. For example, if you bake a cake, there are certain decisions you need to make before you can bake the cake. Firstly, you need to decide what type of a cake you would like to bake; then you have to look for a recipe. After finding a recipe, you have to make sure that you have all the ingredients and the necessary equipment to bake the cake. You also need to make sure that you have the necessary skills and enough time to complete the project. What do you think will happen if you skip any of these steps?

In theme 2 we are going to explore the decision-making steps that should be followed when you conduct research. Emphasis will be placed on how a qualitatively oriented researcher will follow these steps.





## Research design in qualitative research

### Learning outcomes for this unit

In this unit you should master the following:

- Distinguish between basic and applied research.
- Distinguish between the five decision-making steps.

#### 2.1.1 Decision-making steps in the research process

The research process consists of a series of logical decision-making steps. These steps are necessary in order to conduct a research project systematically. Although it is not advisable to omit any of these steps, there is also no need to follow the steps slavishly, since researchers who conduct different types of research do not place equal emphasis on the same steps.

Although different authors may use different terminology for the different steps, in essence they remain the same. For the purpose of this discussion we can distinguish between the following decision-making steps:

Step 1: Choice of a research topic

Step 2: Formulating the problem

Step 3: Data collection

Step 4: Data processing and analysis

Step 5: Report writing

The steps have to be followed in a logical sequence. In other words, you cannot start collecting data until you have chosen the research topic and formulated the research problem.

In step 1, the researcher becomes aware of a research problem, which subsequently motivates him/her to conduct a study on this subject. The researcher may become personally aware of the problem or may be made aware of the problem within his/her working environment. For example, a police officer might become concerned about police members being described in the media as corrupt. This might motivate the police officer to do research on this topic.

In step 2, the researcher defines and outlines the problem to be researched. For instance, using the example about police corruption and the media, the researcher can explore the impact that such allegations of corruption could have on productivity in the

police force. In choosing a sample, the researcher might decide to focus on police officers working in the specialised crime section. During this step the researcher therefore decides what the study will be about and who the study should focus on.

The researcher collects the data or information during step 3. For example, the researcher might conduct interviews with police officers working in the specialised crime unit. The data or information is processed and analysed during step 4; finally, a report outlining the findings of the study is written in step 5.

The decision-making steps are not independent; they act as building blocks with each one building on the previous one. The various decision-making steps in the research process are the same as those in the research design and planning process.

It should also be noted that the same steps are followed in both qualitative and quantitative research. The difference between these two approaches lies in the method that is used to collect, analyse and present the findings.

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is to familiarise you with the decision-making steps in the research process.

Study section 2.1.1 and indicate the action that takes place during each step. Furthermore, categorise each of the following statements regarding a study on robbery according to the relevant step in the decision-making process.



1. “Being tied up and held at gunpoint in your home by robbers is an all-too-real nightmare for many Gauteng residents.” Quotes such as these have made people question their safety at home. Home is supposed to be a place where we can feel safe and protected from the horrors and dangers of the outside world.
2. Participant 1. “It was the worst experience of my life, especially because I was victimised on my own property, where I am supposed to feel safe.”
3. The data gathered answered the research questions, clearly indicating the physical, psychological/emotional and financial consequences of the criminal event for the victims.
4. Participant 2 “They forced their way into our lives and changed our lives forever. Most of all, they took our peace of mind.”
5. Crime statistics on incidents of armed robbery at residential premises, such as those of the SAPS, indicate that this phenomenon is on the increase in our country, specifically in Gauteng.
6. While examining a few quotes from the victims used in this study, the researcher found it worthwhile to research the victims’ experiences of armed robbery incidents at their residences, in accordance with a qualitative approach.

7. The researcher made use of in-depth interviews with the victims.
8. The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire during the interviews.
9. The aim of this research project was to research incidents of armed robbery at residential premises in an empirical phenomenological manner, gathering in-depth information on the physical, psychological/emotional and financial impact of the crime on the direct and indirect victims.
10. The researcher wrote an article on this topic, which was published in the *Acta Criminologica* journal.
11. The researcher summarised the main points of each case in order to identify themes.
12. This study found that two of the direct victims did not feel any physical pain during the robbery incident, even though they had suffered physical injuries.
13. From the data gathered in this study, the researcher was able to identify certain common trends in all of the case studies.
14. The researcher wrote a thesis on house robberies in South Africa.
15. The sample consisted of four cases, including three direct victims of armed robbery at residential premises and a fourth indirect victim of the same crime.

Steps	Action taking place in this step	Statement number
Step 1		
Step 2		
Step 3		
Step 4		
Step 5		

## F e e d b a c k

If you have understood the decision-making steps in the research process properly, your categorisation should look as follows:

- Step 1: Choice of a research topic: 1, 5  
 Step 2: Formulating the problem: 9, 15  
 Step 3: Data collection: 2, 4, 7, 8  
 Step 4: Data processing and analysis: 3, 11, 6, 12, 13  
 Step 5: Report writing: 10, 14

### 2.1.2 Basic and applied research

We can differentiate between basic and applied research. As in the case of the research steps, basic, applied and evaluation research can be done by following either a quantitative or qualitative approach.

Basic research is conducted solely for the purpose of gathering information and building on existing knowledge. It is viewed as the purest form of research and is used to enrich the knowledge base in a specific discipline (Bachman & Schutt 2011:373). According to Palys (2008), basic research is undertaken for its own sake in order to advance knowledge, develop theory, solve an interesting theoretical puzzle, or address the curiosity of the researcher. It is therefore irrelevant whether the research will produce useful, practical or generalisable findings. We can therefore say that the purpose of basic research is to acquire knowledge for the sake of acquiring it. In other words, basic research is done for the sake of acquiring new knowledge and is not concerned with practical or real social problems. Basic research is generally portrayed as pure, highly controlled, bias-free research where a rigorous approach is followed, such as occurs in laboratories.

Applied research, in contrast, specifically aims to do something practical about an identified problem. According to Brodsky and Welsh (2008), its primary focus is on the production of knowledge that is practical and has immediate application to pressing problems of concern to society at large or to specific public or private research clients. It is research that is designed to engage with people, organisations and interests and is aimed to inform human services, public policy and local, national and international decision makers.

Applied research is used to investigate and solve social problems. The approach is sometimes viewed as less controlled, less rigorous, potentially biased and untheoretical in its orientation. Applied research is widely used to inform governmental policy and legislation, as well as to address pressing social issues such as crime and criminal behaviour. Its flexibility, versatility and utility ensure that it can be used in a wide variety of settings, such as in social services, educational settings, government agencies, business and consumer sites, and rural and urban communities.

We can therefore conclude that basic research and applied research differ in purpose, context and methods. Bickman and Rog (1998:xxiii) identified the following differences:

- Applied research aims to improve our understanding of the problem, while basic research intends to expand our knowledge. Although applied research might result in the growth of knowledge, it is on a more limited basis.
- Applied research is often confronted with undefined issues, which are characterised by multiple and often broad research questions. The research environment also tends to be complex. For example, studies aimed at identifying the causes of delinquent behaviour involve multiple explanations. The researcher therefore needs to make conscious choices in order to weigh the relevance of the various factors. In contrast, basic research is narrow in scope and is aimed at investigating a specific topic. For example, in basic research, the purpose of a study might be to determine the effect of alcohol on a person's ability to make responsible decisions. The researcher is required to focus on a single measurement task, which is associated with a rigorous research methodology.
- Basic research is generally concerned with whether there is a causal relationship between variables and, if so, whether this relationship is statistically significant. In applied research, both practical and statistical significance is of importance. (These concepts will be discussed in more detail in the module dealing with quantitative research.) In other words, applied researchers are also interested in whether the relationship between the variables is meaningful. For example, applied researchers are interested not only in whether alcohol has an influence on a person's ability to make responsible decisions, but also whether a reduction in alcohol abuse would improve a person's ability to make responsible decisions.

- Applied researchers are more interested in applying and using theories that could produce important, practical results. In other words, they will ask: Does the theory help to solve the problem? For basic research, it is the theory that is of primary importance. The researcher will ensure that the variables in the study are a flawless representation of the underlying theoretical constructs. For example, in a study exploring the relationship between frustration and aggression, the researcher would make use of every possible method to ensure that the study deals with aggression and not any other related construct, such as anger.
- Applied research can be conducted in diverse contexts, such as schools, prisons and communities. As stated previously, these diverse and complex settings can be demanding for the researcher. Basic research, in contrast, is often conducted at universities or in similar academic environments. This enables the researcher to monitor and control the study closely.
- Applied research is mostly conducted by a team of researchers, which is likely to be multidisciplinary. This is in order to answer the multiple diverse questions that originate from applied studies. Basic research, in contrast, is typically conducted by an individual researcher who behaves autonomously and controls the scope and approach of the study.

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is to help you to understand the difference between basic and applied research.

Study the case studies below in which two research situations are sketched for you. Read through them and decide which one fulfils the requirements of basic research and which one the requirements of applied research.

### Study A

Why law enforcement is not enough: lessons from the Central Karoo on breaking the cycle of crime and violence.

In 2003 the CSIR Crime Prevention Research Group (CPRG) was commissioned by the European Union on behalf of the South African Police Service (SAPS) to facilitate the development of a local crime prevention strategy for the Central Karoo District Municipality. The intention was that the learning achieved in the Central Karoo could be used elsewhere in the country, particularly in rural contexts.

The study provided an opportunity to better understand the cycle of crime and violence at a local level and to use this understanding to promote crime prevention interventions with short, medium and long-term objectives. The study focused on the causes of crime and violence, and identified the roles and responsibilities of a wide range of





stakeholders including, but by no means confined to, those in the criminal justice system (Holtmann 2008:15).

## **Study B**

Living with crime does crime affect victims' perceived quality of life

Crime is thought to be a major concern that shapes the everyday lives of South Africans. But what impact does living with high levels of crime have on the mindset of ordinary citizens? A recent household crime victimisation study conducted in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality provides tentative answers to this question.

A total of 3 300 householders participated in a sample survey conducted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in October and November 2002, as part of a project to assist the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality with the development of a crime prevention strategy for the area. The survey covered experience of crime, general perceptions of crime, personal and household protection, policing, local government and service delivery, and quality-of-life issues.

The sample included people from all walks of life. A quarter of householders were under 35 years and over a third were 50 years or older. Average household incomes varied considerably and a third of households received social assistance, in most cases an old-age pension. Some 42% of householders were black, 35% white, 23% coloured and 1% Indian. White householders were overrepresented in the sample owing to a sample design that was stratified according to police station areas rather than geographical areas (Moller 2004).

## **F e e d b a c k**

Study A is an example of applied research. The research is clearly aimed at the practical prevention of crime in the Central Karoo. The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of crime and violence in the Central Karoo area in order to develop sustainable crime prevention initiatives in this area. The study made use of a multidisciplinary team and focused on various causative factors associated with crime and violence. The study furthermore aimed to develop a model for crime prevention which could be replicated in other areas in South Africa.

Study B aimed to increase the knowledge of the perceived impact of crime on the victim's quality of life. The study is not concerned with applying the research findings to the solution of a practical problem. This study can therefore be classified as basic research.

It should be noted that the researcher can follow a qualitative approach in both basic and applied research studies. In both studies above, A and B, the researcher could have made use of traditional qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews, observation, documents or case studies.

## Self-assessment exercise for study unit 2.1

Indicate which characteristics can be associated with basic research and which ones with applied research.

- a. The research aims to do something practical about an identified problem.
- b. It is conducted solely for the purpose of gathering information and building on existing knowledge.
- c. Its purpose is to acquire knowledge for the sake of acquiring it.
- d. This approach is sometimes viewed as less controlled, less rigorous, potentially biased and untheoretical in its orientation.
- e. It aims to improve our understanding of the problem.
- f. It is generally portrayed as pure, highly controlled, bias-free research where a rigorous approach is followed, such as occurs in laboratories.
- g. It intends to expand our knowledge.
- h. It is used to investigate and solve social problems.
- i. It is generally concerned with whether there is a causal relationship between variables and if this relationship is statistically significant.
- j. The research environment tends to be complex.

Basic research: .....

Applied research: .....



## Step 1: The research topic

Learning outcomes for this study unit:

In this unit you should master the following aspects:

- Identify a research topic.
- Explain the concepts of feasibility, social importance and scientific relevance.
- Choose a research topic in qualitative research.

### Introduction

In step 1 the researcher must choose what phenomena to study. This is one of the most difficult aspects of doing research because it is something the researcher needs to live with for some time. The motives for this choice are also important. In this section we will explore the different things that are important when a researcher chooses a research topic.

### 2.2.1 Identifying a research topic

In step 1 the researcher needs to decide what to study and research. But this is not as straightforward as just picking a topic. Think back to theme 1, where we discussed the influence a researcher's paradigm or worldview has on how a study is approached. The researcher's paradigm is of importance because it determines how the researcher thinks about and approaches a research project. For example, researchers who prefer a qualitative paradigm are generally of the opinion that a phenomenon can only be truly understood through a first-hand study of the participants' experiences and perceptions of their social world. The researcher will therefore choose a research topic that is suitable and in line with a qualitative paradigm.

It is also important that the researcher have a clear understanding of the discipline that underpins the study. In the example we used about corruption in the police force, there will be a difference in the research approach, depending on whether the researcher has a background in police science, psychology, criminology or law. For example, a researcher with a legal background will most probably focus on the impact of corruption on convictions, whereas a psychologist might focus on the psychosocial impact of corruption on the morale of the police officers. In this regard, Bachman and Schutt (2011:22) state that criminological research topics are about aspects of crime



or criminals and seek answers through the first-hand collection and analysis of information. A criminologist might, for example, focus on the influence of corruption on police officers' ability to fight crime.

The researcher's motive for the study is also important. The choice of a research topic is a personal process as well as a scientific or professional one (Bachman & Schutt 2011:22). On a personal level, self-initiated research, where researchers undertake a study on their own, might stem from topics of personal interest. However, a researcher might also participate in contract research, where a study is commissioned by an organisation, such as the Human Sciences Research Council, government agencies or private or non-governmental organisations (Ladikos 2009:137). In other words, the researcher must be clear about what he/she would like to achieve with the research.

Thomas (2009:3) emphasises that when choosing a research topic, it is important to remember that the motive for doing research is to seek an answer to an actual question or real-life problem.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to identify the aspects that should be considered when identifying a research topic.

Name the aspects that should be taken into consideration when identifying a research topic.


### F e e d b a c k

The aspects that should be considered during the identification of a research topic are the researcher's paradigm, the discipline that underpins the study and the researcher's motive for undertaking the study.

## 2.2.2 Identifying research topics in criminology

According to Bachman and Schutt (2011:23), criminological theory is one of the primary sources of research topics for criminologists. Criminological theories provide an explanation as to why people commit crime and why crime occurs. Criminological theories are therefore a rich source of research questions.

For example, the social disorganisation theory directly links the ecological characteristics of areas where people stay with high crime rates. In terms of this theory, it is proposed that disorganised neighbourhoods offer opportunities for youths to become part of a subculture in which delinquency is an acceptable type of behaviour and that criminality is acquired in these social and cultural settings through a process of interaction. Today, the principles of this theory are applied in the

geographical analysis of crime, which is interested in the relationship between people and the environment in which they live and function. The research conducted by Horn and Breetzke (2009) is an example where principles of the social disorganisation theory were used in the development of a safety plan for the 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup.

Personal interest and the experiences of others, such as knowing someone who is a victim of spousal abuse, can also generate topics for research. A criminologist might also be inspired by the work of other researchers. Research articles often end with proposed topics for further research. A researcher might also study topics that have personal or economic advantages, such as completing a study to obtain a degree or doing contract research for payment (Bachman & Schutt 2011:23).

In order to choose a research topic, Bachman and Schutt (2011:24) advise researchers to keep a list of topics that interest them personally. The researcher can then narrow the list down to the most interesting and workable topics. Finally, researchers should evaluate each topic against the following criteria to ensure the significance of the study.

### 2.2.2.1 Feasibility

The feasibility of the topic is concerned with whether the researcher will be able to conduct the study within the allocated (or a reasonable) time frame and with the available resources. For instance, if a researcher is interested in finding out if services are effective in the reduction of youth crime and delinquency, he/she must be aware that this is not a study that can be completed in a short period of time. Such a study will require years of data collection and research. It will probably also require multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews, observations and document analysis.

In the above example, a further question the researcher needs to consider is whether he or she will be able to gain access to the young people who are referred for diversion services, as well as whether he/she has adequate infrastructure (people and funds) to complete such a study. If the answer to one of these questions is “no”, the researcher must carefully consider whether the study is actually feasible (Bachman & Schutt 2011:24).

Another factor that a researcher should consider in terms of the feasibility of a study is whether he/she has the right qualifications and experience to do the study. This is especially relevant in qualitative research, where the researcher actively participates in the collection and interpretation of data. In terms of studies that, for example, explore the impact of a crime on the victims, the researcher needs to have specific skills in order to conduct interviews in such a manner that it does not cause the participants further trauma and thus revictimise them. This aspect also forms part of the ethical considerations that are important in qualitative research.

### 2.2.2.2 Social importance

Owing to the nature of its objectives, qualitative research affects the lives of the research group and/or individual participants in one way or another. Criminological research should



therefore focus on essential areas that can facilitate positive change in the lives of the participants; alternatively, it should focus on research that is important for the development of the field of criminology or for the purpose of developing policy (Bachman & Schutt 2011:25).

### 2.2.2.3 Scientific relevance

It is important for researchers to find out what research has been done on a topic before they undertake a study. This is to ensure that a study is not duplicated unnecessarily and that it will contribute to the knowledge base of a discipline. Even if your topic has been researched before, it is not necessarily a bad idea to do further research on the topic. In this instance a researcher could replicate a study to ensure its validity or follow a different approach in order to add to the existing knowledge on the topic. Such research contributes to the growth and development of a discipline and prevents it from stagnating.

Criminological research questions should be grounded in existing empirical literature and theories. A methodical review of prior research is an essential step before choosing a research topic. This will assist a researcher to expand his/her thinking about the research questions identified, as well as exposing him/her to alternative arguments and perspectives (Bachman & Schutt 2011:27). Social disorganisation theory, as discussed previously, is a good example of where further research made a valuable contribution to the criminological knowledge base. This resulted in important research in the area of geographical crime analysis.

### 2.2.3 Choosing a research topic in qualitative research

In theme 1 we discussed the characteristics of qualitative research. We concluded that there are fundamental differences between studies that follow a qualitative and a quantitative approach. The unique characteristics of a qualitative study are also reflected in the research questions of a qualitative study.

#### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to enable you to review the characteristics of qualitative research and to identify aspects that are important when choosing a research topic in qualitative research.

Study section 1.2.2, which deals with the characteristics of qualitative research. List the things that will influence the choice of a research topic in qualitative research and indicate how they will influence your choice of a topic.


## Feedback

Your answer should include the following aspects:

- Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting and studies social phenomena, such as people in interaction with each other and their environment.
- Qualitative research is interactive and humanistic and makes use of multiple methods.
- Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured.
- Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive.
- The qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically.

Your research topic should therefore include, and be reflective of, the abovementioned characteristics. Look at the list of titles of articles that have been published in the *Acta Criminologica* journal. Although it is not always possible to identify the approach that was followed purely from the title of an article, see if you can identify in which of these articles the researcher made use of qualitative research:

1. Snyman, R. "The meaning of professionalism in policing: a qualitative analysis."
2. Laxminarayan, M. "Measuring crime victims' pathways to justice: developing indicators for cost and quality of access to justice."
3. Prinsloo, M & Bradshaw, D. "The experience of transformation by police officers."
4. De Wet, J, Potgieter C & Labuschagne, GM. "An explorative study of serial rape and victimisation risk in South Africa."
5. De Wet, NC. "Newspapers' portrayal of school violence in South Africa."

If you chose numbers 1, 3 and 5, you would be correct. The first title clearly indicates that the topic is qualitative in nature; in the other titles, the words "experience" and "portrayal" indicate that the researcher explored the participants' perceptions of their life-world. In contrast, in titles 2 and 4, the terms "indicators for cost and quality" and "victimisation risk" focus on processes and statistically measurable concepts rather than human behaviour.

## Summary

In this unit we explained the importance of choosing a research topic and the aspects that you need to consider when starting a research project. The next study unit deals with the formulation of the research problem.

## Self-assessment exercise for study unit 2.2

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Analyse the influence that criminological theory, the personal experiences of the researcher and the work of other researchers could have on the choice of a research topic in criminology. (15 marks)



## Step 2: Formulating the research problem

Learning outcomes for this study unit:

In this unit you should master the following:

- Explain and understand the unit of analysis
- Know what is meant by “research goal”.
- Know what is meant by “research strategy”.
- Be able to discuss what is meant by “problem statement”.

### Introduction

The formulation of the research problem is a complicated part of the research process. The manner in which the researcher formulates the research problem is important because it will determine the research method of the study. It also indicates the parameters of the study.

Some authors refer to this step as the formulation of research questions. But for the purpose of our discussion, we will use the terminology “research problem”. The research problem is a statement that identifies the scope and area of the research topic. It also identifies the specific phenomenon that is being studied and demarcates the research sample that the study focuses on (Corbin & Strauss 2008:25).

Qualitative research is emergent in nature, rather than tightly prefigured. Although qualitative research tends to be more flexible and the research question or method might change, it is still important to formulate the research problem as accurately as possible. In order to do so, the researcher needs to consider the units of analysis, the research goal and the research strategy (Ladikos 2009:138). Once the problem has been formulated, the researcher needs to state the problem. It is important that the problem be stated clearly because it tells the reader what question and/or problem the researcher is trying to address, as well as how the researcher aims to do so.

### 2.3.1 Units of analysis

The units of analysis are the *who, what and where* of the study. Usually the units of analysis are the entities that the researcher will observe and study (Ladikos 2009:138). In qualitative research it is assumed that the concepts pertaining to a phenomenon have not all been identified, or have not been fully developed, or are poorly understood and need further exploration. Consequently, the research problem needs to be formulated in such a manner that it provides the researcher with sufficient



flexibility and freedom to explore the research topic in depth (Corbin & Strauss 2008:25).

Although research problems in qualitative research tend to be broad, the problem should not be too broad, thus giving rise to unlimited possibilities. The following units of analysis should be identified clearly:

- Who – an individual, group of people or community (research sample)
- What – research problem, question or phenomenon that is being studied
- Where – demarcation of where the research is going to take place.

### 2.3.2 Research goal

The research goal indicates the purpose of the research. Criminological and social science research falls within four categories, namely, descriptive, exploratory, explanatory or evaluation research.

