CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

In addition to selecting a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach, the proposal designer also needs to begin reviewing the scholarly literature. Literature reviews help researchers limit the scope of their inquiry, and they convey the importance of studying a topic to readers.

This chapter continues the discussion about preliminary choices to be made before launching into a proposal. It begins with a discussion about selecting a topic and writing this topic down so that the researcher can continually reflect on it. At this point, researchers also need to consider whether the topic *can* and *should* be researched. Then, the discussion moves into the actual process of reviewing the literature. It begins by addressing the general purpose for using literature in a study, then turns to principles helpful in providing a literature review in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies.

IDENTIFYING A TOPIC

Before considering what literature to use in a project, first identify a topic to study and reflect on whether it is practical and useful to undertake the study. Describe the topic in a few words or in a short phrase. The topic becomes the central idea to learn about or to explore in a study.

There are several ways in which researchers often gain some insight into their topic when they are beginning their research. My assumption will be that the topic is chosen by the researcher and not by an adviser or committee member. Several strategies can help start the process of identifying a topic.

One way is to draft a brief title for the study. I am surprised at how often researchers fail to draft a title early in their projects. In my opinion, the "working title" becomes a major road sign in research—a tangible idea to keep refocusing on and changing as the project goes on

(see Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). I find that in my research, this topic grounds me and provides a sign of what I am studying, as well as a sign often used in conveying to others the central notion of my study. When students first provide their prospectus of a research study to me, I ask them to supply a working title if they do not already have one on the paper.

How would this working title be written? Try completing this sentence: "My study is about. . . ." A response might be "My study is about at-risk children in the junior high" or "My study is about helping college faculty become better researchers." At this stage in the design, frame the answer to the question so that another scholar might easily grasp the meaning of the project. A common shortcoming of beginning researchers is that they frame their study in complex and erudite language. This perspective may result from reading published articles that have undergone numerous revisions before being set in print. Good, sound research projects begin with straightforward, uncomplicated thoughts, easily read and understood.

These easily understood titles should also reflect principles of good titles. Wilkinson (1991) provides useful advice for creating a title: Be brief and avoid wasting words. Eliminate unnecessary words such as "An Approach to" or "A Study of." Use a single title or a double title. An example of a double title is "An Ethnography: Understanding a Child's Perception of War." In addition to Wilkinson's thoughts, consider a title no longer than 12 words, eliminate most articles and prepositions, and make sure that it includes the focus or topic of the study.

Another strategy for topic development is to pose the topic as a brief question. What question needs to be answered in the proposed study? A researcher might ask "What treatment is best for depression?," "What does it mean to be Arabic in American society today?," or "What brings people to tourist sites in the Midwest?" When drafting questions such as these, focus on the key topic in the question as the major signpost for the study. Consider how this question might be expanded later (see Chapters 5 and 6, on the purpose statement and on research questions and hypotheses, respectively) to be more descriptive of your study.

A RESEARCHABLE TOPIC

To actively elevate this topic to a research study calls also for reflecting on whether the topic can and should be researched. A topic *can* be researched if researchers have participants willing to serve in the study. It also can be researched if investigators have resources at key points in the study, such as resources to collect data over a sustained period of

time and resources to analyze the information, such as through data analysis or text analysis programs.

The question of *should* is more complex. Several factors might go into this decision. Perhaps the most important is whether the topic adds to the pool of research knowledge available on the topic. A first step in any project is to spend considerable time in the library examining the research on a topic (see later in this chapter for strategies for effectively using the library and library resources). This point cannot be overemphasized. Beginning researchers may advance a great study that is complete in every way, such as in the clarity of research questions, the comprehensiveness of data collection, and the sophistication of statistical analysis. After all that, the researcher may garner little support from faculty committees or conference planners because the study does not add "anything new" to the body of research on a topic. Ask, "how does this project contribute to the literature?" Consider how the study might address a topic that has yet to be examined, extend the discussion by incorporating new elements, or replicate (or repeat) a study in new situations or with new participants.