- **Descriptive research** aims to define or describe a social phenomenon. Although description forms part of most research studies, in this instance the primary purpose of the study is to describe the phenomenon that is being studied. Questions that are answered in such studies are, for example: How many people are victims of assault? or What is the *modus operandi* of car thieves? In qualitative research, a study might describe police corruption or the impact of bullying on the victims.
- **Exploratory research** seeks to find out what is going on. It aims to explore how people interact with each other within a specific setting/environment or how they experience a specific event in their life-world. For example, in the 1980s a researcher investigated the emergence of youth gangs. The goal of the initial study was to explore what it was like to be a gang member and how gang members made sense of their environment. Exploratory research like this frequently follows a qualitative approach because it requires the analysis of a large amount of often unstructured information, such as transcribed interviews and field notes (Bachman & Schutt 2011:9).
- **Explanatory research** seeks to identify the causes and effects of social phenomena. It furthermore aims to predict how a phenomenon will change or vary in response to a variation in the participants' life-world. It strives to answer questions such as: What is the cause of youth crime? or How effective are diversion services in the prevention of reoffending? In qualitative research, a study might explain, for instance, how community members who live in the territory of the Black Kings gang interact with the gang.
- **Evaluation research** seeks to explore the impact that an intervention, such as a rehabilitation programme, has on the individuals who participated in the programme. The research will therefore question how effective a policy or programme is in achieving its goals or outcomes. It is a type of explanatory research because it deals with cause and effect, but it is unique in that it specifically aims to evaluate the effect of policies or programmes. An example of evaluation research in South Africa is where NGOs (non-governmental organisations) evaluate the programmes they present. One such programme is the Silence the Violence programme, which is being presented by Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiative. This programme has been evaluated extensively in South Africa and the United Kingdom (see the Khulisa website for more information).

Although the general perception is that qualitative research is more exploratory in

nature, it can also be used to conduct descriptive, explanatory and evaluation research. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008:25), the research problem should be formulated in such a manner that it accommodates the research goal within the framework of a qualitative approach and paradigm.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to help you to differentiate between the various research goals in qualitative research.

Read the following examples and indicate what the research goal is in each study.

	Example	What is the research goal?
A	A new study has shown that combining high-visibility policing, action from pubs and clubs and appeals in the media may help rural communities to reduce alcohol-related crime.	
B	Research has established a direct correlation between alcohol consumption and the risk of crime victimisation.	
C	Young offenders who intend to engage in a violent act may drink to bolster their courage or in the hopes of evading stricter sentences.	
D	The aim of the research is to explore the relationship between alcohol consumption and spousal abuse.	

### F e e d b a c k

Your answers should be as follows:

- a. Evaluation research
- b. Explanatory research
- c. Descriptive research
- d. Exploratory research

### 2.3.3 Research strategy

The research strategy deals with the research approach. A researcher may follow a quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methodology approach. As discussed previously, each approach has a unique paradigm and approach to scientific research. In qualitative research, the research strategy will strive to observe and study participants' experiences and perceptions of their social world first hand.

### 2.3.4 Stating the research problem

The research problem should be stated clearly in order to tell the reader what question and/or problem the researcher is trying to address, as well as how the researcher aims to do so. The title of the report should also reflect the main problem of a research project.

In qualitative research the main problem is often too broad and complex to study in its entirety. Researchers often subdivide a research problem into sub-problems, which are researched as part of the primary (overarching) problem.

#### Activity

The purpose of this activity is to illustrate practically how to formulate a research problem in qualitative research.

Read the extract from a research article and then answer the problem that follows.

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT

The National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) has been rendering offender reintegration services, which is a crucial component of NICRO's crime prevention strategy, for the past 90 years. The Offender Reintegration Programme is geared to facilitating the successful reintegration into society of offenders released from corrections, while simultaneously assisting incarcerated people and the families of all clients by providing an integrated, comprehensive developmental and social service (NICRO 2005).

This specific programme has been implemented in the towns of Kimberley and Springbok in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Although family intervention is done and support is given, there is very limited focus on the specific needs of the children in such families. Therefore the need for research exploring the needs of children was identified in order to assist the organisation with the implementation of social work services. Hibbert (2005) maintains that the increasing number of incarcerated people across the world has stimulated much research and work regarding the issues facing them and their families. In terms of the national perspective, South Africa has 237 operational correctional facilities with 165 987 inhabitants, which amounts to a national average level of overcrowding of 45% or 51 428 persons (Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons, 2008).

A specific area of study, which has thus far not received adequate attention, relates to children's experience of their parent's incarceration, a particularly common phenomenon within the South African context. These children experience feelings of loss, confusion and distress. Cunningham (2001) states that children often become the secondary and even forgotten victims of their parent's crime.

In addition to these feelings and the impact of parental incarceration, the separation may lead to disciplinary problems, withdrawal, low school performance and health problems (Boswell & Wedge 2002; Komorosky 2004; Seymour & Hairston 2001). In view of the aforementioned challenges, the following research questions must be addressed:

- a. What are the children's experiences of their parent's incarceration?
- b. What are the children's psychosocial needs?

c. What services are rendered to these children? (Strydom & Kivedo 2009:99–100).

1. Identify the units of analysis in this study.


2. Indicate the research goal:

Exploration		Description		Explanation		Evaluation	
-------------	--	-------------	--	-------------	--	------------	--

3. Which research strategy do you think was used in the study? Give reasons for your answer.


4. Why do you think that the research problem is stated clearly in the article?


### F e e d b a c k

In this instance, the units of analysis would be the children of incarcerated parents and the individuals or organisations that deliver services to these children in the specified area. The study is exploratory because the researcher aims to explore the children’s experiences of their parent’s incarceration. The research strategy is qualitative because the researcher strives to study the children’s experiences and perceptions of their parent’s incarceration. Lastly, we can conclude that the research problem is clearly stated because it identifies the units of analysis, research goal and strategy. The research problem is also broken down into smaller components in order to assist the researcher to explore the research topic in detail.

### Summary

In this study unit we discussed the unit of analysis and the importance of the research goal. Once you have a clear understanding of the research goal, the next step is

stating the research problem. The following study unit explains the data collection process.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 2.3

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Fill in the missing words.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ in which the researcher formulates the research question is important because it will \_\_\_\_\_. It also indicates the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a statement that identifies the \_\_\_\_\_. It identifies the specific phenomenon that is being studied and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In order to formulate the research problem, the researcher needs to consider the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ deals with the research approach.
5. The research problem should be \_\_\_\_\_ in order to tell the reader \_\_\_\_\_, as well as \_\_\_\_\_.



## Step 3: Data collection

Learning outcomes for this study unit:

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Distinguish between topic-related and method-related literature.
- Discuss empirical data collection by focusing on interviews, observations and documented information.
- Describe Creswell's data collection cycle.

### Introduction

When we talk about data collection, it is important to note that we should distinguish between the literature review/study and empirical data collection. The literature review is a study of existing literature on the research topic. Empirical data collection, on the other hand, is the data that the researcher collects from the actual study. The literature review informs the empirical study but does not form part of it. This is often confusing because in qualitative research, literature such as documents, memoirs and newspaper articles can be the units of analysis and thus form part of the empirical data collection phase. The difference between the literature review and empirical data collection lies in the purpose of the actions. Below we are going to discuss the literature review and empirical data collection under separate headings.

#### 2.4.1 Literature review/study

In a literature review/study we can distinguish between topic-related and method-related literature. Topic-related literature deals with the subject that is being studied, while method-related literature deals with the methods and methodology that are used in a research project. According to Race (2008), method-related literature is often neglected, even though it is an important aspect of the qualitative research process. Method literature relates to how to use different techniques of data collection and analysis in research projects. It also enables the researcher to explore the different methods of data collection and analysis that could be used in a study.

Topic-related literature can be divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are authentic and the content of the literature has not been analysed or summarised by another person. In a secondary source, the information from a primary source has been reworked and has either been analysed or summarised by other people. Primary sources therefore consist of original and authentic information, while secondary information consists of information that has been altered through a process of analysis, summarising or reinterpretation (Thomas 2009:31).

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is to familiarise you with the types of literature that can be used in a literature study and to distinguish between primary and secondary sources of literature.

Read through the following list of sources that can be used in a literature review and indicate which sources are primary and which are secondary literature sources.

Biographies; diaries; autobiographies; government documents and statistics; dictionaries and encyclopaedias; drawings; letters and correspondence (including e-mails); articles in a journal; review articles; textbooks; photographs; birth certificates and marriage licences; reports of empirical research; speeches; technical reports.

- Which are primary sources?
- Which are secondary sources?

## Feedback

You would be correct if you chose the following as *primary sources*: drawings; diaries; autobiographies; government documents and statistics; letters and correspondence (including e-mails); birth certificates and marriage licences; photographs; reports of empirical research; articles in journals (if they present original empirical research); speeches; and technical reports.

*Secondary sources* are as follows: biographies; dictionaries and encyclopaedias; articles in a journal (if they review other research studies); review articles; and textbooks.

The major difference between primary and secondary sources, therefore, is the directness of the data or evidence being presented. Even though primary data are generally preferred over secondary data, secondary data can make a valuable contribution to a researcher's review of information. Having said this, it is imperative that a researcher always evaluate the quality of a source. The following questions should be asked to determine the quality of the information that is presented:

- Is the literature from a primary or secondary source?
- Is the article published in an accredited scientific journal?
- Was the article peer reviewed?
- Is the information based on empirical research?

According to Ladikos (2009:145), the purpose of a literature review/study is to

- introduce the researcher to similar research
- provide examples of research methods that were used previously to solve similar problems
- introduce the researcher to previously unknown sources of data and/or leading experts in a specific field
- help researchers to evaluate their own efforts by comparing them with the research of other human scientists
- assist the researcher to establish whether a research topic is relevant and has professional and practical significance

Hart (in Bachman & Schutt 2011:30) is of the opinion that a literature review should accomplish three goals: it should summarise previous research, critique prior research and present pertinent conclusions. The summary of previous research enables researchers to familiarise themselves with topical and current information in the field they are studying. It also assists researchers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of prior studies, thus assisting them to learn from good practices and not to repeat ineffective practices. The literature review not only enriches researchers' knowledge, but also gives them valuable examples of different approaches that can be followed.

In qualitative research, literature can assist the researcher to formulate research questions as well as to clarify constructs that are unfamiliar to the researcher. It can also help researchers to recognise unidentified constructs that are associated with the research topic. Literature can also be valuable when a researcher attempts to explain participants' experiences and perceptions of their life-world. In this regard, Bachman and Schutt (2011:32) highlight the role of theories in criminological studies. According to them, criminological theories can assist a researcher to

- understand and explain behaviour and specific phenomena, such as why some people commit crime and others do not
- examine whether poverty causes crime
- explain why some people are prone to victimisation
- make predictions about the criminological world, for example if the death penalty will reduce the murder rate or why target hardening is an effective method to prevent burglaries and robberies at businesses
- organise and make sense of empirical findings
- help guide research and the research process
- inform policy, for example policy on how to deal with victims of crime

According to Thomas (2009:68), after researchers have conducted a literature review, they will “be able to see the wood from the trees”. The literature review is important because it assists the researcher to become familiar with the topic being studied. The literature review furthermore informs the research process. In qualitative research, the literature study can assist the researcher to make sense of the topic and to structure information and the research process in general. It plays an important role in the formulation and refinement of the research problem. It also assists the researcher to identify themes and draw together ideas, as well as link the information with criminological theory. By analysing, integrating and synthesising information, the researcher becomes a proper researcher and not just a “copy artist” who replicates other people's work.

## 2.4.2 Empirical data collection

There are many alternative methods of data collection in qualitative research. In this section we are going to focus specifically on interviews, observations and documented information.

### 2.4.2.1 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews are in-depth conversations between a researcher and participants for the purpose of collecting information (data) in research. They can be conducted between a researcher and individual participants or a researcher and a





small group of participants (focus group interviews). The interviews can be pre-planned or unstructured. In pre-planned interviews the researcher makes an appointment for the interview and might formulate questions and make use of an interview schedule or identify relevant themes for discussion.

In unstructured interviews, the researcher and participant will have an unplanned conversation about

the research topic in order to discover the respondent's perception of it. Although the researcher has a broad idea about the research problem, the questions are not pre-planned interviews.

#### **(a) Interview process**

In general, the qualitative interview is an extension of an ordinary conversation where one person will ask a question and another answers it. Questions and answers follow each other in a logical fashion as people take turns talking. In the qualitative interview, the researcher will ask a question, listen to the answer and then determine the next question to be asked, based on the participant's answer. Research interviews, as opposed to normal conversations, require the researcher to have good interview and listening skills. Developing these skills takes considerable time. Researchers must decide which questions to ask in order to explore the research topic and they should have the necessary skills to extract in-depth information which is required in qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin 2005:13). The researcher's ethical responsibility towards participants also requires the researcher to be qualified to conduct interviews with vulnerable participants, for instance children, prisoners and victims of traumatic crimes.

During the interview, researchers make use of main questions, probes and follow-up questions in order to acquire in-depth information. The main questions stimulate discussion about relevant themes and ensure that the overall subject is covered. Probes are standardised ways to ask for more in-depth information and might be verbal words of encouragement (e.g. "Yes, tell me more" or "This is interesting ...") or non-verbal reactions (e.g. smiling, nodding of your head, eye contact). Follow-up questions and probes also encourage the participant to continue and help the interview to flow. The researcher needs to listen for and then explore keywords, ideas and themes using follow-up questions to encourage the participant to expand on issues that the researcher deems important. Questions should also be asked in order to clarify information as well as to address omissions or gaps in the information. The researcher therefore needs to listen to what is said as well as what is not said (Rubin & Rubin 2005:13).

#### **(b) Listening skills**

Listening skills are just as important, if not more so, than interviewing skills. The qualitative researcher not only listens for factual information, but also listens to hear the meaning of what research participants are saying. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005:14), this requires more intense listening, a respect for and curiosity about what people say, a willingness to acknowledge what is not understood, and the ability to ask about what is not yet known.

### (c) **Logistical arrangements**

The researcher also needs to plan where and how the interview is going to take place. The physical environment where the interview takes place can strongly influence how it proceeds. The comfort, privacy and noise level of the environment are three aspects that the researcher should consider. Comfort refers not only to the physical but also the psychological comfort of the participant and the researcher. The quality of the interview data can be hampered if the participant or researcher is tense and/or anxious. A noisy environment is not only irritating and disruptive, but also hampers the flow of a conversation. Privacy during the interview is vital and the researcher should choose a venue where he/she can conduct the interview in private, without being interrupted.

Qualitative researchers often make use of recording equipment, for instance audio and/or visual recordings, to ensure that they have a complete record of the interview. However, it is important to consider the impact that these recordings could have on the interview process and the quality of data obtained. The recording of interviews also has ethical implications and may be done only with the approval of the participants. Some organisations, such as the Department of Correctional Services, may not allow researchers to record interviews with participants.

### **A c t i v i t y**

The purpose of this activity is to familiarise you with the requirements of qualitative interviews.

Complete the following statements.

Qualitative interviews are \_\_\_\_\_ interviews with the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ in research. Individual interviews entail \_\_\_\_\_, while focus-group interviews are interviews with \_\_\_\_\_.

What is the difference between a structured and unstructured interview?


### **F e e d b a c k**

Qualitative interviews are in-depth interviews with the purpose of collecting information for research. Individual interviews entail an in-depth conversation between a researcher and a participant, while focus-group interviews are interviews with a researcher and a small group of participants.

In structured interviews, the researcher makes an appointment for the interview and might formulate questions and make use of an interview

schedule or identify relevant themes for discussion. Unstructured interviews are unplanned and consist of a conversation about the research topic in order to discover the respondent's perception of that topic.

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### 2.4.2.2 Observation

With qualitative observation, the researcher uses several strategies and some degree of participation in a group's activities in order to study or observe the group. It is a process that enables researchers to learn about the interaction, behaviour and perceptions of the participants in their natural environment by observing and participating in those group activities. This enables researchers to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena they study.

The researcher can play different roles and will therefore need to decide on the extent to which he/she would like to participate and/or observe participants during the course of the study. Bachmann and Schutt (2011:258) identify three roles that researchers can play in this regard:

#### (a) Complete observation

In complete observation the researcher tries to observe things as they happen, without disrupting the participants. This approach is similar to the Big Brother reality television series, where viewers can watch the participants' behaviour and interaction with one another for the period that they remain in the Big Brother house.

Even though the participants' are aware that they are being observed, the researcher does not try to participate in what is going on. This does not constitute natural social behaviour and might alter the participants' behaviour and interaction with one another. The influence of the observer on the participants' behaviour in such a scenario is known as the reactive effect. The effect is lessened when many people are being observed and is greater if only a few people are being observed. It has also been found that the longer the period of observation, the less the impact will be on the participants. An example of this method is if a researcher studies the interaction between police officers and members of a specific community by "shadowing" police members to observe them in their daily activities and interactions with members of that community. Another example is if the researcher observes victim offender mediation processes in order to assess the different party's participation and reactions during the interviews.



### **(b) Participation and observation**

In the majority of cases researchers adopt a role that involves some active participation in the setting. The participants are generally aware of the researcher's observation role but the researcher will participate in enough group activities to develop rapport with the participants and to gain a direct sense of the group's experiences and perceptions (Bachmann & Schutt 2011:260). The example we referred to earlier of Sudhir Venkatesh, who spent seven years studying a gang in Chicago, is an illustration of participant observation. During this period Venkatesh was allowed to be leader of the gang for one day thus gaining first-hand experience of their operations and interactions.

### **(c) Covert participation**

In covert participation, which is also known as complete participation, the researcher studies participants without their knowing it. A researcher might choose this role to lessen the reactive effect. This type of observation is difficult because the researcher cannot openly take notes or ask questions without arousing suspicion. It might also be difficult for the researcher to participate convincingly in group activities – especially if these activities have ethical implications, such as gang or criminal activities. Consequently, the researcher might experience psychological strain (Bachmann & Schutt 2011:262). A researcher who works in a correctional facility and who secretly observes the interactions and relationships between inmates and correctional services members is an example of covert participation. The researcher's position as an employee of correctional services enables him to interact freely with and be privy to the inner world of prison officials and some of the inmates.

#### **2.4.2.3 Documented data**

Documents are text-based files that may include primary data (collected by the researcher) or secondary data (collected and archived or published by others), as well as photographs, charts and other visual materials. In a qualitative study, empirical data documents can include transcriptions of interviews; participant observation field notes; photographs of field situations taken by the researcher as a record of specific activities; video and audio recordings of rituals; and maps and diagrams drawn by the researcher or by field assistants or participants in a study (Schensul 2008). A researcher may also ask participants in the study to keep a journal. The journal would then form part of the research data.

Secondary documents can also act as empirical data in a qualitative study. These documents contain information that is important in describing the historical background and/or current situation in a community or country. They include maps, demographic data, photographs, newspaper articles and statistical information, such as measures of differences in health or educational status. Acquiring such data for use in a study requires considerable time and patience. Although secondary data sources are generally easy to obtain, they may be large and need considerable analysis and integration with other information that is relevant to the study. Some information, for instance medical or educational records, may be subject to local and national regulations and may require participants' permission to be used. Historical documents and photographs may be properly archived in libraries or museums or stored by family members or interested people. The researcher therefore needs to negotiate with the relevant people in order to gain access to the information (Schensul 2008).

Artefacts are another type of primary information that can be used in qualitative



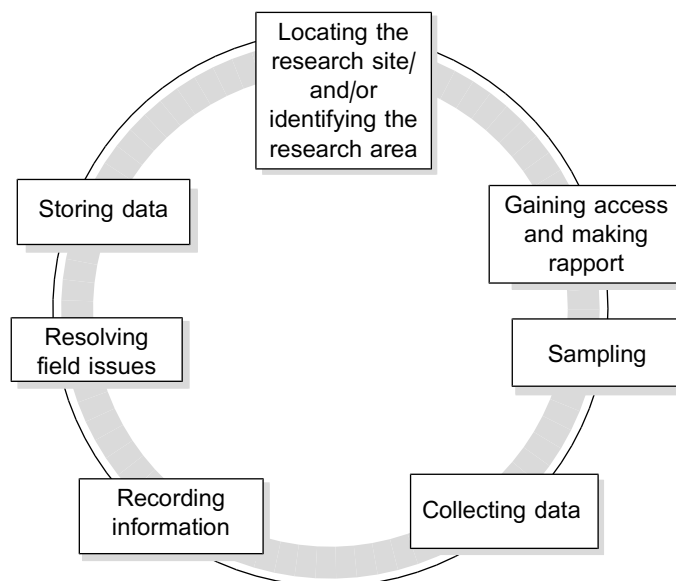
studies. These include objects that societies and cultures make for their own use and they provide historical, demographic and – in some instances – personal information about a culture, society or its people. Artefacts also provide insight into how people lived, what they valued, as well as their beliefs, ideas, knowledge and opinions. A general type of artefact is written texts, such as diaries, journals, memorandums,

meeting minutes and letters. Artefacts can also be objects, for instance photographs, memorabilia, tools, buildings, toys, pottery, jewellery, clothing, weapons, gifts, paintings, graffiti, furniture and tombstones (Norum 2008). For example, a researcher who wishes to study the development of correctional facilities over the ages might make use of photographs, minutes of meetings and memorandums in addition to first-hand inspection of buildings or building plans.

The method of data collection will depend primarily on the purpose of the study. The researcher’s knowledge, skills and experience in using the different types of qualitative data collection methods might also have an influence on the choice of method.

### 2.4.3 The data collection cycle

Creswell (2007:117) describes data collection in qualitative research as a circle of interrelated activities, which constitutes a process of engaging in activities that includes – but also goes beyond – the collection of data. The process can be depicted as follows.



Data collecting activities (Creswell 2007:118)

- **Locating the research site and participants**

Traditionally, the first step in the data collection circle will be to identify people and/or places that the researcher would like to study. This will depend on the type of study.

For instance, in a case study, the researcher will identify participants who participated in or experienced the process or action that is being studied. For example, a researcher who studies the impact of imprisonment on inmates will choose correctional facilities as the site of research and will target inmates to participate in the study.

- **Gaining access and building/establishing rapport**

Gaining access to the research site and participants may require the researcher to get permission to conduct the study. A researcher cannot, for instance, conduct research in a correctional facility without getting the necessary permission from the Department of Correctional Services. Similarly, students need to get permission to do research from the applicable ethical board at the institution where they study. This is to ensure that the rights of participants are protected.

Researchers also need permission from individual participants to include them in a study. In cases of interviews or observation, participants are usually asked to sign an informed consent form to indicate that their participation in the study is voluntarily.

The purpose of this activity is to familiarise you with the different aspects that should be included in an informed consent form.

## A c t i v i t y

Read through the following informed consent form and identify the different aspects that are covered.

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Researcher:** Merlyn Barkhuizen

**Title of thesis:** The physical and emotional victimisation of the male partner within a heterosexual marriage or cohabitating relationship: An explorative study.

**Purpose of study:** The exploration of the phenomena of physical and emotional abuse amongst male victims in marital or cohabitating relationships in order to make recommendations for helping professions and further academic research.

**Procedures:** The researcher will be conducting an interview with the help of an interview schedule. The researcher may also make use of a tape recorder to record conversations. The interviews will not be longer than three hours, but may end sooner by natural process or on request of the respondent or researcher, depending on the circumstances.

**Risks and discomforts:** The respondent may become tired or feel emotional discomfort at which point a break may be requested or the interview may be postponed to a later date or terminated if so desired. The researcher will make every effort to ensure the comfort of and minimise the risks for the respondent.

**Benefits:** It is my hope that the respondents participating in this study will feel the satisfaction of contributing to solving a social problem and helping

to illuminate the problem for those studying the phenomena, which may help others in the future. The respondent will also assist in providing insight into the problem, which may stimulate future research, and thus be of even greater help in the future. On a personal level, it is the hope of the researcher that the respondents will obtain personal satisfaction once they have discussed certain issues with the researcher, thus gaining personal insights that they did not have prior to the interview.

**Respondents' rights:** Participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without negative consequences for the respondent. All information will be treated as confidential and anonymity is assured by the researcher. The data will be destroyed should the respondent wish to withdraw.

The researcher (Merlyn Barkhuizen) and her study leader (Professor Michelle Ovens) are the only individuals who will have access to raw data from interviews, and hereby ensure that data will be treated as stipulated above.

**Right of access to researcher:** Respondents are free to contact the researcher at the telephone number as stipulated on this form, at a reasonable hour, in connection with interview particulars if they so wish.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.**

**I, the undersigned, agree to participate in this study voluntarily without duress.**

Signed at ..... on this ..... day of ..... 2009

.....

(Print Name ..... ) MERLYN BARKHUIZEN


**F e e d b a c k**

In the above consent form, participants are informed of the purpose and process of the study, as well as what is expected of them. This also helps to build rapport between the researcher and participants. The benefits and risks associated with the study are also indicated, as well as the participants' rights, such as the right to withdraw from the study.

- **Sampling**

Sampling can be divided into probability and non-probability sampling methods. Probability sampling implies that every person in the population has a chance of being selected as part of the sample to participate in the study. In the research context, the population refers to the collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a study. For example, in the National Victims of Crime Survey in South Africa, which was conducted in 2003 by the Institute for Security Studies, a probability sample was used. For this study, respondents were randomly selected across the country based on the census data (Burton, Du Plessis, Leggett, Louw, Mistry & Van Vuuren 2004:15). This implies that every person who is included in the census data forms the population and has an equal chance, thus the same probability, of being selected as respondents for this study.

In contrast, non-probability sampling is any sampling method where some of the population have no chance of being selected because they do not possess the specified characteristics to fulfil the requirements of the study. For example, in research studying male rape, the sample will consist of males who are victims of male rape, and it goes without saying that the researcher will have a smaller population to choose from than was the case in the previous example of the national victims of crime survey. The selection of respondents is therefore non-random.

The difference between non-probability and probability sampling is that non-probability sampling does not involve random selection, whereas probability sampling does. Researchers prefer to use probability sampling over non-probability sampling methods because the former are generally considered to be more accurate and rigorous. However, in social research there may be circumstances where it is not feasible, practical or theoretically sensible to do random sampling.



The purpose of this activity is to identify the most suitable sampling method/approach in qualitative studies.

### A c t i v i t y

Reread the above section on probability and non-probability sampling. Indicate which one of the approaches is more suitable for qualitative research? Why did you choose this sampling approach?




## Feedback

In qualitative research, researchers tend to make use of non-probability sampling because the purpose of this type of research is to do an in-depth study of a phenomenon from the participants' perspective. This is time-consuming, often limiting the sample size. There might also be only a limited number of respondents available to study.

We can distinguish between four types of non-probability sampling, namely, purposive or judgmental sampling; quota sampling; the reliance and available sampling method and snowball sampling.

According to Creswell (2007:125), purposeful sampling is synonymous with qualitative research. This is because the researcher can select participants and research sites that are associated with the phenomenon and research problem being studied. The researcher needs to decide who or what is representative of the phenomenon being studied and how many sites or participants need to be included in the study in order to explore the research problem. Rubin and Rubin (in Bachman & Schutt 2011:129) suggest the following three guidelines for selecting participants for purposive sampling. The participants should be

- knowledgeable about the subject or phenomenon that is being studied
- willing to participate in the study
- representative of the range of points of view

In terms of the size of the sample, it is suggested that researchers continue to select participants until they have achieved completeness and saturation. Completeness is reached when the data the researcher has collected provide an overall sense of the meaning of the phenomenon being studied. Saturation is achieved when little new information is collected from any new participants (Bachman & Schutt 2011:131).

In quota sampling, quotas are set to ensure that the sample represents certain characteristics in proportion to their prevalence in the population. For example, in research on bullying behaviour in secondary schools, the population will consist of all the secondary school children in South Africa. From the total population the researcher will then identify a quota that he/she deems to be representative of the larger population to be included in the study. For instance, the quota might be set at sixty learners from each secondary school in the identified area. This might be further refined in that the researcher might specify that 50% of the sample should be male and 50% should be female. In this regard, quota sampling shares some of the characteristics of probability sampling, even though the selection process tends to be less rigorous and precise (Bachman & Schutt 2011:128).

In snowball sampling, the researcher will start off contacting some participants who are representative of the sampling criteria and will ask them to identify other people to include in the study. The sample thus snowballs in size. This technique is usually used for hard-to-reach or hard-to-identify interconnected populations, such as drug dealers, gangsters, prostitutes and informal leaders in a community (Bachman & Schutt 2011:13).

It should be noted that in qualitative studies the sample can consist of events, settings, participants and/or artefacts/documents. In most qualitative studies, the researcher will make use of more than one level of sampling, for example in the study exploring the development of correctional facilities, the researcher will collect data from documents, artefacts, interviews and observation. The sampling will therefore include participants, sites, events and settings. The sample can also change during the study owing to the flexible nature of qualitative studies.

In terms of the size of a sample in qualitative research, sample sizes tend to be smaller than in quantitative studies. This is because the emphasis is on the quality rather than the quantity of data. The general guideline in qualitative research, therefore, is not only to study a few sites or participants, but also to collect extensive, in-depth details about each participant and/or site. The intent in qualitative research is not to generalise information, but rather to clarify a phenomenon and/or research problem (Creswell 2007:126).

In qualitative interviews, the concept of saturation can be used to determine the sample size. A research sample reaches saturation if no new data are collected after a number of individual or focus group interviews have been conducted. For example, in the study analysing the impact of imprisonment the researcher will continue to conduct focus group interviews until information (themes) is replicated and no new information is collected.

#### ● **Collecting data**

The type of data collected will depend on the data collection method used. As discussed earlier, qualitative researchers can make use of interviews, observation or documents to collect information. The researcher therefore needs to identify the type of data to be collected based on the research phenomenon and/or research problem being studied. As stated previously, qualitative data are usually in written format, but can also include observations, photographs, audio and video information and artefacts.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to identify the different types of data collection that can be used in qualitative studies.

Read the following study and identify the different methods of data collection that the researcher used.

Henry Trotter's *Sugar girls and seamen* explores an unexamined type of sex work – dockside prostitution. Trotter spent 15 months doing participant observation in four dockside nightclubs in South Africa – bars that cater exclusively to foreign seamen – which amounted to 150 evenings at three nightclubs in Cape Town and one in Durban. Almost all of the prostitutes (called “sugar girls”) are black or mixed race and the sailors are mostly East Asian. Trotter interviewed 90 bar prostitutes (out of 140) and 50 sailors, club owners, bouncers, bartenders and waitresses. These actors regarded Trotter as a curiosity (since he frequented the bars, was not a sailor and didn't buy sex), but he gained their confidence over time. Trotter's role and actions are quite visible in the book.

Many seamen buy sex when docked at ports around the world, and this is encouraged by their co-workers. But the South African nightclubs offer much more than sex; they are also sites of binge partying – playing pool, singing karaoke songs, watching TV and dancing. For others, the pleasure of club flirtation (which requires that the men buy the women drinks) is enough to satisfy their need for female companionship. For those who are interested in sex, it is not just sex that attracts them to the bars. Having been denied contact with women for so long at sea, the men seek their companionship through prolonged conversations and mutual sharing. The women use the conversations to make the men care about them.

The bars are unique geo-cultural intersections: “Through their continual

interactions with foreign seamen, [the bargirls] become major traffickers in culture, ideas, languages, styles, goods, currencies, genes, and diseases.” What is unique about these sites is the extent to which the women adopt multiple cultural toolkits and foreign languages, which they acquire through numerous conversations with the men. They are adept at using their (international) cultural repertoire to market themselves. The women also develop “a mental database of stereotypes to deal with each nationality” in order to tailor their behaviour to different clients. They rank each group in terms of their generosity and manageability – with Japanese seamen ranking at the top and Vietnamese at the bottom.

The bar girls spend hours each night dancing provocatively, flirting with the men, and hoping for an eventual solicitation. Owners depend on them to attract customers to the bar, but they also exercise control over them. Owners use temporary or permanent bans to punish those who fight, steal, fall asleep, disrespect the staff, leave the bar early, visit other clubs, or fail to get the men to buy numerous drinks. Despite the rules and sanctions, the women do not see themselves as victims but instead as enterprising agents who exploit the opportunities offered by the bars: “They can earn decent money, enjoy a flexible work schedule, control the price and location of the sexual rendezvous, and move around with relative autonomy.” The nightclub provides ample opportunity to screen clients, diminishing the chances of anything going awry after they leave with a client. Very few had ever been abused by a client, nor did they have pimps.

Relations among the sugar girls are both supportive and competitive. Verbal and physical conflict are regular occurrences, as one would expect in an environment in which alcohol is consumed in large quantities and where the men sometimes play women off against each other. The most serious offence is intruding on another’s transaction: “Everyone agrees that if a club girl gets caught poaching, she deserves a beating because it amounts to theft.” The women hope to forge a permanent relationship with a man and relocate to his country. For those few who do so, things usually do not work out well. They confront boredom, a foreign culture, suspicious or racist in-laws, and lack friends – all in stark contrast to the independence they had at home and the carnival atmosphere of the clubs. A few, however, do manage to adapt and thrive in their new life abroad (Weitzer 2010:265–266).


## Feedback

This is a good example of where the researcher used interviews and participant observation to study dockside prostitution extensively. It is also clear from the extract that the researcher was familiar with the cultural practices and social interactions associated with this specific form of prostitution, thus indicating that he made use of literature to inform and enrich the empirical data. You can read more about this study in the following book: Trotter, H. 2008. *Sugar girls and seamen: a journey into the world of dockside prostitution in South Africa*. Auckland Park, SA: Jacana.

### ● Recording information

The researcher should record information or data collected during interviews, observations and document analysis. As stated previously, researchers frequently make use of audio and/or audio-visual recordings of interviews. This can be done only after obtaining the necessary permission from the participants and the applicable organisation. These interviews are then transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis of the data.

Researchers can also make use of field notes to record information. Field notes are the primary means of recording observation data. A researcher might start off by writing some notes from observations or interviews. These notes are often just brief ideas that the researcher jots down, as it can be disruptive if the researcher tries to write extensive notes while in the field. These notes are later captured in more detail, usually on a computer. The detailed notes are then organised for analysis purposes. It is important for the researcher, on a daily basis, to capture more detailed information from the field in order to ensure that they do not forget some of the information (Bachman & Schutt 2011:267).

Creswell (2007:135) also suggests that researchers make use of standard interview and observation protocols to record additional information. An interview and observation protocol describes the data collection procedure followed in a study. For instance, during an interview the following protocol form can be used to capture information.

Interview protocol: Victim-offender mediation process
Time of the interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____
Recording code: _____
Briefly describe the role/position of the interviewee:
Observations during the interview:
General comments:

The form will then be attached to a copy of the transcribed interview or copies of the field notes.

### ● Resolving field issues

Field issues involve all the operational challenges a researcher might face during the process of data collection. Before data collection can commence, the researcher needs to gain access to the organisations, sites and individuals that have been targeted to participate in the research. Researchers need to convince individuals to participate in the study and to build trust and credibility at the field site in order to ensure the necessary response and participation.

Researchers might also be required to submit a proposal to an organisation's review board in order to get permission to involve their clients and employees in the research, as well as to gain access to documents from the organisation. Some organisations have strict policies and regulations which regulate access to clients and employees, as well as to their records. The following form is an example of the conditions set by the Department of Correctional Services.

AGREEMENT REGARDING CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO RESEARCH DONE IN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES WHICH ARE UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name & surname) wish to conduct research titled \_\_\_\_\_ in/at \_\_\_\_\_ institutions which falls under the authority of the National Commissioner of Correctional Services. I undertake to use the information that I acquire in a balanced and responsible manner, taking in account the perspectives and practical realities of the Department of Correctional Services (hereafter referred to as "the Department") in my report/treatise. I furthermore take note of and agree to adhere to the following conditions:

#### 1.1 INTERNAL GUIDE

The researcher accepts that an internal guide, appointed by the Department of Correctional Services will provide guidance on a continual basis, during the research. His/her duties will be:

- 1.1.1 To help with the interpretation of policy guidelines. He/she will therefore have to ensure that the researcher is conversant with the policy regarding functional areas of the research.
- 1.1.2 To help with the interpreting of information/statistics and terminology of the Department which the researcher is unfamiliar with.
- 1.1.3 To identify issues which could cause embarrassment to the Department, and to make recommendations regarding the utilization and treatment of such information.
- 1.1.4 To advise Correctional Management regarding the possible

implementation of the recommendations made by the researcher.

With regard to the abovementioned the research remains the researchers own work and the internal guide may therefore not be prescriptive. His/her task is assistance and not to dictate a specific train of thought to the researcher.

## 1.2 GENERAL CONDITIONS WHEN DOING RESEARCH IN PRISONS

- 1.2.1 All external researchers, before conducting research, must familiarize themselves with guidelines for the practical execution of research in prisons as contained in the handbook (see par. 11 of Research Policy).
- 1.2.2 Participation in the research by members/offenders must be voluntary, and such willingness must be indicated in writing.
- 1.2.3 Offenders may not be identified, or be able to be identified in any way.
- 1.2.4 Research Instruments such as questionnaires/schedules for interviews must be submitted to the Department (internal guide) for consideration before they may be used.
- 1.2.5 The Department (Internal Guide) must be kept informed of progress and the expected completion dates of the various phases of the research and progress reports/copies of completed chapters furnished for consideration to the Department, should this be requested by the Department.
- 1.2.6 The Research Ethics Committee of the DCS must be provided with a soft copy and two hard copies of the researcher's report.
- 1.2.7 The Researcher's report must be submitted for evaluation two months prior to presentation and publication for the National Commissioner's approval (see par. 9 of Policy).
- 1.2.8 Research findings or any other information gained during the research may not be published or made known in any other manner without the written permission of the Commissioner of Correctional Services.
- 1.2.9 A copy of the final report/essay/treatise/thesis must be submitted to the Department for further use.
- 1.2.10 Research will have to be done in the researcher's own time and at his own cost unless explicitly stated otherwise at the initial approval of the research.

## 1.3 CONDUCT IN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

- 1.3.1 Arrangements to visit a correctional centre(s) for research purposes must be made with the Area Manager of that particular centre. Care should be taken that the research be done with the least possible disruption of offender's routine.
- 1.3.2 Office space for the conducting of tests and interviews must be determined in consultation with the Area Manager of that particular centre.

- 1.3.3 Research instruments/interviews must be used/ done within view and hearing distance of a member(s) of the South African Correctional Services.
- 1.3.4 Documentation may not be removed from files or reproduced without the prior approval of the Area Manager of the Centre.
- 1.3.5 Any problem experienced during the research must be discussed with the relevant Head of the Correctional centre without delay.
- 1.3.6 Identification documents must be produced at the centre upon request and must be worn on the person during the visit.
- 1.3.7 Weapons or other unauthorized articles may not be taken into the correctional centre.
- 1.3.8 Possessions of the Researcher taken into the correctional centre and other necessary articles that are worn on the researcher's person are at his own risk. Nothing may be handed over to the offenders except that which is required for the process of research, e.g. manuals, questionnaires, stationery, etc.
- 1.3.9 The research must be done in such a manner that offenders/members cannot subsequently use it to embarrass the Department of Correctional Services.
- 1.3.10 Researchers must be circumspect when approaching offenders with regard to their appearance and behaviour, and researchers must be careful of manipulation by offenders. The decision of the Head of Centre in this regard is final.
- 1.3.11 No offender may be given the impression that his/her co-operation could be advantageous to him/her personality.

## 2. INDEMNITY

The researcher waives any claim which he may have against the Department of Correctional Services and indemnifies the Department against any claims, including legal fees at an attorney and client scale which may be initiated against the latter by any other person, including an offender.

## 3. CANCELLATION

The National Commissioner of Correctional Services retains the right to withdraw and cancel authorization or research at any time, should the above conditions not be adhered to or the researcher not keeps to stated objectives. In an event of the researcher deciding to discontinue the research, all information and data collected from the liaison with the Department must be returned to the Department and such information may not be published in any other publication without the permission of the National Commissioner of Correctional Services. The National Commissioner of Correctional Services also retains the right to allocate the research to another researcher.

#### 4. SUGGESTIONS

The researcher acknowledges that no other suggestions except those contained in this agreement were made which had led him/her to the entering into this agreement.

Signed at ..... on the ..... day of ..... month ..... year.

RESEARCHER: .....

#### WITNESSES

Above-mentioned researcher signed this agreement in my presence.

Name & surname: ..... Date: .....

Researchers should also prepare for any challenges they might face if they make use of observation or interviews to collect information. Observation challenges are closely related to the role of the researcher during the observation. For example, a researcher who makes use of covert participation, where the researcher studies participants without their being aware of it, needs to consider how he/she will be able to collect the data required for the research. According to Creswell (2007:139), challenges a researcher might face during observation include remembering to take field notes, recording quotes accurately, and avoiding feeling overwhelmed at the observation site, as well as coping with emotions that may arise when observing emotionally disturbing incidents. The researcher also needs to learn how to assimilate and integrate observations into an analysable format.

Field challenges in qualitative interviews often involve the procedure for conducting interviews. The researchers might have to deal with unexpected participant behaviour, such as extreme emotional reactions, anger or resistance during an interview (Creswell 2007:141). Before making use of interviews, the researcher needs to ensure that he/she has the necessary skills and experience to conduct in-depth interviews. For example, research on sensitive issues such as rape will require special interview skills on the part of the researcher in order to establish the necessary rapport that will enable the researcher to acquire essential information. The researcher also needs the necessary skills to deal with the participant's emotions in order to avoid revictimising the participant. The researcher also needs to consider the emotional impact that the interviews will have on him/her personally and how this will affect his/her ability to analyse the data objectively.

Once again, if a researcher fails to resolve field issues before commencing the research, he/she will be "preparing to fail".

#### ● Storing data

The storing of data is a subject that generally does not receive enough attention during the research process. This usually comes to the fore only when the researcher loses raw data owing to a technical malfunction, administrative lapse or even theft.

The approach to storing data will depend on the type of information collected. According to Creswell (2007:142), the following principles should be followed when storing qualitative data:

- Always make copies of computer files. Keep these copies in a safe place away from



the computer. For example, do not make backup copies of files and then keep them in the same bag as the laptop containing the original material. Many researchers ended up losing all their information in this way when their laptop is stolen.

- Use high-quality tapes for audio and visual recordings. Even more important is to make sure that the audio and/or visual recorders work before entering the field for observation or conducting an interview.
- Develop a master list of types of information collected as well as where the information can be found. For example, label each audio tape with a date, participant number and other relevant information. Make a master list of all the audio recordings and link each recording with the reference number of the transcribed interview.
- Protect the anonymity of participants by masking their names in the data. This can be achieved by making use of pseudonyms and/or codes.
- Develop a data collection matrix as a visual means of locating and identifying information for a study.

Participant	Type of data	Date recorded	Place stored
A4 Daniel	Interview	2010/10/04	Tape A4 & Audio file Interview A4 Transcript A4 Computer file – Interviews A4 Daniel & Backup – Flash disk A file A4Daniel
	Diary	2010/04/01– 2010/09/30	Computer file – Diary A4Daniel Back-up – Flash disk A file A4Daniel
	Pictures	2010/05/09	Pictures A4Daniel Computer file – Scan Pictures A4Daniel

## Summary

In this study unit we explained to you the importance of the literature review and empirical data collection methods. We also explained Creswell's data collection cycle. In the next study unit we discuss data processing and analysis.

## Self-assessment exercise for study unit 2.4

---

A Choose the **most** correct option.

In a literature review/study we can distinguish between topic-related and method-related literature. Topic-related literature deals with

1. methods of data analysis in research projects
2. planning of the research process
3. the subject that is studied
4. the methods and methodology
5. different techniques of data collection

B Choose **the most** correct option.

- (a) Primary data sources include drawings; diaries; autobiographies; government documents and statistics; letters and correspondence (including e-mails); birth certificates and marriage licences; photographs; reports of empirical research; articles in journals if they present original empirical research; speeches; and technical reports.
- (b) Secondary data sources include biographies; dictionaries and encyclopaedias; articles in a journal if they review other research studies; review articles; and textbooks.
- (c) Secondary data are generally preferred over primary data.
- (d) Primary sources consist of original and authentic information.
- (e) Secondary information consists of information that has been altered through a process of analysis, summarisation or reinterpretation.

1. a, b, c, d
2. a, c, d, e
3. a, b, d, e
4. b, c, d, e
5. a, b, c, e

C Choose **the most** correct statement.

- (a) The quantitative interview is an extension of an ordinary conversation where one person asks a question and another person answers it.
- (b) Questions and answers follow each other in a logical fashion as people take turns talking.
- (c) Research interviews require the researcher to have good interviewing skills.
- (d) Researchers must decide which questions to ask in order to explore the research topic.
- (e) Researchers should have the necessary skills to extract in-depth information that is required in qualitative research.

1. a, b, c
2. b, c, d
3. c, d, e
4. b, d, e
5. a, d, e

Complete this statement by choosing the correct option from the combination below.

D Choose the correct option by filling in the missing words. Artefacts are another type of \_\_\_\_\_ information which can be used in qualitative studies. They include objects that societies and cultures make for their own use and provide \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and, in some instances, personal information about a \_\_\_\_\_, society or its people.

1. secondary, historical, demographic, culture
2. primary, historical, demographic, culture
3. secondary, cultural, demographic, heritage
4. primary, social, demographic, heritage
5. primary, historical, cultural, culture

E Choose the **INCORRECT** statement.