The issue of whether the topic *should* be studied also relates to whether anyone outside the researcher's own immediate institution or area would be interested in the topic. Given two topics, one that might be of limited, regional interest and one of national interest, I would opt for the latter because its appeal to a general audience will help readers appreciate the worth of the study. Journal editors, committee members, conference planners, and funding agencies all like research that will reach a broad audience. Finally, the *should* issue also relates to the researcher's personal goals. Consider the time it takes to complete a project, revise it, and disseminate the results. Any researcher should consider how the research study and its heavy input of the researcher's time will pay off in enhancing career goals, whether these goals relate to doing more research, obtaining a future position, or advancing toward a degree.

Before proceeding with a proposal or a study, one needs to weigh these factors and ask others for their reaction to a topic. Seek reactions from colleagues, noted authorities in the field, academic advisers and faculty committee members, and colleagues.

PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in a research study accomplishes several purposes. It shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely

related to the study being reported. It relates a study to the larger ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling in gaps and extending prior studies (Cooper, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings. All or some of these reasons may be the foundation for writing the scholarly literature into a study (see Miller, 1991, for a more extensive list of purposes for using literature in a study). Beyond the question of why it is used is the issue of how its use might differ in the three approaches to research.

LITERATURE REVIEWS IN QUALITATIVE, QUANTITATIVE, AND MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

In *qualitative* research, inquirers use the literature in a manner consistent with the assumptions of learning from the participant, and not prescribing the questions that need to be answered from the researcher's standpoint. One of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory. This means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas.

However, the use of the literature in qualitative research varies considerably. In theoretically oriented qualitative studies such as ethnographies or critical ethnographies, the literature on a cultural concept or a critical theory from the literature is introduced by researchers early in a study as an orienting framework. In grounded theory studies, case studies, and phenomenological studies, literature will serve less to set the stage for the study.

With an approach grounded in learning from participants and variation by type of qualitative research, we see several models for incorporating the literature in a qualitative study. I offer three placement locations. A literature review can be used in any or all of these locations. As shown in Table 2.1, you might include the literature in the introduction to a study. In this placement, the literature provides a useful backdrop for the problem or issue that has led to the need for the study, such as who has been writing about it, who has studied it, and who has indicated the importance of studying the issue. This "framing" of the problem is, of course, contingent on available studies. One can find illustrations of this model in many qualitative studies employing different strategies of inquiry.

TABLE 2.1 Using Literature in a Qualitative Study

Use of the Literature	*Criteria*	*Examples of Suitable Types of Studies*
The literature is used to "frame" the problem in the introduction to the study.	There must be some literature available.	Typically used in all qualitative studies, regardless of type.
The literature is presented in a separate section as a "review of the literature."	An approach often acceptable to an audience most familiar with the traditional, positivist, approach to literature reviews.	This approach is used with those studies employing a strong theory and literature background at the beginning of a study, such as ethnographies, critical theory studies.
The literature is presented in the study at the end; it becomes a basis for comparing and contrasting findings of the qualitative study.	This approach is most suitable for the "inductive" process of qualitative research; the literature does not guide and direct the study but becomes an aide once patterns or categories have been identified.	This approach is used in all types of qualitative designs, but it is most popular with grounded theory, where one contrasts and compares his or her theory with other theories found in the literature.

A second form is to review the literature in a separate section, a model typically used in quantitative research. This approach often appears when the audience consists of individuals or readers with a quantitative orientation. Moreover, in theory-oriented qualitative studies, such as ethnographies and critical theory studies or studies with an advocacy or emancipatory aim, the inquirer might locate the theory discussion and literature in a separate section, typically toward the beginning of the study. Third, the researcher may incorporate the related literature in the final section of the study, where it is used to compare and contrast with the results (or themes or categories) that emerged from the study. This model is especially popular in grounded theory studies. I recommend it because it uses the literature inductively.

Quantitative research, on the other hand, includes a substantial amount of literature at the beginning of a study to provide direction for the research questions or hypotheses. In planning a quantitative study, the literature is often used at the beginning of a study to introduce a

problem or to describe in detail the existing literature in a section titled "related literature" or "review of literature," or something similar. In addition, the literature is included in the end of a study in which the researcher compares the results of the study with the existing findings in the literature. In this model, the quantitative researcher uses the literature deductively as a framework for the research questions or hypotheses.