Challenges a researcher might face during observation are

1. remembering to take field notes
2. recording quotes accurately
3. avoiding feeling overwhelmed at the observation site
4. acquiring special interview skills to conduct in-depth interviews
5. coping with emotions that may arise when observing emotionally disturbing incidents



## Step 4: Data processing and analysis

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Understand the data analysis spiral.
- Discuss qualitative data processing by focusing on identifying, coding and categorising information.
- Explain ethnographical and narrative analysis to illustrate how data can be analysed in qualitative research.
- Discuss computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) by focusing on code-based theory building software and text retrievers and text-based managers.

### Introduction

Qualitative research studies tend to be unique and therefore demand unique strategies for data analysis. These studies also frequently result in a large amount of data that are derived from observing or interviewing research participants. Babbie (2010:418) describes the processing of qualitative data as both a science and an art. The key to the analysis of qualitative research is coding. Coding involves the categorisation and classification of items of data. This is usually coupled with a system that enables the researcher to retrieve the data later. The primary purpose of coding is to discover the patterns in data that enable researchers to acquire an understanding or knowledge of the phenomenon they are studying (Babbie 2010:400). Although it is possible to conduct data analysis manually, the process is so much easier when using software specifically designed for qualitative data management. In this section we will explore both manual and computerised methods of processing and analysing data.

### 2.5.1 The data analysis spiral

According to Creswell (2007:150), data analysis in qualitative research is not a once-off process or governed by distinct steps. The steps in the data analysis process are interrelated and often happen simultaneously. In other words, data analysis already begins during the data collection phase. The researcher can form an initial understanding of a phenomenon during tasks such as data collection and coding, which is associated with data processing. Creswell (2007:150) is of the opinion that qualitative data analysis takes the form of a spiral rather than a fixed linear approach. According to him, the data analysis process moves in analytical circles, which start off with the raw data (text or images). Data management forms the first loop in the process.

During data management, the researcher organises the data into files or folders, onto index cards or in computer files. The organised files are then converted into appropriate text units for manual or computerised analysis. The researcher continues with the analysis by getting a sense of the complete database. This requires the researcher to read through all the data a couple of times in order to develop a holistic view of the research data. Initial analysis begins when the researcher starts to make notes in the margins of the transcribed interviews and field notes or comments at the bottom of photographs. The notes include short phrases, ideas and/or key concepts that the researcher identifies.

The process then moves on from the reading and note-writing loop to the describing, classifying and interpreting loop. This is characterised by the coding of data, which will be discussed in more detail later on in the study unit. The researcher then proceeds to classify the data into categories and/or themes. The data are then interpreted and, finally, presented during the last phase of the spiral (Creswell 2007:150–154).

### Activity

The purpose of this activity is to help you to develop an understanding of Creswell's data analysis spiral.

Study section 2.5.1 and describe the processes associated with each of the phases in the data analysis spiral.

Process	Action

### Feedback

Data management, where the researcher organises the raw data, is the first process. This is followed by the phase where the researcher reads through the data several times in order to develop a holistic view of the research data. Next is the initial analysis, where the researcher makes notes using short phrases to identify key concepts in the margins of transcribed interviews and field notes or makes comments at the bottom of photographs. Thereafter the researcher codes the data. The data are then broken down into categories and/or themes, after which they are interpreted and, finally, presented.

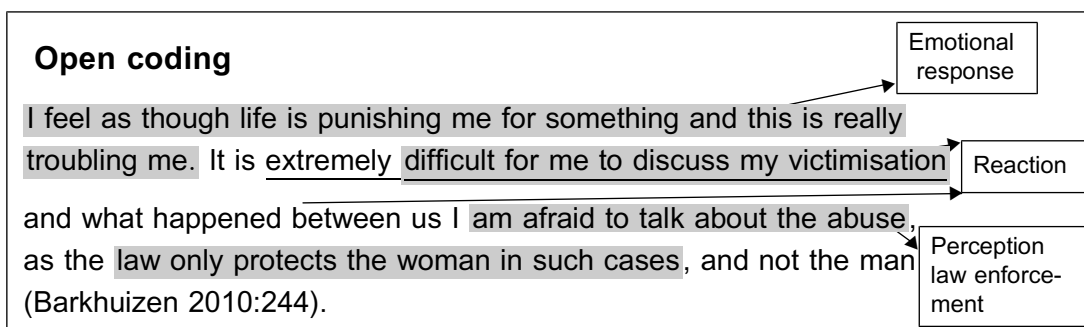
## 2.5.2 Qualitative data processing

The processing of qualitative data consists of identifying, coding and categorising information and then identifying patterns found in the data. As stated previously, qualitative data usually originate from interview transcripts or observation notes. The coding of information forms an integral part of the data analysis process.

- **Codes and coding**

In qualitative research, coding refers to the process whereby ideas and concepts are generated from raw data such as interview transcripts, field notes, archival materials, reports, newspaper articles and art. The coding process requires the researcher to identify, arrange and systematise key thoughts, concepts and categories found in the data. During the coding process, portions of data are separated from their original context and labelled in

some way so that all data bearing the same label can be retrieved and inspected together (Ayres 2008). As can be seen in the following example, coding requires the researcher to read through a transcribed interview or field notes, line by line, in order to identify potentially interesting events, features, phrases, behaviours or stages of a process and distinguish them with labels (Benaquisto 2008). This process is known as **open coding**.



These initial codes can then be reworked into a smaller number of categories or themes, from which conclusions are subsequently drawn. A coding framework, which is the system used to classify the concepts, their definitions and criteria for recognition, is developed over time during the coding and analysis of the data. Through this process of coding and the repeated reviewing of codes, the link between various codes becomes evident, thus enabling the researcher to come to an understanding of the data (Benaquisto 2008). This process of linking codes in order to establish relationships (connections between codes) is known as axial coding.

Researchers frequently make use of thematic coding, where information is broken down into key themes or categories that describe the phenomenon being studied. In contrast to open and axial coding, which tend to focus on a more comprehensive analysis of the data through the inclusion of the researcher's analytical insights, thematic coding aims to reduce the data into more manageable sections. In thematic coding, the researcher frequently begins with a list of known and/or anticipated themes. For instance, in a scenario where the researcher makes use of an interview schedule, the themes are linked with the questions in the interview schedule. The researcher might also identify themes from the review of the literature or from professional experience (Ayres 2008).

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is to help you to apply theoretical information in practice.

Carefully read through the following extract from a transcribed interview and identify the relevant codes a researcher might use to analyse the data.

A few years into our relationship I received a job offer, as a result of my field of expertise, to work on an exclusive private island off the coast of Africa. I arranged a position for Lynn with the hope that the change would be beneficial to her and our relationship. We left and for three months things were going fairly well between us, but then she became violent once again. This time the abuse was worse and it became almost impossible to hide it from others as the island was small and the inhabitants few. I ran out of excuses after a while.

I feel humiliated because I was abused by her. Very few people understand what I went through and just about no one wants to listen to my story if I try to tell them. The one or two people I have tried to tell refer to me as a “Pissie” who cannot stand up to a woman, especially these “Matcho Blou Bul Boelies” that attack their wives after a party to prove their manliness. They also don’t care in whose company they abuse their wives. I believe that this is wrong and would never raise my hand to a woman. I believe that a man has a lot more power to injure than a woman does.

## Feedback

Possible codes that could be used in this section are:

- relationship dynamics
- frequency of abuse
- physical impact of abuse
- emotional impact of abuse
- perceptions of abuse in society
- personal perceptions of abuse

It is clear from this section that coding is an important but laborious and time-consuming task.

### 2.5.3 Qualitative data analysis

There are many different approaches to data analysis in qualitative research. The method used will largely depend on the research topic, the researcher’s personal preferences, as well as time constraints and the equipment and finances available to the researcher. We will now briefly consider ethnographical and narrative analysis to illustrate how data can be analysed in qualitative research.

### 2.5.3.1 Ethnography

Ethnography focuses on the way in which research participants construct and understand their social world/life-world. It therefore aims to understand, rather than describe, participants' life-world (Bachman & Schutt 2011:289). During the analysis of data, the researcher will identify data and/or themes that deal with how the participants construct and perceive their life-world. An example of such a study could be the analysis of social behaviour of members of a prison gang. In such a study the researcher will focus on understanding the life-world of prison gangs and the effect thereof on the social functioning of gang members in the prison environment.

### 2.5.3.2 Narrative and discourse analysis

Narrative analysis focuses on how people create and use stories to interpret their life-world. Researchers do not focus on the factual content in order to determine whether it is valid or not, but rather on the story itself. Stories are viewed as products of social interaction in society and reflect the social behaviour, historical accounts and cultural practices of a specific society. Narratives act as the interpretive devices through which people represent themselves and their life-world (Bachman & Schutt 2011:291).

The coding strategy in narrative analysis involves the reading of a story in order to classify it into general patterns (Bachman & Schutt 2011:291). For example, Alford (2007) used narrative analysis to research the phenomenon of whistle-blowers, those who speak out against illegal or unethical practices in the organisation in which they work. The following extract is an example of how Alford used the "story" of one of the participants to understand their perceptions of their personal experiences.

"I did it because I had to ... because I had no other choice ... because I couldn't live with myself if I hadn't done anything ... because it was speak up or stroke out ... . What else could I do? I have to look at myself in the mirror every morning?" This is what most whistle-blowers say (the comments of several strung together to form a single quote), and the question is how to regard this almost universal explanation, one that is generally offered gratis – that is, not in response to a question about "Why'd you do it?" There is something formulaic about the explanation, but that does not mean empty. The trick will be to find out what the explanation is a formula for. The answer is that choice less choice is a formula for relief from the almost unbearable regret of having let oneself be sent on a suicide mission (Alford 2007).

From the analysis it is clear that Alford does not focus on the factual content, but rather on the participant's understanding of his life-world and the phenomenon.

Conversation analysis, also known as discourse analysis, is a method researchers use to analyse conversations. Discourse analysis focuses on the sequence and details of conversational interaction (Bachman & Schutt 2011:292). In other words, it looks at patterns of speech, such as how people talk about a particular subject, what metaphors they use, how they take turns in conversation, and so on. The researcher therefore analyses the conversation and associated interactions between participants and is not interested in the content of the conversation as such.

## 2.5.4 Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS)

Qualitative research is characterised by the large amount of raw data it generates, usually in the form of text. Traditionally, researchers used to spend endless hours



organising and analysing the raw data manually. However, qualitative research has changed dramatically with the introduction of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS). Currently, computer software is used in the transcription and analysis of interviews, as well as in the coding of data.

Data analysis computer software can be divided into two broad categories, namely, generic software and dedicated qualitative analysis software (Ezzy 2002:112). Generic software, such as Microsoft Word (MSWord), is generally used to capture and store data, as well as for text retrieval and as a text-based manager. According to Lewins and Silver (2009), dedicated qualitative analysis software includes programs that are designed specifically to assist with the coding and retrieval of information, as well as with textual mapping. Qualitative researchers can make use of the following types of packages:

#### 2.5.4.1 Code-based theory building software

This software assists the researcher in managing the analysis of qualitative data in order to apply thematic coding to raw data, thereby reducing the amount of data in accordance with identified themes. It also assists researchers to test relationships between concepts and/or themes, thus assisting with the analysis of information. Some of the programs facilitate the graphic visualisation of relations and processes by making use of text mapping. ATLAS.ti, NVivo and HyperResearch are examples of such programs.

#### 2.5.4.2 Text retrievers and text-based managers

These software programs assist in complex searches for text and language, including the use of thesaurus tools to find words with similar meanings. They index all words contained in the text in order to provide word frequency tables, to create active word lists, as well as to provide easy keyword or phrase retrieval. Text-based managers tend to have more functions than text retrievers and they are generally better equipped to deal with a large volume of data. Examples of these software programs are Metamorph and WordCruncher.

It should be noted that CAQDAS software assists researchers only in terms of the analysis of data. It remains the researcher's task to analyse and interpret the computer-generated data further.

### Summary

In this study unit we focused on data processing and analysis in qualitative research. We discussed ethnography and narrative and discourse analysis, as well as computer-assisted qualitative data analysis. In the next study unit we explain the report writing procedure.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 2.5

Complete the following sentences.

1. In qualitative research, coding refers to the process whereby

\_\_\_\_\_.

2. The coding process requires the researcher to

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Thematic coding is where \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Conversation analysis is also known as \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Qualitative research has changed dramatically with the introduction of \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. Data analysis computer software can be divided into two broad categories, namely, \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. Coding requires the researcher to \_\_\_\_\_ .  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
8. Initial codes can later be reworked into \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. A coding framework is \_\_\_\_\_ .
10. This process of linking codes in order to establish relationships (connections between codes) is known as \_\_\_\_\_ .



## Step 5: Report writing

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the purpose of a research report.
- Discuss the different steps in writing an academic report.

### Introduction

The purpose of doing research is not only to study phenomena, but also to communicate the findings to people who can benefit from the research. Imagine if great inventors, such as Alexander Bell, who invented the telephone, or Thomas Edison, who invented electricity, had kept their inventions to themselves and failed to share their discoveries with others! Similarly, it is pointless for researchers to conduct research and then fail to communicate their findings with others who can benefit from them. Bachman and Shutt (2011:242) view this as one of the most important steps in the research process, stating that “if the intended audience is not able to learn about the study’s results, the research should be judged as a failure no matter how expensive the research, how sophisticated its design, or how much of yourself you invested in it”.

### 2.6.1 Purpose of a research report

Scientific reporting has three primary functions: it communicates specific data and ideas; it usually contributes to the body of knowledge of a discipline; and it may stimulate or provide direction for further investigation (Babbie & Mouton 2001:563). The primary purpose of writing a report is to share information, such as research findings, with interested parties. These parties will differ, depending on the purpose of the report. A researcher might write a research report for different reasons, such as a dissertation (master’s degree), thesis (doctoral degree) or an assignment to obtain an academic qualification. Researchers also write articles for publication in scientific journals or to present their findings at a conference.

The purpose of a research report may also be to advance scientific knowledge, to shape social policy or to organise social action (Bachman & Schutt 2011:425). Scientific knowledge is advanced when researchers study a phenomenon that has not been studied before or if their studies unearth new or additional information in the field of existing studies. For example, after the xenophobic attacks in South Africa in May 2008, various studies were conducted on the subject because limited knowledge was available on the phenomenon from a South African perspective. The information gained from these studies thus advanced our scientific knowledge base.

Research can also be used to change social policy. For example, in 2006 NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders) researched the impact that growing up within a prison environment could have on a child who remains with his/her mother during her incarceration. Based on the findings, they made a submission to the Portfolio Committee on Corrections to recommend certain changes to the policy. The submission contributed to changes that were included in the Correctional Services Amendment Act 25 of 2008. In this instance, the research was conducted not only to advance scientific knowledge, but also to bring about changes in policy and practice.

The idea of research as a method to organise social action originated with William White. He argued that researchers should abandon the idea of academic research and engage more in applied research to develop a better understanding of social phenomena. Consequently, he developed an alternative research and reporting strategy called participatory action research (PAR) (Bachman & Schutt 2011:426). This type of research is frequently undertaken by researchers who are also practitioners in the field and it aims to improve the performance quality of an action or intervention in a specific area. In PAR, the researcher is directly involved and also involves other persons in the field of study. As in the case of the qualitative data analysis spiral, the PAR process is described as a spiral and consists of the following steps:



Consequently, he developed an alternative research and reporting strategy called participatory action research (PAR) (Bachman & Schutt 2011:426). This type of research is frequently undertaken by researchers who are also practitioners in the field and it aims to improve the performance quality of an action or intervention in a specific area. In PAR, the researcher is directly involved and also involves other persons in the field of study. As in the case of the qualitative data analysis spiral, the PAR process is described as a spiral and consists of the following steps:

- planning a change
- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change
- reflecting on the process and consequences
- replanning
- acting and observing again (Bachman & Schutt 2011:426)

In contrast with traditional qualitative studies where research results are reported at the end of a study, in PAR reporting happens throughout the research process. PAR therefore provides useful and immediate feedback.

A researcher might use PAR research to evaluate how effective a rape and trauma centre is in its delivery of services to rape victims. To determine this, researchers will start off by looking at the goals of the centre and then, based on the goals, will identify measurable objectives. For instance, the researcher might ask if the centre's staff can cope with the number of clients they see, what the needs of the clients are and whether the centre fulfils these needs, as well as whether the centre is administered cost-effectively. Next, the researcher will identify the people in the organisation who are responsible for the collection of data, such as an intake officer to collect data on the number of clients who use the centre on a daily basis. This information can then be compared with the running costs of the centre to determine whether the centre is cost-

effective. Thus, all the information is analysed and interpreted to determine if the centre is effective. But this is not where the research process ends. In PAR, the next phase will be to identify problem areas and then to take action to resolve these problems. The remedial steps will be regarded as a new action, which also needs to be evaluated. It is therefore clear that participation research can become an ongoing process.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is for you to identify the purpose of research reports.

Study section 2.6.1 and write down the purpose of research reports.


### F e e d b a c k

The purpose of research reports is to

- share information
- obtain an academic qualification
- write an article for publication in a scientific journal
- advance scientific knowledge
- shape social policy
- organise social action

Remember, it is important not only to know what the purpose of report writing is, but also to be able to discuss the purpose and give an applicable example of where you would use a specific type of report.

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## 2.6.2 Writing a research report

In writing a research report, Babbie and Mouton (2001:565) advise researchers to “tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; and tell them what you told them”. This might seem confusing, but essentially it means that researchers should record their research in such a manner that it is reflective of the planning, process and findings of the study. The phrase “and tell them what you told them” refers to the researchers’ responsibility to integrate information in order to present a holistic report of the research (Babbie & Mouton 2001:565).

It is important to remember that a research report is a scientific document and should

therefore follow certain methodological guidelines. Ladikos (2009:155) recommends that the following methodological guidelines be followed when writing a research report:

- The research problem must be clearly stated.
- The report must specify the goals of the research.
- The research design must be indicated.
- The report should contain information about the nature and relevance of data sources.
- The report should provide all relevant details about the data collection.
- The report must describe the processing and analysis of the data.
- The conclusion must be based on data that relate to the research problem.
- The report should satisfy the technical requirements of the organisation pertaining to the format and length of the study and referencing style.

The layout of a research report will be determined by the purpose of the report. A report for academic purposes follows a different format from, for instance, an article that is written for publication in a scientific journal. It is therefore important for the researcher to know which format to follow before writing the report.

As an example of a research report, we will explore the generic structure most commonly used for writing an academic report.

### 2.6.2.1 Introduction

The purpose of an introduction is literally to introduce the reader to the study. It should therefore include information on the origin and purpose of the study. The researcher should also give some background information to contextualise the study. An introduction should include a brief outline of the content and structure of the report. The following is an example of an introduction to an article that was published in the *Acta Criminologica* journal.

#### INTRODUCTION

When studying incarceration, it is necessary to understand the origin of a particular aspect of the system that would constitute the context of a study. From a historical perspective, the first part of the article therefore provides an overview of the origin and development of female incarceration in South Africa. However, both locally and abroad the female inmate population usually constitutes a very small portion of the correctional population. For this very reason, it is often a neglected population, not only in terms of programmes and services delivery to this minority group but also from a research perspective. Incarcerated women experience specific problems, and with the following discussion research findings are presented on conditions in female correctional centres. In addition, as many incarcerated women are plagued by concerns about their children, the final part of the study refers to the phenomenon of incarcerated mothers (Luyt & Du Preez 2010:88).

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is for you to identify the information that must be included in an introduction.

Read the introduction in the above box and answer the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of the article?
2. What background information does the researcher include to contextualise the article?
3. What will be discussed in the article?

## Feedback

From the introduction, the reader can deduce that the purpose of the article is to discuss research findings on the conditions in female correctional centres. The researcher argues that female inmates are a neglected group in corrections. This is primarily because they are a minority group; consequently they are neglected in terms of facilities and developmental programmes. The article will include information on the origin and development of female incarceration in South Africa, conditions in female correctional centres and the phenomenon of incarcerated mothers.

The introduction thus tells the readers what to expect when they read the article. The introduction is a very important part of a research report because it can either stimulate the reader's interest or discourage the reader from reading any further.

### 2.6.2.2 Literature review

The purpose of a literature review is to place the research in a broader context. It introduces the reader to information, such as similar research, on the topic of the report. The literature review also explains the reason why the researcher undertook this particular study. A literature review consists primarily of existing research and theories. Care should therefore be taken to acknowledge the source of the information.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:566), plagiarism – where an author uses someone else's words and/or ideas without acknowledging the original source – can be avoided by making use of quotation marks to identify where the exact words are quoted from another source. It is also not acceptable to reword an idea and present the revised version as your own. The researcher must always acknowledge the original source of information.

### 2.6.2.3 Methodology

It is very important to include detailed information on the methodology that was followed in the study in order to confirm the validity of the study. This allows the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of the method and the validity and reliability of the study. Information about the approach (quantitative or qualitative), the sample used and the method of data collection, analysis and interpretation should be discussed. The researcher should also indicate why he/she chose the specific research methodology (Bachman & Schutt 2011:431).

#### 2.6.2.4 Discussion of findings

In this section the researcher presents and discusses the results of the study. Findings represent the researcher's interpretations of the analysed data. They should be presented in a logical format in order to assist the reader to understand the findings and why the researcher came to specific conclusions.

In qualitative research, the findings are generally substantiated in textual format, making use of direct quotes from the participants and extracts from narratives or field notes. The following is an example of how qualitative findings can be presented in a research report.

Tom states that he did not have a good support system during the time of his abuse. There were no community members (in the form of friends or neighbours) to which he could turn for help or support during abusive episodes for physical assistance or emotional support. He states that he was taught that men do not complain about their relationship problems, especially not to other males as this would lead to profound embarrassment for both parties. He says that he was under the impression that others thought:

“What’s your problem, just sort her out. Don’t come and whine to everybody. Just get divorced and move on – what’s your case?” He further states that other people feel, “You don’t have to share your inner soul with me. I don’t want to listen to your problems”, and says, “I don’t understand why I was feeling embarrassed as I did not feel like I was instigating abuse, but eventually started doubting myself” (Barkhuizen 2010:189)

In the above example the researcher presents her interpretation of the data and then includes a verbatim quote from the participant to substantiate her findings.

#### 2.6.2.5 Conclusion

The researcher reflects on the key research findings and their implications in the conclusion. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:568), in the conclusion the researcher should “... avoid reviewing every specific finding, but [you] should review all the significant ones. The report should conclude with a statement of what [you] have discovered about [your] subject matter”. In the conclusion, the researcher summarises the most important findings and discusses the implications thereof in practice, as can be seen in the following example.

##### CONCLUSION

The South African Department of Correctional Services indicated in the last White Paper (Department of Correctional Services, 2005) that dysfunctional families provide fertile ground for acts of criminality. Incarcerated women and their children (as an example of a minority group and dysfunctional families) form an ideal cornerstone from which to start introducing major transformation in the correctional system. This refers to transformation that would benefit the female inmates. The question remains, when will the correctional authorities start to walk the talk and go out of their way to implement transformation and rehabilitation strategies properly, instead of changing policy every time a challenge arises? How do we then answer the question posed earlier in this discussion, namely, whether at the beginning of the second decade in the third millennium, conditions in correctional centres have advanced with the times, or has progress become stagnant and caught up in time to match the mega designs present in many of the older correctional structures of South Africa? The unfortunate answer is that



progress has indeed become stagnant in most areas of incarceration in South Africa. Many times, transformation ideas are shipwrecked at the point of implementation and opportunities for change and rehabilitation are simply forfeited as was demonstrated with regard to the incarcerated female minority population in South Africa.

In the above example, the authors summarise the findings of the article in the conclusion. They also ask pertinent questions that could be explored in another study, for example looking at the impact frequent policy changes has on the Department of Correctional Services' service delivery to female inmates.

### 2.6.2.6 Bibliography

A bibliography is a systematic list of books and other sources, such as journals, internet articles and interviews with experts, which is placed at the end of a scientific report. The purpose of referencing is to

- demonstrate that scientific research practice was followed
- show the range of ideas and approaches used in the study
- acknowledge the sources the researcher consulted
- inform the reader where to locate the sources used in the study
- avoid plagiarism (Learning Advisors and Librarians 2011)

The bibliography should include full bibliographic details of all the sources used in a research report. There are different methods of referencing, each following a unique format. It is important for the researcher to verify the method prescribed by the academic institution, journal or organisation. For example, at the University of South Africa we make use of the Harvard referencing method.

### Summary

In this study unit we explained the purpose of a research report and the different steps to follow when writing a research report. The next study unit deals with methods in qualitative research. The first section deals with the characteristics and value of narrative research.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 2.6

Answer the following questions.

1. Scientific reporting has three primary functions, namely

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is participatory action research (PAR)?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which steps are involved in the data analysis spiral of the PAR process?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the purpose of research reports?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the purpose of a literature review in a research study?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is plagiarism?

## THEME 2: SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Indicate the differences and similarities between basic and applied research. (30 marks)
2. Summarise the decision-making steps in the research process. (15 marks)
3. Explain the aspects that should be considered during the identification of a research topic. (15 marks)
4. Analyse the criteria against which a research topic should be evaluated in order to ensure the significance of the study. (15 marks)
5. Discuss the aspects that will influence the choice of a research topic in qualitative research and indicate how these aspects will influence the choice of a topic. (30 marks)
6. Describe the three factors that should be taken into consideration in order to formulate a research problem in qualitative research. (30 marks)
7. Criminological and social science research falls within four categories. Discuss each of the categories and make use of relevant examples to illustrate the differences between the different categories. (30 marks)
8. Describe literature reviews in qualitative research. (30 marks)
9. Make use of examples to distinguish between the use of topic-related and method-related literature in a literature review. (15 marks)
10. Discuss the qualitative interview as a method of data collection. (30 marks)
11. Distinguish between the different roles a researcher can play during observation. (15 marks)
12. Analyse Creswell's data collection cycle. (30 marks)
13. Analyse Creswell's data analysis spiral. (30 marks)
14. Discuss the role computer-assisted qualitative data analysis can play in qualitative research. (15 marks)
15. Analyse the purpose of a research report. (15 marks)
16. Describe the generic structure most commonly used for writing an academic report. (30 marks)

### Answers to self-assessment exercises in theme 2

#### Study unit 2.1

Basic research – b, c, f, g, i

Applied research – a, d, e, h, j

#### Study unit 2.2

The answer to this question can be found in section 2.2.2.

#### Study unit 2.3

1. The manner in which the researcher formulates the research question is important because it *will determine the research method of the study. It also indicates the parameters of the study.*
2. The research problem is a statement that identifies the scope and area of the *research topic*. It identifies the specific phenomenon that is being studied and demarcates the research sample used in the study.
3. In order to formulate the research problem, the researcher needs to consider the *units of analysis, the research goal and research strategy.*
4. *The research strategy* deals with the research approach.
5. The research problem should be stated clearly in order to tell the reader *what*

question and/or problem the researcher is trying to address, as well as how the researcher aims to do so.

### Study unit 2.4

- A 3
- B 3
- C 4
- D 2
- E 4

### Study unit 2.5

Complete the following sentences:

1. In qualitative research, coding refers to the process whereby *ideas and concepts are generated from raw data*.
2. The coding process requires the researcher to *identify, arrange and systematise key thoughts, concepts and categories found in the data*.
3. Thematic coding is where *information is broken down into key themes or categories that describe the phenomenon that is being studied*.
4. Conversation analysis is also known as *discourse analysis*.
5. Qualitative research has *changed dramatically with the introduction of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS)*.
6. Data analysis computer software can be divided into two broad *categories, namely generic software and dedicated qualitative analysis software*.
7. Coding requires the researcher to *read through a transcribed interview or field notes, line by line, in order to identify potentially interesting events, features, phrases, behaviours or stages of a process and to distinguish between them with labels*.
8. Initial codes can later be reworked into a *smaller number of categories or themes, from which conclusions are subsequently drawn*.
9. A coding framework is *the system used to classify the concepts, their definitions, and criteria for recognition and is developed over time during the coding and analysis of the data*.
10. This process of linking codes in order to establish relationships (connections between codes) is known as *axial coding*.

### Study unit 2.6

Answer the following questions:

1. Scientific reporting has three primary functions, namely
  - it communicates specific data and ideas
  - it contributes to the body of knowledge of a discipline
  - it may stimulate or provide direction for further investigation

2. What is participatory action research?

It is a type of research that is frequently undertaken by researchers who are also practitioners in the field and it aims to improve the performance quality of an action or intervention in a specific area.

3. Which steps does the data analysis spiral of the PAR process consist of?
  - planning a change

- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change
- reflecting on the process and consequences
- re-planning
- acting and observing again (Bachman & Schutt 2011:426)

4. What is the purpose of research reports?

- to share information
- to obtain an academic qualification
- to write an article for publication in a scientific journal
- to advance scientific knowledge
- to shape social policy
- to organise social action

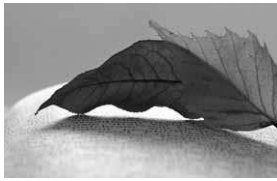
5. What is the purpose of a literature review in a research study?

The purpose of a literature review is to place the research in a broader context. It introduces the reader to information on the topic of the report, such as similar research. The literature review also explains the reason why the researcher undertook this particular study.

6. What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism occurs when an author uses someone else's words and/or ideas without acknowledging the original source.





## Methods in qualitative research

“Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” *Zora Neale Hurston*

### Introduction

In theme 1 we explored the origin of scientific knowledge and the approaches (quantitative and qualitative) in scientific research. We determined that there are three factors that a researcher needs to consider in order to choose which approach to follow, namely:

- the researcher’s scientific-philosophical and research-methodological points of departure
- the aim of the research project
- the nature of the research phenomenon (area of research/investigation) and research object (specific study object) (Ladikos 2009:49)

The research design process in qualitative research therefore begins when the researcher makes a conscious decision to follow a qualitative approach. This, in turn, influences the methodology and scientific techniques that are applied in the study. Scientific technique is an aid or one of the tools of scientific methods and may include, for instance, interviews or observations (Ladikos 2009:49).

There are various methods that a researcher can use to conduct a qualitative study. The term “method” literally means “the path along which” and therefore indicates the way in which the study is conducted (Ladikos 2009:49).



## Narrative research

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Discuss in detail the characteristics of narrative research.
- Explain the value of narrative research.
- Identify the limitations of narrative research.

A narrative is a verbal account of a sequence of events in the order in which they happened. In other words, it is a description of people's experiences in their everyday interactions with one another and with their social environment. Moen (2006) refers to the sharing of these experiences as storytelling. According to him, people make use of storytelling to find practical solutions to life's challenges and to create an understanding of their experience. Not only do people continually create narratives to order and structure their life experiences, but they are also constantly bombarded with narratives from the world in which they live. People thus use narrative descriptions about their experiences and interactions with their life-world to make sense of the behaviour of others (Moen 2006).



In narrative studies, researchers are interested in people's stories. Narratives allow a researcher to study how individuals, or a group of people, understand their interaction in a specific context within their social, cultural and institutional environment (Moen 2006).



### 3.1.1 Characteristics

A narrative can be defined as the process of telling a story or giving an account of an event or experience. In narrative research, the researcher focuses on participants' "life stories". It should be noted that the researcher is not interested in what happened, but is concerned with the meaning participants attach to the stories. Qualitative researchers study personal and group narratives within the context of their natural settings, thereby attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

There are three basic assumptions that underpin narrative research, namely:

- that human beings organise their experiences of the world into narratives and that narratives are the primary method by which human existence is rendered meaningful
- that the stories that are told depend on the individuals' past and present experiences, their values, the people the stories are being told to (the addressees) and when and where they are being told. Life stories are therefore not abstract structures that can be viewed in isolation from their social and cultural context. They are rooted in perceptions about society and shaped by an individual's knowledge and personal identity, which are continually being constructed and revised.
- that researchers acknowledge the multi-voiced-ness that is present in narratives. Even though researchers acknowledge that narratives are generally personal stories shaped by the knowledge, experiences, values and feelings of the persons who are telling them, they also recognise that collective stories are influenced by the cultural, historical and institutional settings in which they occur. Narratives are therefore an interaction between individuals' beliefs and experiences and the influences of their life-world. Narratives connect individuals and their social context, resulting in a multitude of voices being present within an individual's stories (Moen 2006).

Clandin and Connely (in Creswell 2007:55–57) identify five aspects that should be included in the collection and analysis of data when doing narrative research:

1. Firstly, the researcher identifies a research problem or question. It is important that the research problem or question be suited to narrative research. The purpose of the research should be to study stories of individuals or groups in order to understand the storytellers' (participants') perspective of a phenomenon. Creswell (2007:55) highlights the fact that the analysis of stories is time-consuming and intensive and that the sample should therefore not be too large.
2. Secondly, researchers identify and select one or more participants who have stories or life experiences pertaining to the research question or problem. The researcher then spends considerable time with the participants in order to collect their stories. Multiple types of information, such as verbal dialogue, letters, photographs, memos or memorandums and journals or diaries are used to construct and shed light on the narrative. Researchers can also make use of audio or video equipment to record data.
3. Thirdly, researchers collect information about the context of the stories. This involves collecting information on the participants' background (their family, job and social environment), their culture (race and ethnicity) and historical context (place and time) in order to contextualise the stories within the participants' life-world.
4. Fourthly, the researcher needs to analyse the participants' stories in order to

break them down into an analysable format. Creswell (2007:56) refers to this process as “restorying”. According to him, the researcher needs to identify key elements, such as time, place, plot and scene, and then rewrite the story to place it within this chronological format. Stories can also be analysed in terms of themes. For example, in a study that explored the narratives of ninth graders regarding conflict, the researcher identified four types of stories, namely, action tales, expressive tales, moral tales and rational tales. The story types thus act as themes in terms of which the researcher can analyse the stories (Bachman & Schutt 2011:291).

Riessman (2008) identifies structural, interactional and performative analysis as additional methods to examine narrative data. Structural analysis focuses on the way a story is told; therefore the language that participants use to tell the story is important. In interactional analysis, the dialogue between teller and listener is important and the researcher will therefore focus on this interactional process between storyteller and listener. In performative analysis, researchers analyse the non-verbal actions that storytellers use during narratives. It is important to remember that in narrative studies, researchers focus on the meaning that participants attach to the story and not on the factual content of the story.

5. Fifthly and lastly, the researcher collaborates with the participants throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the research process. The relationship and the impact of the research process on both the participants and the researcher often form key elements of the narrative. The following quote from a book by Ross Kemp (2008), which describes the killing of a young man in gang-related fighting, is an example of how the researcher’s perspective becomes part of the narrative.

The Crips believed that the 49 Bads had done it, and macho gang pride – known here by one of the deadliest words in the English language, respect – dedicated that a Blood had to pay in the same coin. When the Crips came looking for payback it seems they found Robert Lee Walker. What’s really hard for an outsider like me to understand is that Walker may well have been killed simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time (Kemp 2008:121).

The narrative was constructed from stories told by Robert Lee Walker’s girlfriend and friend, who viewed the attack, as well as from information from 49 Bads gang members. This is an example of the multi-voiced-ness that is associated with narrative studies. Note how Kemp uses “gang language” to place the story in context. By including his perspective on the story, Kemp as researcher – becomes part of the narrative.

Narrative analysis allows the readers to understand a phenomenon through the stories of people’s own perspectives on the occurrence. Furthermore, the contextualisation of these stories informs the readers of the broader social settings and processes that had a direct and/or indirect impact on the narrative.

## Activity

The purpose of this activity is to help you to identify the studies for which narrative research can be used.

Read through study unit 3.1 and identify which types of studies are suited to a narrative approach.


### F e e d b a c k

Narrative research is suitable for any topic where the researcher is interested in the participants' "life stories" from their perspective. As stated previously, the focus of narrative research is on the participants and their stories as a reflection of how they interpret happenings in their life-world.

### 3.1.2 Value of narrative studies

The primary value of narrative research is that it creates the opportunity to understand the experiences and perceptions of individuals and/or groups within their life-world. It can thus help the researcher to understand the motives for various types of behaviour. For example, the narrative analysis in Ross Kemp's book on gangs will assist the reader to understand why gang killings take place. Narrative studies also connect individuals and their social context, thus creating insight into the cultural, historical and institutional settings in which the narratives occurred.

### 3.1.3 Limitations of narrative studies

Creswell (2007:57) is of the opinion that narrative research is a difficult method to use because the researcher needs to collect extensive information about the participants in order to have a clear understanding of their experiences. Narrative research is therefore inappropriate for studies with large numbers of participants.

### Summary

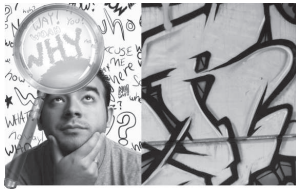
In this study unit we explained the characteristics, value and limitations of narrative studies. The next study unit deals with phenomenological research.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.1

Fill in the missing words.

1. A narrative can be defined as the process of \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. In narrative studies, researchers are interested in \_\_\_\_\_. Narratives allow a researcher to \_\_\_\_\_ , or a group of people, \_\_\_\_\_ in a specific context within their \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. In narrative research, the researcher focuses on participants' \_\_\_\_\_ .

4. In narrative studies, the researcher is not interested in what happened, but is concerned with the \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Qualitative researchers study \_\_\_\_\_ within the \_\_\_\_\_ , thus attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.



## Phenomenological research

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the characteristics of phenomenological research.
- Discuss the value of phenomenological research.
- Identify the limitations of phenomenological research.

Phenomenology deals with the investigation and description of people's experience in and perceptions of their life-world, without determining whether what is experienced is objectively real. Phenomenological research focuses on the experiences that a group of participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon, such as domestic violence or crime victimisation. According to Creswell (2007:57), the purpose of phenomenological research is to reduce individual experiences of a phenomenon to a description of shared experiences that a group of people have in common. For example, in the following extract from the book on gangs by Ross Kemp (2008:56–57), the author describes how a gang in New Zealand was formed because of the shared experiences and perceptions of a group of children in 1968.

Originally a white gang but now mainly Maori, the Mongrel Mob was formed in Hasting and nearby Napier back in 1968 by kids who said they had been abused in the country's childcare system. Alienated by what they claimed to have suffered at the hand of their supposed carers, the kids formed the Mongrel Mob as a way of striking back, not just at the people they felt had ruined their childhood but at the country as a whole.

This narrative describes the experiences, perceptions and reactions of a group of children that resulted in their forming a gang. The essence of why gangs are formed, namely, as a rebellion against what gang members perceived as abuse from authoritarian structures in a country, was also found to be prevalent in other gangs around the world (Kemp 2008). This type of information thus helps us to understand gangs as a phenomenon.

### 3.2.1 Characteristics

As stated previously, the purpose of phenomenological studies is to investigate the fundamental nature of an experience or phenomenon by examining the descriptions of the experiences given by participants. Phenomenological studies can thus be

described as the study of phenomena or, more specifically, the appearance of things in terms of participants' own experiences. These studies seek to examine the meanings that things have from a personal perspective and how these meanings may be shaped and/or used (Berg 2008). The end result of phenomenological studies is to determine and describe the participants' understanding of the phenomenon being explored. The description involves not only what was experienced, but also how it was experienced (*The Sage Glossary of the Social and Behavioural Sciences* 2008). Phenomenological researchers thus highlight human experience as not only valid, but as an important element in understanding human existence. It should be noted that the purpose of phenomenological studies is not to interpret or explain a phenomenon, but merely to give a description of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon being explored.

According to Morrissey and Higgs (2006:162), phenomenological research is based on two premises. The first is that human experiences are a valid, rich and rewarding source of knowledge. Experience, namely, what we are aware of at any point in time, is viewed as the source of all knowing and as the basis of behaviour. It is also the foundation of our knowledge of our self and others, as well as of the world in general. Human experience is therefore viewed as a reliable source of data, the foundation of knowledge about human phenomena.

The second premise of phenomenological research emphasises the importance of participants' everyday world as a valuable and productive source of knowledge. This information assists researchers to develop knowledge into the nature of a phenomenon by analysing how it occurs in the participants' daily lives. In other words, participants' descriptions of experiences in their life-world, together with their perceptions and understandings of these experiences, are the essence of what phenomenological research is about (Morrissey & Higgs 2006:163).

Data collection in phenomenological research is done through empirical or reflective methods. Interviews are often used as a method of empirical data collection in phenomenological studies (Adams & Van Manen 2008). In phenomenological studies, researchers distinguish between two types of interviews, namely, phenomenological and hermeneutic interviews. The phenomenological interview is used to explore and collect empirical data about a phenomenon, such as the social structure of a gang. The hermeneutic interview is used to explore how the participants interpret aspects of their experiences associated with the studied phenomenon.

Observations are also used to collect data in phenomenological research. This is a process that enables researchers to learn first-hand about the interaction, behaviour and perceptions of the participants in their natural environment by observing and participating in those activities. This enables researchers to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena they study.

Reflective methods of data collection aim to interpret aspects of meaning or meaningfulness that are associated with a phenomenon. They are associated with the reduction of information in order to identify themes that can describe and interpret the meaning of the lived experience. According to Adams and Van Manen (2008), themes such as lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality) and lived human relations (relationality or communality) could assist the researcher to understand a phenomenon on an existential level.

Typically, phenomenological researchers will make use of a small sample because of the in-depth analysis that is required in this type of study. An example of a phenomenological study is an examination of the lived experiences of women who are victims of domestic violence. The researcher may question domestic violence victims

about their experiences, perceptions and understandings. Data collection could consist of interviews with victims of domestic violence. Interview questions would explore the participants' experiences and probe their thoughts, feelings, concerns and personal viewpoints on the abuse they experience. It would also explore when, where, why and how the abuse occurs. The purpose of such a study would be to identify prevailing themes that describe domestic violence as a phenomenon, with specific emphasis on the experiences of female victims.

### 3.2.2 Value of phenomenological studies

The value of phenomenological studies is that they describe the essence of a phenomenon by comparing individual experiences in order to explain the shared characteristics associated with the phenomenon. It is a method that allows for an in-depth study of a specific phenomenon. It highlights the importance of human experience as valid information to understand the different aspects of human existence. It also recognises the value of the everyday world as a valuable and productive source of knowledge in order to create insights into the nature of a phenomenon.

Phenomenological studies also have practical value in so far as they can assist therapists to understand the nature of a client's experiences. For instance, they can help a therapist to understand why victims of domestic violence are often reluctant to end an abusive relationship.

### 3.2.3 Limitations of phenomenological studies

Owing to the in-depth nature of a phenomenological study, the sample generally consists of a small number of participants. It might be methodologically challenging to collect the full, rich verbal accounts required by phenomenological study, especially in the case of studies of children or in cases where the researcher studies sensitive issues, such as male rape or incestuous relationships.

## Summary

In this study unit we explained the characteristics, value and limitations of phenomenological studies. The next section deals with grounded theory research.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.2

Answer the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of phenomenological research?

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2. In phenomenological studies, researchers distinguish between two types of interviews, namely, phenomenological and hermeneutic interviews. What is the difference between these types of interviews?

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3. What are the premises on which phenomenological research is based?
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which data collection methods can be used in phenomenological research?
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the value and limitation of phenomenological research?

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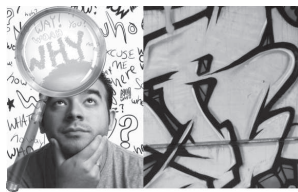
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## Grounded theory research

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the characteristics of grounded theory.
- Discuss the value of grounded theory.
- Identify the value of grounded theory.

Grounded theory refers simultaneously to a method of qualitative inquiry and the products of that research. In terms of a method used in qualitative research, grounded theory method consists of a set of systematic but flexible guidelines for conducting inductive qualitative research aimed at the development of theory (Charmaz & Bryant 2008).

### 3.3.1 Characteristics

The purpose of grounded theory is to develop theory. The theory is “grounded” in, or based on, the data that is generated during observations (Bachman & Schutt 2011:293). The primary objective of grounded theory is to expand on an explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon. The elements are then categorised into relationships within the context and process of the study. Grounded theory is therefore not descriptive in nature but, rather, aimed at illustrating concepts.

Grounded theory differs from other qualitative research methods and makes use of the following steps (Simmons & Gregory 2003):

- **Minimising preconceptions**

The research process commences with the researcher having as few preconceptions as possible. The researcher does not attempt to hypothesise or understand a phenomenon prior to commencing the study. The researcher therefore does not formulate problem statements or attempt to identify categories/themes before the collection and analysis of the data. The researcher also does not undertake a literature study before the empirical research; he/she will incorporate existing literature only after the development of the theory has essentially been completed. Research questions are furthermore not identified in advance. The data that are collected during the research process lead to the discovery of relevant questions (Simmons & Gregory 2003).

- **Suspending the action problem**

Action problems are social or organisational problems or issues for which a solution is being sought, for example why programmes in correctional facilities are not effective in preventing re-offending. Traditionally, a researcher faced with these problems would attempt to understand or explain them. In grounded theory, however, the researcher refrains from forming preconceived ideas and views and waits until all the information associated with the topic has been collected. The researcher then analyses the data through a process of constant comparison. This process will be explained later on in the study unit.

- **Discovering the research problem**

Grounded theory research begins with a general topic rather than a clearly defined research problem. This general topic gives an indication of where and how data collection should begin. The research problem is identified only later, during the process of data collection and analysis.

Data analysis in grounded theory has a well-defined process that begins with a basic description of a phenomenon. It then moves to the description of concepts associated with the phenomenon that is being studied. This is then followed by the development of a theory. Data analysis is accomplished through an elaborate set of coding processes. According to Corbin and Strauss (in Walker & Myrick 2006:549), coding plays a more significant role in grounded theory than in other qualitative studies; it is not simply part of data analysis, but is the actual process whereby data is analysed.

Glaser (in Walker & Myrick 2006:549) defines coding as a process whereby data are conceptualised through the constant comparison of incident with incident, and incidents with concept. This involves two analytical processes. The first involves drawing comparisons between one incident and another in order to identify themes and generate categories. New incidents are then compared with the categories.

The second process involves the use of neutral questions such as: What category does this incident indicate? These two procedures, together with the use of memorandums that document the researcher's thoughts as coding proceeds, are used to organise the research data. These data will eventually be structured to form a theory (Walker & Myrick 2006:549).

Grounded theory thus integrates the analysis of data and the development of theory into one process. Data collection, analysis and theory formulation are connected in a reciprocal relationship which is characterised by the constant process of comparison. This is especially evident in that, according to grounded theory, the processes of asking questions and making comparisons are specifically detailed to inform and guide analysis and to facilitate the theorising process.

Strauss and Corbin (in Babbie 2010:307) are of the opinion that grounded theory allows a researcher to do scientific research while being creative at the same time. They identified the following guidelines that underpin the research process:

- Think comparatively in order to avoid biases that can originate from interpretations of initial observations. Obtain multiple viewpoints from various participants as well as by making use of different methods of data collection, such as interviews, literature studies and observations.
- Periodically step back as the data accumulate in order to compare and check data and interpretations continually. The continual comparison of data that have been collected from various sources is a key component of grounded theory research.
- Maintain an attitude of scepticism, assuming that initial interpretations are only

provisional. Keep on testing interpretations through a continual process of comparison.

- Follow the research procedure. Strauss and Corbin (in Babbie 2010:308) identified the following three essential steps in the research process, namely, making comparisons, asking questions and sampling based on theoretical concepts. The processes of asking questions and making comparisons are thorough and are used to inform and guide the analysis of information during theory development.

Yogan and Johnson's (2006) research, which involved the examination of the differences between art and graffiti produced by male and female inmates in a correctional centre, is an example of grounded theory research. The purpose of the study was to examine the artwork in order to determine if there was a difference in the way male and female inmates express themselves within a prison environment. The researchers took photographs and wrote notes about the drawings and graffiti in an old prison after all the inmates had been transferred to a new correctional centre. This granted them the opportunity to explore the prison building freely, such as the cells to which they would not ordinarily have had access.

Yogan and Johnson (2006:37) used a two-part coding process to analyse the photographs and memos. Firstly, each researcher analysed the photos and memos individually and divided the data into predominant themes and categories. The two researchers then met and compared notes in order to develop the themes that they used during the second coding phase.

During the second phase of coding, the researchers developed a typology of the photos based on recurring themes that they noted in the prison art. Only then did they compare their categories with other research studies, literature and theory in order to get a clearer picture of the difference between the male and female inmates' pictures. The purpose of the literature review was not to change their original themes, but rather to compare other researchers' explanations with their own. Based on their analysis, theory was developed which created insight into how inmates use art as a form of non-verbal communication.

In practice, some researchers do not adhere strictly to the principles of grounded theory, choosing only to use the continual comparison analysis technique during the analysis of data. In this instance the researchers tend to follow the more traditional qualitative process, which includes compiling a literature review before commencing with the empirical phase of the study.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to help you to understand grounded theory as a qualitative research method.

Read study unit 3.3. Identify the differences between grounded theory and other more traditional methods of doing qualitative research.


## Feedback

Grounded theory differs from other qualitative research methods in that it follows a top-down approach instead of a bottom-up approach. The researcher identifies a subject for the study and commences with data collection without having formulated a clear problem statement. Numerous methods, such as interviews, observations and document analysis, are used to collect data. The study is guided by what the researcher observes and experiences in the field or research setting. Information from the literature review is viewed as an additional source of information, which is compared with the empirical findings of the study. The process of continual comparison eventually results in the formulation of a theory.

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### 3.3.2 Value of grounded theory

Grounded theory is a scientifically rigorous method whereby a researcher develops theory through a systematic analysis of a phenomenon of interest. The process enables the researcher to explain real-world situations from the perspective of the participants. The unique approach that is followed in grounded theory facilitates an unbiased and in-depth analysis of the data.

Grounded theory furthermore contributes to the development of the knowledge base in a discipline. It is a flexible method of data collection and analysis that allows the researcher to make use of various types of data, such as interviews, photographs and observation.

### 3.3.3 Limitations of grounded theory

A common criticism of grounded theory studies is that it is not “real” research. These criticisms have been established to be unfounded because grounded theory is based on a systemic research process, including sampling, coding, and writing memos. Findings are furthermore based on empirical data rather than only on a researcher’s perceptions.

Grounded theory is a complex process and requires a high level of experience and insight on the researcher’s part.

## Summary

In this study unit we explained the characteristics, value and limitations of grounded theory in research. The next study unit deals with ethnographic research.

## Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.3

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Fill in the missing words.

1. The purpose of grounded theory is to \_\_\_\_\_. The theory is “grounded” in, or based on, the data that is generated \_\_\_\_\_. The primary objective of grounded theory is to \_\_\_\_\_ by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon. The elements are then

categorised into \_\_\_\_\_ within the context and process of the study. Grounded theory is therefore not \_\_\_\_\_ in nature but, rather, aimed at \_\_\_\_\_ .

2. Data analysis in grounded theory has a well-defined process that begins with \_\_\_\_\_ of a phenomenon. It then moves to the \_\_\_\_\_ associated with the phenomenon that is being studied. This is then followed by \_\_\_\_\_ .



## Ethnographic research

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the characteristics of ethnographic research.
- Discuss the value of ethnographic research.
- Identify the limitations of ethnographic research.

Fetterman (2008) describes ethnography as the art and science of describing a group or culture. The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the perspective of research participants. It is a method whereby researchers give people a voice to tell their stories from within their context. The researcher uses ethnography to predict patterns of human thought and behaviour (Fetterman 2009:1). Researchers who do ethnographic research are known as ethnographers.

### 3.4.1 Characteristics

Ethnography is about understanding human experience by studying events, language, rituals, institutions, behaviours, artefacts and interactions (Cunliffe 2010:227). The purpose of ethnographical research is to describe and understand the natural and social world within which people function. Typical of qualitative research, ethnographical studies aim to describe social groups from the group members' perspective. Researchers typically make use of fieldwork and use techniques such as interviews and observation to immerse themselves in the life-world of the people they study for an extended period of time (Bachmann & Schutt 2011:288). In this regard ethnography is not a quick research method and might require the researcher to study the group over a period of a year or more.

Important concepts underpinning ethnography include culture, a holistic perspective and contextualisation, emic and etic perspectives, a non-judgemental orientation and inter- and intra-cultural diversity, as well as symbols and rituals (Fetterman 2008).

#### ● Culture

The concept of culture is viewed as the sum of a social group's obser-



vable patterns of behaviour, customs and way of life. This includes the ideas, beliefs and knowledge that is characteristic of a group of people. Ethnographers therefore study the cultural behaviour and the cultural knowledge of a specific group in order to describe the practices that are unique to a particular group (Fetterman 2008).

- **Holistic perspective**

Ethnographers follow a holistic approach in their research, which enables them to develop a comprehensive understanding of the unique culture associated with a specific social group, such as female prisoners, gangsters or a community on the Cape Flats of South Africa. The study might include a description of the group's history, religion, politics, economy and subcultures and the physical and social environment in which members of the culture function (Fetterman 2009:18). For example, in the study of the gang culture in Chicago, the researcher not only described the Black Kings gang, but also focused on the physical and social environment in which the gang functions. The study explored the interaction between the gang and the community, as well as the community's reaction to the gang. It also described the interaction between the gang and the police and each group's perception of the other (Venkatesh 2009).

- **Emic and etic perspectives**

The emic perspective refers to the insider's, or native's, perspective of reality. In other words, ethnographic research offers a description of a social group's culture from the perspective of this group. Ethnographers therefore follow a phenomenological research approach.

The etic perspective, in contrast, represents the researcher's external social scientific perspective on reality. It embodies the researcher's scientific analysis of the data. Generally, ethnographers will start off by collecting data from an emic perspective and then use both the natives' views and their own scientific analysis to examine and interpret the data. The emic and etic orientations thus represent different levels of data analysis (Fetterman 2008).

- **Non-judgemental orientation**

According to Fetterman (2009:23), a non-judgemental orientation requires the ethnographer to maintain a non-judgemental viewpoint, thus suspending personal perceptions based on the researcher's individual values and beliefs. In the Chicago gang study we referred to previously, the researcher was confronted with scenarios where gang members made a living from selling drugs and extortion, and used violence to discipline gang members and members of the community who did not conform to the gang's set of laws. These practices conflicted with the researcher's value system. Therefore, in order for him to undertake the study, he had to be continuously aware of his personal prejudices and make an effort not to allow those to influence the analysis and interpretation of data (Venkatesh 2009).

- **Inter- and intra-cultural diversity**

In ethnographic research, intercultural diversity refers to the differences between two cultures, whereas intra-cultural diversity refers to the differences between various subcultures within a culture. Intercultural differences are less difficult to observe than are intra-cultural differences. In the case of intercultural differences, the variations can be identified through a point-by-point comparison between two different cultures, for

instance their political, religious, economic and social systems (Fetterman 2009:24). Intra-cultural differences, however, are more difficult to observe. For example, the researcher identified different groups within the Black Kings gang, namely, a group that takes care of the safety of the gang, a group that manages the economic income of the group and different groups that sell the drugs. Each of these groups has its own customs and can be viewed as a subculture that functions within the larger culture of the gang. It was therefore important for the researcher also to take note of the intra-cultural differences in order to do an ethnographical study of the Black Kings gang.

### ● Symbols and rituals

Ethnographers look for symbols that help them to understand and describe a culture. Symbols can be flags, art, graffiti or tattoos. Fetterman (2008) describes symbols as expressions of meaning that evoke powerful feelings and thoughts. For instance, within the gang culture, tattoos are used to show allegiance to a gang. They are also used to indicate the rank/position of a gang member.

Rituals are repeated patterns of symbolic behaviour, such as initiation ceremonies used by gangs. Ethnographers view symbols and rituals as symbolic behaviour by means of which cultures express themselves. It is therefore important for ethnographers to study the symbols and rituals that are used by different cultures.

Multiple methods are used to analyse data in ethnography studies. According to Fetterman (2008), ethnographic analysis is iterative and commences once the research problem has been identified. One of the first steps in the data analysis process is for the researcher to organise the information in such a manner that he/she is able to work through the data systematically. This can be a daunting task, as traditionally the data can include field notes, audio and visual recordings of interviews and interactions, as well as field notes (Cunliffe 2010:231). Data are coded and categorised into themes and patterns of thought and behaviour.

Ethnographical studies offer detailed and rich, or “thick”, descriptions of the group that is being studied. Consequently, the researcher focuses on capturing the micro-interactions in the field in order to capture the essence of the group being studied. “Thick” description is furthermore important in establishing the “validity” of ethnographic texts (Cunliffe 2010:231).

The researcher’s experiences are an integral part of ethnographical research. According to Cunliffe (2010:231), there are four tasks involved in becoming an ethnographer, namely, learning how to do fieldwork; learning how to write; figuring out who you are as a person/fieldworker/writer; and knowing how, where and when these all connect. The researcher’s interpretation, also known as the etic perspective, therefore contributes to the in-depth description of the group that is being studied.

## 3.4.2 Value of ethnographical research

Ethnographical research enables the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of a group’s life-world from the perspective of the group members. Such studies enable researchers and practitioners to gain insight into the life-world of unique cultures and groups, such as prisoners and gang members. The methods of data collection allow researchers to record the behaviour as it occurs (Nurani 2008:446).



### 3.4.3 Limitations of ethnographical research

Ethnographic research is time-consuming, potentially expensive and requires an experienced researcher. In addition, researcher bias may influence the validity of the research. Similarly, participants might tell the researcher what they think the researcher would like to hear, thus manipulating the data. This is especially the case if too few data are collected, which might result in false assumptions about behaviour patterns. Another limitation of ethnographic research is that it frequently focuses only on a single setting, thus limiting the value of the research.

### Summary

In this study unit we explained the characteristics, value and limitations of ethnographic research. The next study unit deals with the case study in research.

#### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.4

Complete the sentences.

1. Ethnography is about \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. The purpose of ethnographical research is to \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Ethnographical studies aim to \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Important concepts that underpin ethnography include culture, \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Ethnographers follow a holistic approach in their research, which enables them to \_\_\_\_\_ .



## Case study research

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the characteristics of cases studies in research.
- Discuss the value of case studies in research.
- Identify the limitations of case studies in research.

A case study involves an in-depth study of a phenomenon explored through one or just a few cases. It is a method that is widely used within the field of criminology. For example, in their book *Serial murder*, Holmes and Holmes (2010) make use of case studies to illustrate differences between types of serial killers, as well as to discuss the unique traits and elements associated with each type of serial murderer.

### 3.5.1 Characteristics

Case study research involves the in-depth analysis of a few cases over a specific period of time. Cases may involve individuals, groups, organisations, movements, events or geographic units. The data are detailed, varied and extensive in order to explore a case holistically (Neuman 2006:29).

According to Stakes (in Creswell 2007:74–75), the first step for a researcher conducting a case study is to determine whether a case study approach is suitable for the research problem. A case study can be used only within a bounded system. A bounded system can be defined as a system where specific cases can be identified. For instance, in the example of serial murderers, the researchers were able to identify specific people who could be classified as serial murderers, based on a pre-existing classification system that differentiates serial murderers from other categories of murderers.

In the next step the researcher needs to identify specific cases within the bounded system. These cases may involve one or more individuals, a programme, an event or an activity. In general, researchers will make use of purposive sampling to choose cases that are most applicable to the study of the phenomenon. For example, Holmes and Holmes (2010) included case studies of different types for serial killers, such as lust killers, thrill killers and comfort killers, in order to discuss the phenomenon of serial killers from different perspectives.

Data collection in case study research is typically in-depth and makes use of multiple sources of information, such as documents, archival records, interviews, direct

observation and physical artefacts such as autobiographies (Creswell 2007:75). For instance, in the case of Ted Bundy, the researchers used personal interviews with Bundy, his family and friends, as well as interviews with police officers who investigated his case and correctional officials in the prison where he was detained. They also consulted documents such as court reports and newspaper articles.

A holistic approach is followed in the analysis of case study data. During the analysis, the researcher will develop a detailed description of the case, focusing on aspects such as the history of the case, the chronology of the event or a day-to-day description of the case (Creswell 2007:75). When multiple cases are studied, a typical format involves providing a detailed description of each case before presenting general conclusions.

In the final step the researcher presents the findings and conclusions of the case study. Creswell (2007:75) describes this as the step where the researcher reports the meaning of the case or the lessons learnt. The idea is for the researcher to report findings about the uniqueness or peculiarity of the particular case.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to familiarise you with the process involved in case study research.

List the steps that are followed when using a case study for research purposes.


### F e e d b a c k

The researcher commences by determining whether a case study approach is suitable for the research problem, since a case study can be used only within a bounded system. The researcher then identifies specific cases within the bounded system. Next, data are collected, typically by means of multiple sources of information, such as documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation and physical artefacts such as autobiographies. A holistic approach is then followed in the analysis of case study data and, finally, the researcher presents the findings and conclusions of the case study.

## 3.5.2 Value of case study research

Case studies offer the opportunity to do an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon by using one or just a few cases. This leads to greater insight into the phenomenon.

Case studies are a valuable method for conducting exploratory or preliminary research. They can also be used effectively to describe a phenomenon, such as serial murderer.

### 3.5.3 Limitations of case studies

Case studies are time-consuming and require that researchers be experienced in collecting, analysing and interpreting data. Case studies focus on special characteristics or qualities of the case, which might limit the application of this form of research. Findings are also based on a limited number of cases and therefore cannot be generalised.

### Summary

In this study unit we explained the characteristics, value and limitations of case studies in research. The next study unit deals with historical studies in research.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.5

.....  
Discuss the characteristics of case studies. (30 marks)



## Historical studies

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the characteristics of historical studies.
- Discuss the advantages of historical studies in research.
- Identify the limitations of historical studies.

Historical studies are used to study contemporary social and cultural issues, such as drug abuse or terrorism, or the history of an individual person or of a concept, such as violence. In this regard, historical research provides the critical contextual link between the past and the present (Lundy 2008). It also enhances the researcher's understanding of the present. This type of research may focus on a topic, event or individual, and data can be collected from narratives, document studies, film or video documentaries, biographies and/or autobiographies.

The book by Albanese (2011), entitled *Organised crime in our times*, is an example of a historical study of organised crime. In writing the book, the researcher made use of biographies and films to analyse the nature, history and theories of organised crime.

### 3.6.1 Characteristics

Historical studies include the critical examination of sources, interpretation of data and analysis of narratives in order to analyse and interpret history. The assumption is that we can improve our understanding of social processes and phenomena when we compare these with other places and times (Bachman & Schutt 2011:308).

The first phase of historical studies is to identify a researchable phenomenon. Lundy (2008) advises researchers to examine background information on the topic in order to develop the focus of the study. This can be achieved through a literature review, interviews with experts and by watching documentaries and films on the subject. The researcher then selects a particular time period, person, phenomenon or era related to the phenomenon to study (Lundy 2008).

In the second phase the researcher develops hypotheses or research questions and identifies a theoretical perspective to guide the data collection process and interpretation of results (Lundy 2008). For instance, Albanese (2011) made use of Hirschi and Gottfredson's general theory of crime to explain organised crime.

Data collection takes place during the third phase. Data sources can be divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to first-person accounts of events in original documents, letters, artwork, literature, music, observational notes,

journals and photographs (Lundy 2008). The sources were generally created during the time period being studied or at a later date by a participant in the events. This enables the researcher to get as close as possible to the phenomenon that is being studied. Primary sources may be in their original form or may have been reproduced later in a different form, such as in a translated document, book, microfilm collection and videos or on the internet (Lundy 2008).

A secondary data source is any item that was created after the events it describes or to which it relates, or a source that was created by someone who was not directly involved in the events or was only an eyewitness to the phenomenon being studied (Lundy 2008). Sources of secondary data might be letters, diaries, biographies and accounts written years after the event, such as a first-person account of a child, written later as an adult. Other examples are scholarly or popular books and articles, reference books, biographies and textbooks (Lundy 2008). Data are systematically collected and labelled and all the critical details of the data source are noted.

The interpretation of the data takes place during the fourth phase. Lundy (2008) describes this as a process that uses many of the researcher's senses to interpret the data. Researchers might, for example, be required to listen to music or recordings of the era and should immerse themselves in the study. The researcher might also be required to become familiar with the language and expressions of the era. The evaluation of the reliability and validity of material is important during this phase (Lundy 2008).

The final phase of historical research involves the writing of the report in which the findings and conclusions are presented. A critical description of the historical event, as well as its significance in terms of society, should be included in the report (Lundy 2008). The format of the report will depend on the purpose thereof: it might be a book, article for publication in a scientific journal or an assignment for academic purposes.

Lundy (2008) identified four types of historical studies, namely, oral history, autobiographies, biographies and life histories, as well as case studies. In oral history studies, the researcher collects personal accounts and recollections of events from a living individual through audio and video recordings. Although oral history can include the written works of an individual who has died, it is primarily limited to recollections of living individuals (Lundy 2008).

An autobiography is an account of a person's life that has been written down or recorded by the individual himself/herself. A biography narrative, in contrast, is an account of a person's life which is either told to the researcher or found in archives, documents and other sources (Lundy 2008). Life histories are also a form of biographical writing and are an extensive record of a person's life, as told to the researcher. The life history of a person involves a living individual (Lundy 2008).

As we discussed in study unit 3.5, a case study is a type of historical research that explores a phenomenon through an in-depth examination of a single case. Case studies make use of small samples and may involve an individual person, an event, a group or an institution.

According to Lundy (2008), historical research in the future will be influenced by technological advances and the use of the internet for correspondence of both primary and secondary sources. For example, owing to advances in technology, few people nowadays keep diaries or journals or write letters. Lundy therefore predicts that historical research will change as more correspondence and eyewitness accounts are recorded on the internet.

### 3.6.2 Advantages of historical studies

Historical research makes use of theory to explain a phenomenon. It illustrates the relevance of an existing theory and may even contribute to the development of new theory.

In historical studies, in-depth research is done of a phenomenon within the context of its historical era. It describes the personal experiences of people in a specific period of time. Various data sources are consulted, thereby enhancing the reliability of the studies.

### 3.6.3 Limitations of historical studies

Data in historical studies cannot be generalised as they focus on a specific phenomenon and are therefore not representative. Research participants can furthermore distort experiences, either consciously or unconsciously. The researcher therefore needs to validate the authenticity of all sources. In this regard, the researcher should also take care that his/her own prejudices, opinions and theoretical orientations do not influence the results. Written sources on similar situations have to be studied carefully and compared with the researcher's own findings.

### Summary

In this study unit we explained the characteristics, advantages and limitations of historical studies in research. The next study unit deals with reflexive research.

#### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.6

Answer the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of historical studies?

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2. Which sources of data are generally used in historical studies?

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3. Name the four types of historical study.

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## Reflexive research

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the characteristics of reflexive research.
- Discuss the advantages of reflexive research.
- Identify the limitations of reflexive research.

Reflexive research is the brainchild of Wilhelm Dilthey, who focused on the relevance of lived experiences for the human sciences. He described “lived experiences” as a reflexive or self-given awareness that is integral to life as we live it.

Reflexivity deals with an explanation of how qualitative researchers’ “lived experiences” have influenced a research project. The extent to which researchers engage in reflexivity depends on the methodological approach of a study (Dowling 2008). For example, reflexivity will play a larger role in methods in which the researcher engages directly with participants, such as in participant observation.

### 3.7.1 Characteristics

Reflexivity is characterised by a process of ongoing self-awareness. Researchers are increasingly keeping detailed journals and/or diaries of their own for research purposes. The journals and diaries reflect the researcher’s own behaviours, attitudes, feelings and thoughts during the research process (Smith-Sullivan 2008). These lived experiences are later incorporated into their research findings. The researcher’s journals or diaries thus provide a multi-layered facet to a study.

There are essentially four types of reflexivity adopted by qualitative researchers. The first type of reflexivity is known as the approach of “bracketing”. This involves the researchers’ keeping a diary of the thoughts and feelings that influenced their methodological decision making throughout a study. Writings in the journal or diary will reflect on the methodological decision making that the researchers engaged in during the research process (Dowling 2008).

The second type of reflexivity is known as epistemological reflexivity. From theme 1 you will recall that epistemology involves the researcher’s theory of knowledge and it concerns the nature of knowledge. In this instance researchers will keep a diary or journal to assist in their understanding of how their personal prejudices, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes might influence a study. For example, if a researcher has negative preconceived assumptions about male rape, he/she might find it difficult to



study the victim's experiences of crime victimisation objectively. This type of reflexivity can be valuable in grounded theory studies (Dowling 2008).

The third type of reflexivity is not limited to keeping a journal or diary, but is incorporated in the data analysis phase of the research process. Here the researcher makes use of personal experiences in the examination of political and social issues. This type of reflexivity is used in ethnographical and historical studies. An example of such a study could be where a criminologist in Somalia uses phenomenological research to describe the impact of piracy-related crimes on the citizens of that country. Being a citizen of Somalia, inevitably the researcher will have personal experiences of how piracy has affected society (Dowling 2008).

The fourth type of reflexivity explores the impact that the reciprocal nature of the researcher-participant relationship has on research findings and the researcher's analysis and interpretation of data. It challenges the notion of neutrality and objectivity in this relationship. The premises of this type of reflexivity are that researchers and participants become "partners" in the researcher's study, and that findings are influenced by both the researcher's and the participants' personal experiences and perceptions. Both researchers and participants, therefore, experience reflexivity. This view of reflexivity could be considered problematic in terms of the validity of research findings. However, reflexivity might enrich a study in the case of qualitative research, where the aim is generally to understand the participants' life-world.

Achieving reflexivity is not a natural process and it requires the researcher to consider and examine decisions made at each stage of the research process. In so doing, the researcher consciously engages in a continuous process of professional and personal introspection.

### 3.7.2 Advantages of reflexive studies

Reflexive research acknowledges the lived experiences of the researcher. It thus compels researchers to acknowledge their personal prejudices and opinions, thereby enabling them to deal objectively with these responses and the impact they have on their study. Reflexive research makes use of the reciprocal interaction between researcher and participant to develop an in-depth understanding of the research participant's life-world. Reflexive research offers researchers the opportunity to immerse themselves in qualitative research. The researcher's journals or diaries provide a multi-layered facet to a study.

### 3.7.3 Limitations of reflexive studies

Reflexivity could be considered problematic in terms of the validity of research findings because it could be said that the data are based on the researcher's subjective observations. Data in reflexive studies cannot be generalised as they focus on the researcher's life experiences and are therefore not representative. Nevertheless, the researcher should take care that his/her own prejudices, opinions and theoretical orientations do not influence the research results. Achieving reflexivity is not a natural process and requires the researcher to consider and examine decisions made at each stage of the research process.

## Summary

In this study unit we explained the characteristics, advantages and limitations of reflexive research. The next study unit deals with ethical considerations in research.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 3.7

Answer the following questions.

1. Describe what reflexivity means in your own words.

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2. Briefly describe the four types of reflexivity in qualitative research.

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## THEME 3: SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Identify and discuss the five aspects that should be included in the collection and analysis of data in narrative studies. (15 marks)
2. Compare narrative and phenomenological research as research methods in qualitative studies. (30 marks)
3. Explain the following statement with reference to the steps followed in grounded theory: Grounded theory is different from other qualitative research methods. (15 marks)
4. Important concepts underpinning ethnography include culture, a holistic perspective and contextualisation, emic and etic perspectives, a non-judgemental orientation and inter- and intra-cultural diversity, as well as symbols and rituals. Explain the relevance of these concepts in ethnographic research. (30 marks)
5. Critically analyse the use of case studies in qualitative research. (30 marks)
6. Reflexive research is the brainchild of Wilhelm Dilthey and focuses on the relevance of lived experiences for the human sciences. Discuss how a researcher's lived experiences can be incorporated into qualitative research. (15 marks)

### Answers to self-assessment exercises in theme 3

#### Study unit 3.1

1. A narrative can be defined as the process of *telling a story or giving an account of an event or experience*.
2. In narrative studies, researchers are interested in people's stories. Narratives allow a researcher to study *how individuals*, or a group of people, *understand their interaction* in a specific context within their *social, cultural and institutional environment*.
3. In narrative research the researcher focuses on participants' *"life stories"*.
4. In narrative studies the researcher is not interested in what happened, but is concerned with *the meaning participants attach to the stories*.
5. Qualitative researchers study personal and group narratives within the context of their natural settings, thus attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

#### Study unit 3.2

1. The purpose of phenomenological research is to reduce individual experiences of a phenomenon to a description of shared experiences that a group of people have in common.
2. The phenomenological interview is used to explore and collect empirical data about a phenomenon, such as the social structure of a gang. The hermeneutic interview is used to explore how the participants interpret aspects of their experiences associated with the studied phenomenon.
3. Human experiences are a valid, rich and rewarding source of knowledge. Participants' everyday world is viewed as a valuable and productive source of knowledge.
4. Interviews and observations can be used in phenomenological research.
5. Refer to section 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 for the answer.

### Study unit 3.3

1. The purpose of grounded theory is to *develop theory*. The theory is “grounded” in, or based on, the data that is generated *during observations*. The primary objective of grounded theory is to expand upon *an explanation* of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon. The elements are then categorised into *relationships* within the context and process of the study. Grounded theory is therefore not descriptive in nature but, rather, aimed at *illustrating concepts*.
2. Data analysis in grounded theory has a well-defined process which begins with a basic *description* of a phenomenon. It then moves to the *description of concepts* associated with the phenomenon that is being studied. This is then followed by the *development of a theory*.

### Study unit 3.4

1. Ethnography is about *understanding human experience by studying events, language, rituals, institutions, behaviours, artefacts and interactions*.
2. The purpose of ethnographical research is to *describe and understand the natural and social world within which people function*.
3. Ethnographical studies aim to *describe social groups from the group members’ perspective*.
4. Important concepts underpinning ethnography include culture, *a holistic perspective and contextualisation, emic and etic perspectives, a non-judgemental orientation and inter- and intra-cultural diversity, as well as symbols and rituals*.
5. Ethnographers follow a holistic approach in their research, which enables them to *develop a comprehensive understanding of the unique culture associated with a specific social group*.

### Study unit 3.5

The answer to this question can be found in study unit 3.5.

### Study unit 3.6

The answers to the questions are as follows:

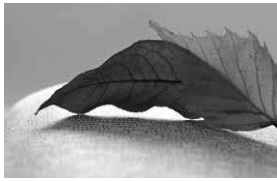
1. The purpose of historical studies is to study contemporary social and cultural issues in order to enhance the researcher’s understanding of the present.
2. Data sources can be divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to first-person accounts of events in original documents, letters, artwork, literature, music, observational notes, journals and photographs. Secondary data sources are any item that was created after the events it describes or to which it is related, or that was created by someone who was not directly involved in the phenomenon or was only an eyewitness to the phenomenon being studied.
3. Oral history, autobiographies, biographies and life histories and case studies.

### **Study unit 3.7**

1. Researchers keep detailed journals and/or diaries of their lived experiences. Lived experience reflects the researcher's behaviours, attitudes, feelings and thoughts during the research process. These lived experiences are later incorporated into the research findings, thus providing a multi-layered facet to the research studies.
2. The answer to this question can be found in section 3.7.1.







## Ethical considerations in qualitative research

“A man without ethics is a wild beast loosed upon this world.” *Albert Camus*

### Introduction

Formal procedures to protect the rights of research participants grew out of research-related human rights violations. In the past, members of vulnerable groups, such as prisoners, were subjected – voluntarily, but often also involuntarily – to medical experiments. An example is the study that Dr Leo Stanley conducted at the San Quentin Prison. From 1913 to 1951, prisoners became subjects in a wide variety of medical experiments, such as involuntary sterilisation. Other procedures included testicle transplants, where the testicles of executed prisoners – and even from goats and boars – were surgically implanted into living prisoners. Stanley believed that his experiments would rejuvenate old men, control crime – because he believed that crime had biological causes – as well as prevent the “unfit” persons from reproducing (Blue 2009:210).

Even though social science research generally does not harm participants physically, there is still a danger that participants might be traumatised emotionally or have their human rights violated. Researchers may become so engrossed in planning a research project that they fail to consider the impact their research might have on the research participants. The purpose of this theme, therefore, is not only to introduce you to the topic of research ethics, but also to encourage you to think critically about the people who are the subjects of research.



## Research ethics

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

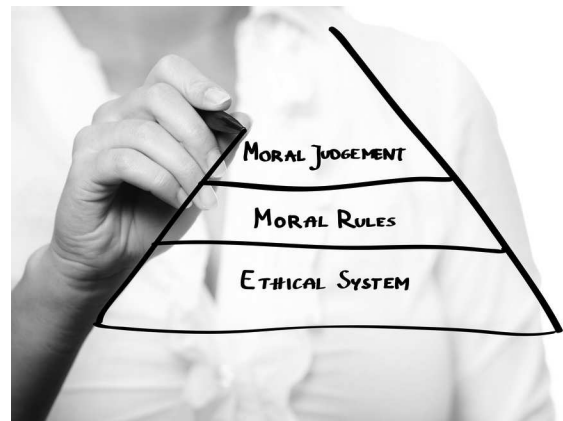
- Explain the purpose of research ethics.
- Discuss the ethical issues to consider in qualitative research.

#### 4.1.1 The purpose of research ethics

The primary purpose of ethics in research is to protect the human rights of the research participants, while ensuring that the study yields maximum benefits. The Belmont Report (Bachman & Schutt 2011:56) identified the following three ethical principles for the protection of human subjects:

- **Respect for persons**

In accordance with this principle, research participants should be treated as autonomous agents who are able to make their own decisions and act independently. Research participants have the right to know what the purpose of a study is and what will be done with the findings once the study has been completed. They also have the right to decide if they would like to participate in a research study. Participants furthermore have the right to know if they might suffer direct or indirect harm as a result of the study. In this regard, Duffy (2008) highlights the responsibility of researchers to protect the rights of vulnerable participants.



According to Duffy (2008), “vulnerability in qualitative research applies to potential conditions of research participants in which the participants, by virtue of some psychological, cognitive, physical, medical, legal, socioeconomic, or age-related status, are deemed to be more susceptible to lack of full understanding, manipulation, exploitation, or some other possible harm within the research process”. Vulnerability is concerned with research participants’ ability to understand the implications of a research study and, consequently, to give truly informed consent to participate in the study. In qualitative research, vulnerable participants generally include pregnant women, inmates, minor children, persons with psychiatric disorders and/or other



cognitive impairments, persons who have HIV or are HIV-positive, persons with a compromised legal status and persons with low socioeconomic status (Duffy 2008).

## A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to help you to think critically about protecting vulnerable groups as subjects of research.

Read the following abstract.

### **Prisoners should be used for experiments/research without consent**

Human rights have been a controversial issue because it is very difficult to draw the boundary between the rights of the individual versus the rights of a group. At the same time, we accept the fact that while all humans are entitled to protection of natural, basic rights, there are always limits on these rights. The best example is the generally accepted principle that when a person infringes the rights of another (for example by committing murder), that person forfeits their own claim to such rights (Adapted from: <http://www.debatewise.com/debates/982>).

## F e e d b a c k

Based on the above-mentioned abstract, do you think prisoners should be used for medical or social science experiments without their consent, if such studies will benefit society in general?

The answer to this question can result in an emotional debate, where the limitation of a prisoner's rights – based on their having disregarded their victim's rights – can be discussed at great length. Nevertheless, using prisoners in research studies without their consent is unacceptable in terms of the principle of ethical research.

According to the Belmont Report, the second principle in the protection of research participants' rights is justice (Bachman & Schutt 2011:56).

### ● **Justice**

The principle of justice requires that there be an equal distribution between the benefits and risks of a research study. According to Watts (2008), balancing rights and responsibilities in qualitative research entails balancing the search for knowledge with concerns about the vulnerability, confidentiality and intrusion in the lives of participants. This principle highlights the importance of integrity in research, which underpins ethical practice in all research-related activities, especially data collection and analysis. Integrity focuses on the responsibility of the researcher to do no harm, to gain informed consent from participants, and to represent respondents' views as accurately as possible (Watts 2008).

### ● **Beneficence**

The principle of beneficence deals with minimising the possible harm to research respondents, while maximising the benefits of the research study for both the respondents and society in general. This principle also touches on the obligations researchers have to the various stakeholders in the research process, such as the

research participants, the funding body and the organisation the researcher is associated with, such as an academic institution or the researcher's employing organisation (Ballinger 2008).

According to Ballinger (2008), accountability advocates standards of research practice against which the researcher can be judged in terms of whether a study was conducted ethically.

#### 4.1.2 Ethical issues to consider in qualitative research

Ethics is like a golden thread that runs through the research process. It is the one element that should guide the actions of every researcher. It influences and is imbedded in the design and conduct of qualitative research studies (Cheek 2008).

The following are some of the pertinent ethical issues that should be considered in qualitative research studies.

##### 4.1.2.1 Achieving valid results

The concept of validity refers to a scientific demand in terms of research acts (e.g. observation and the use of techniques) and survey results (e.g. processing of collected information). Validity thus indicates (i) the absence of bias (in the scientist) and (chance) errors; and (ii) the existence of a close relationship or cohesion between procedures carried out in the research process, the research findings and the study object (Multilingual Glossary Criminology Level 1 2011). Research, according to Bachman and Schutt (2011:58), is the pursuit of objective knowledge about human behaviour. The concept of validity is therefore strongly linked to the principle of objectivity in research.

Objectivity requires a researcher to approach research participants without bias. In other words, the researcher needs to set aside any personal prejudices or likes and dislikes in order to truly learn about human behaviour. This can be difficult because the nature of qualitative research demands that data collection and analysis be rooted in a subjective paradigm that is not value-free and that is inextricably linked with the goals of the researcher and the perceptions of research participants (Watts 2008). The danger might therefore exist that neither the researcher nor the participants are emotionally detached from the research topic. Furthermore, qualitative researchers spend more time with participants than do other researchers, and they are also more intensely involved with their research participants than are other researchers. This makes it more likely that they will form relationships that extend beyond the research relationship, which, of course, might jeopardise the researcher's ability to remain objective. Qualitative research, according to Watts (2008), requires a level of openness and wholeness on the part of the researcher that translates into integrity, "straightforwardness" or "moral uprightness".

##### 4.1.2.2 Honesty and openness

According to Bachman and Schutt (2011:59), the researcher's scientific concern with validity requires researchers to be open in disclosing their methods and honest in presenting their findings. This can be achieved only when the researcher openly discloses exactly how a study was conducted. Openness about the methodology and research procedure that were followed in a study goes hand in hand with honesty in research.

#### 4.1.2.3 Protecting research participants

As discussed previously, the protection of research participants' human rights is of paramount importance. In this regard the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences has stipulated the following ethical principles:

- Research should expose participants to no more than minimum risk of personal harm.
- Researchers should fully disclose the purpose of the research.
- Participation in research should be voluntary and the participants must give informed consent to participate in the research.
- Confidentiality must be maintained for individual research participants unless it is voluntarily and explicitly waived (in Bachman & Schutt 2011:60).

Although these ethical principles sound straightforward, a question arises about the definition of harm. Harm can be defined as any damage or injury that affects a person's physical and/or mental wellbeing and that might result in moral injury or deterioration. While the question about what constitutes physical and/or psychological harm is debatable, it is safe to say that if a researcher is concerned about the impact that his/her study might have on participants, then he/she should explore these concerns thoroughly.

Informed consent is one of the methods used in research to protect the rights of participants. The term "informed consent" refers to the document participants sign to indicate that their participation in the study is voluntary.

According to Ruth Faden and Tom Beauchamp (in Israel & Hay 2008), research participants need to understand that they are authorising someone else to involve them in a research project. They should therefore be clear about what they are authorising. In most circumstances, researchers must provide potential participants with information about the purpose, methods, demands, risks, inconveniences, discomforts and possible outcomes of the research, including whether and how the research results might be disseminated.

Informed consent might become a complicated matter if researchers engage in covert research or deception. If deception is an element that is required in a study, it will compromise the informed and voluntary nature of consent (Israel & Hay 2008).

#### 4.1.2.4 Avoiding deception in research

Deception occurs when research participants are misled about the purpose, procedure and/or intent of the study. This becomes an issue if deception is a critical component of the research study. For example, if the researcher wants to observe the interaction between correctional officials and inmates, both parties might act unnaturally if they know that their interactions are being observed. But if the researcher, for instance, indicates that he/she is studying the daily routine in correctional facilities, this might appear less threatening, resulting in both parties acting more naturally and thus providing more accurate research findings.

The golden rule is to ask if the deception is justifiable and if any harm caused by lack of consent might be outweighed by the public benefit obtained from the research. Bachman and Schutt (2011:68) also advise researchers to debrief participants if there is any possibility of psychological harm to them. The purpose of debriefing is to reduce any possibility of psychological harm by informing people about their experience or allowing them to talk about it. This might happen during a conversation with the

participants after the completion of the data collection phase. Researchers might also make the research report available to the participants to inform them about the findings of the study.

#### 4.1.2.5 Maintaining privacy and confidentiality

Maintaining privacy and confidentiality is an important aspect of ensuring that ethical standards are followed in a study. Procedures to protect participants' confidentiality might include keeping research notes in a safe place to prevent other people from gaining unauthorised access to them. Qualitative researchers often also make use of pseudonyms or codes to ensure the anonymity of participants.

### Activity

- The purpose of this activity is to help you to understand the impact of research on the participants and
- to conceptualise the importance of ethical research.

#### **Stanford Prison Experiment**

The purpose of this research was to study the psychological effects of becoming a prisoner or prison guard. To do this, Philip Zimbardo, a psychologist at Stanford University, simulated a prison environment and then carefully noted the effects of this institution on the behaviour of the participants. Participants for the study were recruited through an advertisement in a local newspaper, which called for volunteers in a study of the psychological effects of prison life. More than 70 applicants answered the advertisement and were subjected to diagnostic interviews and personality tests to eliminate candidates with psychological problems, medical disabilities or a history of crime or drug abuse. The participants were divided into two groups, designated either “prisoners” or “prison guards”.

On a quiet Sunday morning in August, a police car swept through the Californian town of Stanford, picking up some of the participants as part of a mass arrest for violation of Penal Codes 211, armed robbery, and 459, burglary. Standard procedure for the arrest of suspects was followed and participants were picked up at their homes, charged, warned of their legal rights, searched and handcuffed. Blindfolded and in a state of mild shock, the participants who were chosen to be prisoners were transported to the “prison”. Upon arrival, each participant was systematically searched and stripped naked, and then deloused with a spray, creating the impression that they may have germs or lice.

The participants who acted as guards were given no specific training on how to be guards. Instead, they were free – within limits – to do whatever they thought was necessary to maintain law and order in the prison and to command the respect of the prisoners.

Prisoners and guards rapidly adapted to their roles, moving beyond the boundaries of what had been predicted and leading to dangerous and psychologically damaging situations. One-third of the guards were judged to have exhibited “genuine” sadistic tendencies, while many prisoners were emotionally traumatised and two had to be removed from the

experiment early. Finally, Zimbardo, alarmed at the increasingly abusive antisocial behaviour being displayed by the subjects, terminated the entire experiment early (Bachman & Schutt 2011:53).

1. Do you think it was ethical to conduct this study?
2. Was it ethical to justify the suffering experienced by participants on the basis of the knowledge gained through the research?

### F e e d b a c k

This experiment is still widely discussed. Interestingly, Philip Zimbardo, the researcher who conducted the study, concluded that the experiment was unethical, based on the fact that it exposed participants to psychological and physical harm. The researcher also admitted to having been deceitful in that the participants were not informed of what the experiment would entail (Bachman & Schutt 2011:60).

Students who are interested in this experiment can read more about it on the following web page: <http://www.prisonexp.org/discussion.htm>

## Summary

In this study unit we explained the purpose of research ethics and the issues to consider in qualitative research. The last study unit deals with the Code of Conduct of the Criminological and Victimological Society of Southern Africa (CRIMSA).

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 4.1

Complete the following sentences.

1. The Belmont Report identified three ethical principles for the protection of human subjects, namely,
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
2. Integrity focuses on the responsibility of the researcher to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The principle of beneficence deals with  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Pertinent ethical issues that should be considered in qualitative research studies are

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Code of conduct of the Criminological and Victimological Society of Southern Africa (CRIMSA)

### Learning outcomes for this study unit

In this study unit you should master the following:

- Explain the general principles of CRIMSA.
- Discuss the ethical standards of CRIMSA.
- Discuss the role of criminologists in disclosure and in respect of the rights of the research population.
- Explain professional conduct.
- Describe the ethical considerations with regard to audio and visual recordings.

CRIMSA is a non-governmental and voluntary society aimed at promoting the academic, practical, social and universal relevance of criminology in order to understand, control, prevent and reduce crime and its outcomes in Southern Africa (<http://www.crimsa.ac.za/#mission>).

CRIMSA has developed a code of conduct that is intended to sensitise criminologists, victimologists and other scholars or practitioners in this field to ethical issues that may arise in their work. The purpose of the code is, furthermore, to encourage criminologists to behave ethically. This code of conduct includes general principles and ethical standards that underlie criminologists' professional responsibilities and conduct. The code of conduct should thus act as a guideline for determining ethical behaviour in the context of criminologists' everyday professional activities.

### 4.2.1 General principles

The CRIMSA code of conduct is based on the assumption that criminologists' professional activities are committed to enhancing the general wellbeing of society and the individuals and groups within society. In this context, professional activities refer to any activity a criminologist undertakes, such as court work, writing of reports for clients and/or research.

Practitioners in the field of criminology operate within the larger context of social justice. They therefore have an obligation to their clients not to recreate forms of social injustice such as discrimination, oppression or harassment in their own work. Criminologists must be careful to avoid incompetent, unethical or unscrupulous use of criminological knowledge (CRIMSA 2004).

According to the code of conduct, criminologists should strive to maintain high levels of competence in their work, such as striving to maintain an ongoing familiarity with current ideas, literature and research in the subject area.

Criminologists should recognise the limits of their expertise and not undertake tasks that are beyond their qualifications, training and experience. A student in criminology may undertake professional work only once they are qualified to do so. In general, this is only once they have obtained an honours degree in criminology or another related field in the social sciences, for instance psychology or social work.

Criminologists should at all times respect the rights, dignity and worthiness of all people. In this regard, the code of conduct specifically mentions the rights, dignity and worthiness of crime victims and those accused or convicted of committing crimes, as well as of students and research subjects. According to the CRIMSA Code of Conduct (2004), this entitles criminologists' clients to insist that information about them remain confidential.

Criminologists should furthermore refrain from discriminating against people based on their age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, health or physical condition or domestic status. They should be sensitive to individual, cultural and role differences among people and thus acknowledge the rights of other people and groups to have values, attitudes and opinions that are different from their own.

### A c t i v i t y

The purpose of this activity is to familiarise you with a criminologist's responsibilities in accordance with the CRIMSA Code of Conduct. You could read more on CRIMSA'S website: <http://www.crimsa.ac.za>

Study and then summarise the general principles of the CRIMSA Code of Conduct.


### F e e d b a c k

You should have listed the following responsibilities of a criminologist:

- A criminologist should at all times strive to enhance the general wellbeing of society and the individuals and groups within society.
- A criminologist should not recreate any forms of social injustice such as discrimination, oppression or harassment in their own work.
- Criminologists must avoid being incompetent or unethical and refrain from the unscrupulous use of criminological knowledge.



- Criminologists must maintain high levels of competence in their work.
  - Criminologists must maintain an ongoing familiarity with current ideas, literature and research in the subject area.
  - Criminologists should recognise the limits of their expertise and not undertake tasks that are beyond their qualifications, training and experience.
  - Criminologists should at all times respect the rights, dignity and worthiness of all people.
  - Criminologists should refrain from discriminating against people based on their age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, health or physical condition, or domestic status.
  - Criminologists should acknowledge the rights of other people and respect these groups' values, attitudes and opinions, even though they might differ from their own.
- 

#### 4.2.2 Ethical standards

The following ethical standards are specified in the CRIMSA Code of Conduct:

1. Criminologists should adhere to the highest possible ethical standards and conduct criminological research with integrity. Remember that the principle of integrity in research focuses on the responsibility of the researcher to do no harm and to protect the rights of participants while conducting research.
2. Since individual criminologists vary in their research modes, skills and experience, they should always declare at the outset the limits of their knowledge and the disciplinary and personal limitations that may affect the validity of their findings. In terms of research, this ethical standard warns researchers not to make use of data collection and analysis methods that are beyond their level of experience/expertise.

In his book *Gang leader for a day*, Sudhir Venkatesh, a researcher from the University of Chicago, wanted to do research on poverty in the poor black neighbourhoods surrounding the university. He identified a housing project and decided to interview residents that lived in one of the buildings. One day, armed only with his questionnaire, he walked into the building and started asking questions. He was immediately captured and held hostage overnight by members of the Black Kings gang (Venkatesh 2008:204). Even though this study, which had a precarious start, resulted in valuable research on the gang culture, the researcher's inexperience could have resulted in the failure of his study, not to mention the loss of his life!

3. In presenting their work, criminologists are obliged to report their findings in detail. They must not misrepresent the findings of their research nor omit significant data. All details of the theories, methods and research designs that might have a bearing upon interpretations of research findings should be reported. This section refers to the ethical principle of honesty and openness.
4. Criminologists should not make any commitments to respondents, individuals, groups or organisations unless they fully intend to honour them and are able to

do so. For example, if a researcher undertook to make the research report available to the participants, he/she should honour this commitment.

5. Criminologists should provide adequate information, documentation and citations of the tools and methods they used to collect data and information during the study. This includes a bibliography of the literary sources that they consulted.
6. Criminologists must not accept grants, contracts or research assignments that appear likely to violate the principles of this code of conduct. In other words, researchers should not accept a grant or contract if they know that any part of the study would require them to act unethically. For example, in the case of the Stanford prison experiment, we can question whether the researcher should have undertaken the research in the first place, given the questionable nature of the study in terms of its ethical implications. Furthermore, researchers should dissociate themselves from research if they discover an ethical violation that they are unable to correct.
7. Criminologists must report all sources of financial support and other sponsorship.
8. When financial support for a project has been accepted, criminologists must make every reasonable effort to complete the proposed work according to schedule.
9. Criminologists have the right to disseminate research findings, except those likely to cause harm to consumers, collaborators or participants, those that violate formal or implied promises of confidentiality, or those that are proprietary under a formal or informal agreement.
10. Science, public trust and public policy demand that criminologists share data and documentation regularly. This will help to ensure the validity of a research study.

#### 4.2.3 Disclosure and respect of the rights of research population by criminologists

In his book *Gang leader for a day*, Sudhir Venkatesh, the researcher, once chatted to JT, the gang leader whom he had befriended, and told him what he had observed in the community in which the gang was operating. This included telling JT about what some of the community members did to earn money, such as selling false identity documents or car licence plates. According to gang rules, each person who earned money within the gang territory had to pay “taxes” to the gang. Unbeknown to Venkatesh, JT later used this information to punish members of the community who did not pay the required taxes to the gang. Thereafter, the community members no longer trusted the researcher, which had a negative impact on his research (Venkatesh 2008:204). This example illustrates the dangers of researchers’ failing to adhere to the principles of confidentiality.

In terms of the CRIMSA Code of Conduct (2004):

1. Criminologists should not misuse their positions as professionals for fraudulent purposes or as a pretext for gathering information from or on behalf of any organisation or government. A researcher should therefore not be deceitful in terms of the motive and/or purpose of a research study.
2. Criminologists should not mislead the respondents involved in a research project as to the purpose of their research.
3. The process of conducting criminological research must not expose respondents to substantial risk of personal harm. Investigators must make every effort to ensure the safety and security of research participants and project staff.

4. Informed consent must be obtained when embarking on research projects involving human subjects. The principles of ethical propriety, namely, fairness, honesty and openness of intent, should be endorsed at all times.

All these issues were discussed in section 4.1.2 as well.

#### 4.2.4 Professional conduct

According to the CRIMSA Code of Conduct (2004), criminologists have a responsibility to use their professional knowledge and skills in a scientific manner for the benefit of each individual, group, community and society at large, with due consideration of their personal and professional limitations. This requires them to present their areas and levels of expertise honestly, accurately and fairly.

Every criminologist, in his/her role as practitioner, researcher, educator and administrator, has an important social responsibility because their recommendations, decisions and actions may alter the lives of others. They should therefore be aware of the situations and temptations that might cause them to misuse their influence and authority.

Once again we can refer to the example where Sudhir Venkatesh told JT about some of his research findings. Venkatesh viewed JT as an important source of information for his research, and by sharing his findings with JT, the researcher, firstly, hoped to validate the truthfulness of the information and, secondly, to obtain further information. But if you read the book, you will also notice that JT repeatedly told Venkatesh that he (Venkatesh) was either “with him” or “with someone else”. The researcher felt flattered by this level of acceptance, but at the same time he interpreted it as a threat, namely, that if he (Venkatesh) was not prepared to be a “team player” and share what he was doing with JT, then he (Venkatesh) would be isolated from JT, the gang and the community, which would prevent him from continuing with his research (Venkatesh 2008). This shows how the researcher’s behaviour had a direct impact on some of the community members, in that they were punished for his indiscretions. We can only speculate that Venkatesh, in feeling flattered by the attention he received from JT and desiring to maintain his favourable position with JT and the gang, overstepped the bounds of ethical research.

It is therefore important for researchers to recognise that professional problems and conflicts might arise during their research, which could interfere with their professional effectiveness. Criminologists should therefore take steps to ensure that these conflicts do not produce deleterious results for members of society, research participants, colleagues, learners and employees. The criminologist should furthermore avoid performing multiple and conflicting roles, for example being a witness in a trial and at the same time a consultant for a legal defence team only. It is crucial that criminologists clarify their role as experts from the outset (CRIMSA 2004).

#### 4.2.5 Ethical considerations with regard to audio and visual recordings

Ethical issues associated with audio and visual recordings are especially important in qualitative research because of their possible threat to participants’ right to confidentiality. Audio and visual recordings should be mentioned and their implications explained to all parties who are involved in the research. Participants must give permission for the use of audio and/or visual recordings by signing informed consent

forms. Recorded material should be stored in a secure place in accordance with the requirements of the ethics review board.

In conclusion, the design of a research study is much more than simply identifying techniques that will be used to collect data. It involves theoretical, methodological and ethical considerations that shape both the design and the aims of the research project. Ethical considerations in research are an integral part of the research design and go beyond simply meeting the requirements of an ethics review board (Cheek 2008).

## Summary

In this study unit we explained the CRIMSA Code of Conduct. It is important that you understand the principles and standards of CRIMSA clearly.

### Self-assessment exercise for study unit 4.2

.....

List the ethical standards that are specified in the CRIMSA Code of Conduct:

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_
- (v) \_\_\_\_\_
- (vi) \_\_\_\_\_
- (vii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (viii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ix) \_\_\_\_\_
- (x) \_\_\_\_\_

## THEME 4: SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Critically discuss the purpose of research ethics in qualitative research. (30 marks)
2. Explain the general principles of the CRIMSA Code of Conduct. (15 marks)

### Answers to self-assessment exercises in theme 4

#### Study unit 4.1

1. The Belmont Report identified three ethical principles for the protection of human subjects, namely,
  - respect for persons
  - justice
  - beneficence
2. Integrity focuses on the responsibility of the researcher to do no harm, to gain informed consent from participants and to represent respondents' views as accurately as possible.
3. The principle of beneficence deals with minimising the possible harm to research respondents while maximising the benefits of the research study for the respondents as well as society in general.
4. The pertinent ethical issues that should be considered in qualitative research studies are
  - achieving valid results
  - honesty and openness
  - protecting research participants
  - avoiding deception in research
  - maintaining privacy and confidentiality

#### Study unit 4.2

The answer to this question can be found in section 4.2.2.

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# FAQ

**Why you should do the activity?**

**How you should carry out the activity?**

**How you should record your answer?**

Every activity is followed by a discussion or feedback that forms part of the learning content. Read the feedback only after you have completed the activity. If you read the feedback first, you will be denying yourself the opportunity to learn from that activity. Furthermore, feedback on an activity may not make sense unless you have actually done that activity. If you find it difficult to do an activity, it means that you have not fully grasped the relevant learning material and you need to work through it again.

You will also find self-assessment exercises at the end of each study unit. The aim of these exercises is to help you to test your knowledge and understanding of the study material. So make sure that you can do the tasks (answer the questions). The self-assessment questions will be formulated in the same way as in the assignments and examination (short questions and multiple-choice questions). Therefore the activities, assignments and self-assessment exercises will also assist to prepare you for the examination.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**DISCUSSION FORUMS**

**OFFICIAL STUDY MATERIAL**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

# Glossary

**Analyse:** To determine distinguishing elements (features), identify causes and effects and ascertain and indicate joint/mutual relationships.

**Applied research:** Research that is used to investigate and solve social problems.

**Axiology:** Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics in research.

**Basic research:** Research that is conducted solely for the purpose of gathering information and building on existing knowledge.

**Case study:** A qualitative research method for making a descriptive study of an existing situation as a way of generating and testing hypotheses.

**Classify (categorise):** Information must be placed in an existing classification system.

**Coding:** The process whereby ideas and concepts are generated from raw data such as interview transcripts, field notes, archival materials, reports, newspaper articles and art.

**Compare:** Two or more matters are weighed up against each other in respect of certain features.

**Complete:** Whatever is missing to make a full sentence must be filled in.

**Complete observation:** The researcher tries to observe things as they happen without disrupting the participants.

**Covert participation (complete participation):** The researcher studies participants without them being aware of it.

**Criminology:** An applied discipline in the human sciences and its field of study includes the scientific study of crimes, offenders, victims, the punishment of offenders (criminal justice system) and the prevention (reduction) and control of crime.

**Define:** This instruction or assignment entails the pure reproduction of information by knowing and being able to reproduce a pithy, authoritative explanation or description of a concept. A definition consists of three parts, namely, the “term”, “class” and “distinguishing characteristics”. “Term” refers to the thing that is being defined. “Class” is the category to which the term belongs and here the similarities between the term being defined and other terms mentioned in the same class or category are mentioned. The “distinguishing characteristics” of the term are the distinguishing features.

**Demonstrate (show how):** Substantiate information or illustrate it with reference to an appropriate example.

**Describe (explain, elucidate).** The “what” and “how” of a particular topic must be indicated without one’s own comments or arguments. “Describe” entails merely “sketching an existing picture”. You have to show whether you know how a particular phenomenon looks or how a particular process proceeds.

**Descriptive research:** Research that aims to define or describe a social phenomenon.

**Design (create, develop, compile, combine, formulate, compose, build up):** Create or develop a new original combination or composition of information/data.

**Discourse:** An in-depth discussion of or arguments about a specific topic.

- Discuss** (argue, give reasons for, debate): The essences of a matter must be singled out (highlighted) and explained.
- Documentary evidence:** Written documentation presented to a court as evidence such as an affidavit. It has less value than oral evidence because the witness cannot be cross-examined.
- Epistemology:** Epistemology focuses on the source, nature and characteristics of scientific knowledge.
- Ethics:** A code for personal behaviour.
- Ethnography:** Research that focuses on the way research participants construct and understand their social/life world.
- Evaluation research:** Seeks to explore the impact an intervention, such as a rehabilitation programme, has on the individuals who participated in the programme.
- Everyday or pre-scientific knowledge:** Non-scientific knowledge arising from everyday experiences in which human beings associate with fellow human beings and the world.
- Examine:** Data must be analysed or divided into parts to indicate causes, effects, relationships and so on.
- Experiments:** Studies conducted in a controlled environment in which the researcher assumes a cause-effect relation between two or more variables and manipulates these variables in a test situation.
- Explain** (make clear/elucidate): An indication must be given that the learning content is really understood, how things are linked (relate to each other), why this is so and not otherwise, and why a specific result follows. The explanation must be illustrated with examples and illustrations and reasons must be given for statements or conclusions.
- Explanatory research:** Research that seeks to identify the causes and effects of social phenomena.
- Exploratory research:** Research that seeks to find out “what is going on?” It aims to explore how people interact with each other within a specific setting/environment or how they experience a specific event in their life world.
- Feasibility of the research topic:** This is concerned with whether the researcher will be able to conduct the study within the allocated (or a reasonable) time frame and with the available resources.
- Gathering/collecting data:** This step in the research process starts with a decision on what data gathering method and technique(s) will be used. The scientist is in search of valid knowledge and will therefore give preference to data gathering methods and techniques that will promote the validity and reliability of the research.
- Grounded theory:** This is a type of qualitative research that refers simultaneously to a method of qualitative inquiry and the products of that research. In terms of a method used in qualitative research, a grounded theory method consists of a set of systematic, but flexible, guidelines for conducting inductive qualitative research aimed at the development of theory.
- Historical studies:** This method is used to study contemporary social and cultural issues, such as drug abuse or terrorism, or the history of an individual person or

of a concept such as violence. In this regard historical research provides the critical contextual link between the past and the present.

**Humanists:** An umbrella term for a scientific conception in terms of which scientists place the focus on the meaning that events have for people who are involved in them, and how people give meaning to situations and the world around them. Scientists also believe that there is a meaningful interaction between the researcher and the research object, that is, that there is mutual influencing and that the researcher construes or interprets what is observed. Authentic human situations and behaviour cannot be observed, described, explained and understood in the same way as natural phenomena.

**Hypothesis:** A supposition/presumption or direction-giving statement that serves as the basis for discussion or empirical research.

**Indicate** (show, identify): Symbols, names, concepts and so on must be recognised from memory and information about them given briefly.

**Indicate differences and similarities:** A comparison must be made of two or more matters to point out specific similarities and differences.

**Inductive:** Moving from the specific to the general; a method of formal reasoning which start off with particular facts and then proceeds to derive generalisations from the specific facts.

**Inductive reasoning:** Inductive reasoning is based on the assumption that if we observe or experience many of the same themes or behaviour patterns then we can assume that it is the general principle.

**Interpret** (construe): Facts must be commented on and examples given to substantiate/support the comments. One's personal assimilation of information, interpretation or construction must be clearly evident.

**Interpretivism:** A research approach which argues that people do not live in an empirically observable reality but in a world where they interrelate and where their life-world is constructed through experiences, perceptions and interactions with other people. Human phenomena can only be studied if researchers immerse themselves in the research context.

**In-depth interview:** A structured or unstructured conversation between a researcher and a research participant aimed at collecting information.

**Literature review:** This is a study of the existing literature on the research topic which informs the empirical study but does not form part of the empirical study.

**Methodology:** The research technique used to do a scientific study. It is linked to the research approach (e.g. qualitative or quantitative) which is rooted in the philosophical assumptions of the study.

**Narrative analysis:** An analysis of participants' personal accounts of a sequence of events in the order in which they happened.

**Nonprobability sampling:** This is any sampling methods where some people in the population have no chance of selection because they do not possess the specified characteristics to fulfil the requirements for the study.

**Object of study:** Any phenomenon that serves as the object of study or research. The term "known object" is less frequently used.

**Objectivity ideal:** The way in which the scientist tries to or does remain neutral and unbiased (unprejudiced) and tries to or does arrive at value-free knowledge.

**Objectivity:** To be objective implies that the scientist can observe, describe and

explain/understand phenomena without personal interests, prejudices and emotional interests exercising an influence. Whether objectivity is possible and what the specific meaning attached to it is depend on the scientist's scientific-philosophical point of departure.

**Observations:** A qualitative data collection method based on sensory observations or the experience (facts) of research participants.

**Ontology:** Ontology is concerned with the objects and behaviour that we assume to exist in the world and how these should be viewed and studied.

**Paradigm:** This is a model or framework for observation or understanding which shapes how a researcher views and approaches research studies. It is a basic way of thinking or a set of assumptions which is accepted (along with others) by all (or a group of) practitioners of a discipline.

**Participation observation:** This is a research technique where the researcher adopts a role that involves some active participation in the setting. The participants are generally aware of the researcher's role of observation but the researcher will participate in enough group activities to develop rapport with the participants and to gain a direct sense of the groups' experiences and perceptions.

**Phenomenology:** This deals with the investigation and description of people's experience in and perceptions of their life-world without reference to the question of whether what is experienced is objectively real. Phenomenological research focuses on the experiences a group of participants have in common as the participants experience a phenomenon.

**Philosophical assumptions:** Reflection of how the researcher thinks about the social world and knowledge.

**Philosophy of science:** An umbrella term for the different ways in which science and scientific research are approached from a philosophical level. It is concerned with the impact that the philosophical assumptions, paradigms and methods used in research has on the generated knowledge.

**Positivism:** The branch of social science that uses the scientific method of the natural sciences and suggests that human behaviour is a product of social, biological, psychological or economic forces.

**Precise and systematic observations:** The process(es) by which the scientist gathers information from the external or internal environment. The important role played by previous experience and priorities (preferences) is widely acknowledged. The specific definition of observation is, however, determined by the scientist's scientific-philosophical point of departure.

**Primary data:** Data collected by the researcher making use of in-depth interviews, observations or questionnaires.

**Probability sample:** This implies that every person in the population has a chance of being selected to be part of the research sample.

**Procedure:** The way in which a thing must be done.

**Processing research data (data analysis):** This refers to the analysis and interpretation of information that has been gathered.

**Qualitative interviews:** In-depth conversations between a researcher and participants for the purpose of collecting information (data) in research.

**Qualitative research:** An umbrella term for a research approach which aims to study participants' experiences and perceptions of their social world. The researcher

plays an active and participatory role in the collection and interpretation of data. Research data and findings are mainly written or spoken words, or observations that do not have a direct numerical interpretation.

**Questionnaire:** A series of questions or items about a single subject or a series of related issues that must be answered by a respondent. Questions can be used to measure aspects like attitudes and opinions and for collecting biographical information. In a structured questionnaire the answer options are provided.

**Quota sampling:** A proportional share of research participants is identified to ensure that the sample represents certain characteristics of the research population in proportion to their prevalence in the population.

**Reflexive research:** This focuses on the relevance of lived experiences for the human sciences. Reflexivity deals with an explanation of how qualitative researchers' "lived experiences" have influenced a research project.

**Reliable:** This term usually indicates the replicability of surveys and the repeatability of research results by other researchers in the same research situations with the same methods and techniques.

**Research goal:** This indicates the purpose of the research.

**Research problem:** A statement that identifies the scope and area of the research topic.

**Rhetoric:** The language used in research which is reflective of the philosophical assumptions of a study.

**Sample:** A smaller group of people which is representative of the larger group in terms of their composition and/or other characteristics.

**Scientific idea:** This represents the researcher's beliefs and the goals pursued by them in the search of knowledge.

**Scientific knowledge:** Systematised, critically and methodically acquired knowledge that is verifiable. Scientific knowledge is obtained on the basis of systematic observation and in a controlled way and must meet the requirements of validity and reliability.

**Secondary data:** Data collected and archived or published by others. It includes photographs, charts, and other visual materials. In a qualitative study empirical data documents can include transcriptions of interviews; participant observation field notes; photographs of field situations taken by the researcher as records of specific activities; visual and audio recordings of rituals; and maps and diagrams drawn by the researcher or by field assistants or participants in a study.

**Snowball sampling:** A sampling technique where the researcher contacts some participants who are representative of the sampling criteria and asks them to identify other people to include in the study.

**Standardise:** An attempt to make things the same.

**Survey method:** A method of data collection. Example: an opinion survey/poll of some group of people on the abolition of the death penalty. This usually involves random sampling for a relatively small but manageable and representative group of people that form part of a larger group.

**Survey research:** This is systematic data collection in order to explore the relation between variables by giving each respondent an identical set of questions to answer.

**Theory:** A theory may be defined as a group of logically cohesive statements presented to categorise or explain phenomena.

**Units of analysis:** These involve the who, what and where of the study. Usually the units of analysis are the entities that the researcher will observe and study.

**Valid (true):** This concept refers to a scientific demand that is made on research acts (like observation and the use of techniques) and survey results (like the processing of collected information). Validity thus indicates (i) the absence of bias (in the scientist) and (chance) errors; (ii) the existence of a close relationship or cohesion between procedures carried out in the research process, the research findings and the study object.

**Value-free:** The quest for freedom from value (for value-free or neutral knowledge) implies that, as far as possible, personal convictions/persuasions and sentiments may not influence the scientist's observation and research. To guard against such influence, scientists rely not only on their ability to set aside value judgements (to be objective) but also to follow research procedures and specific techniques to eliminate value judgements.

**Values:** This term refers to a particular attitude or norm that directs a person's or a group's preferences and behaviour.

**Variables:** Variables are behaviour or objects that we measure, control, or manipulate in research.

**Verifiable:** It should be possible to test (verify) scientific knowledge by applying specific criteria in order to determine its veracity (truth), correctness, accuracy or validity.

**SCHEDULE**

**PRESCRIBED BOOKS**

**STATISTICS**

**SITE INFO**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**SELF-ASSESSMENTS**