A separate section on the "review of the literature" deserves special mention because it is a popular form for writing literature into a study. This literature review might take several different forms, and little consensus exists about a preferable form. Cooper (1984) suggests that literature reviews can be *integrative*, with the researchers summarizing broad themes in the literature. This model is popular in dissertation proposals and dissertations. A second form recommended by Cooper is a *theoretical* review, in which the researcher focuses on extant theory that relates to the problem under study. This form appears in journal articles in which the author integrates the theory into the introduction to the study. A final form suggested by Cooper is a *methodological* review, in which the researcher focuses on methods and definitions. These reviews may provide not only a summary of studies but also an actual critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the method sections. Some authors use this form in dissertations and in "review of related literature" sections in journal articles.

In a *mixed methods* study, the researcher uses either a qualitative or a quantitative approach to the literature depending on the type of mixed methods design being used. In a sequential design, the literature is presented in each phase in a way consistent with the type of design being used in that phase. For example, if the study begins with a quantitative phase, then the investigator is likely to include a substantial literature review that helps to establish a rationale for the research questions or hypotheses. If the study begins with a qualitative phase, then the literature is substantially less, and the researcher may incorporate it more into the end of the study—an inductive approach to literature use. If the researcher advances a concurrent study with an equal weight and emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative data, then the literature may take either qualitative or quantitative forms. Ultimately, the approach to literature use in a mixed methods project will depend on the type of strategy and the relative weight given to the qualitative or quantitative research in the study.

My suggestions, then, for planning to use the literature in a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study are as follows.

- In a *qualitative* study, use the literature sparingly in the beginning of the plan in order to convey an inductive design, unless the qualitative strategy-type requires a substantial literature orientation at the outset.
- Consider the most appropriate place for the literature in a *qualitative* study and base the decision on the audience for the project. Keep in mind placing it at the beginning to "frame" the problem, placing it in a separate section, and using it at the end of a study to compare and contrast with the findings of the current study.
- Use the literature in a *quantitative* study deductively as a basis for advancing research questions or hypotheses.
- Use the literature to introduce the study, describe related literature in a separate section, or compare extant literature with findings in a *quantitative* study plan.
- If a separate "review of the literature" is used, consider whether the review will consist of integrative summaries, theoretical reviews, or methodological reviews. A typical practice in dissertation writing is to advance an integrative review.
- In a *mixed methods* study, use the literature in a way that is consistent with the major type of strategy and the approach—qualitative or quantitative—that is most prevalent in the design.

DESIGN TECHNIQUES

Regardless of whether you write the literature into a qualitative, quantitative, or a mixed methods study, several steps are useful in conducting a literature review.

STEPS IN CONDUCTING A LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review for a proposal or a research study means locating and summarizing the studies about a topic. Often these summaries are research studies (because you are conducting a research study), but they may also include conceptual articles

or thought pieces that provide frameworks for thinking about topics. There is no one way to conduct a literature review, but many scholars proceed in a systematic fashion to capture, evaluate, and summarize the literature.

Step 1 Begin by identifying key words useful in locating materials in an academic library at a college or university. These key words may emerge in identifying a topic, or they may result from preliminary readings in the library.

Step 2 With these key words in mind, next go to the library and begin searching the library catalog for holdings (i.e., journals and books). Most major libraries have computerized databases of their holdings. I suggest focusing initially on journals and books related to the topic. Also, I suggest beginning to search the computerized databases typically reviewed by social science researchers, such as ERIC, PsycINFO, Sociofile, and the Social Science Citation Index (later, these will be reviewed in some detail). These databases are available online using the library's Web site, or they may be available on CD-ROM in a library.

Step 3 I would initially try to locate about 50 reports of research in articles or books related to research on my topic. I would set a priority on the search for journal articles and books because they are easy to locate and obtain. I would determine whether these articles and books are held in my academic library or whether I need to send for them by interlibrary loan or purchase them through a bookstore.

Step 4 Using this initial group of articles, I would then look at the articles and photocopy those that are central to my topic. In the selection process, I would look over the

abstract and skim the article or chapter. Throughout this process, I would try simply to obtain a sense of whether the article or chapter will make a useful contribution to my understanding of the literature.

Step 5 As I identify useful literature, I begin designing my literature map, a visual picture of the research literature on my topic. Several possibilities exist for drawing this map (to be discussed later). This picture provides a useful organizing device for positioning my own study within the larger body of the literature on a topic.

Step 6 At the same time that I am organizing the literature into my literature map, I am also beginning to draft summaries of the most relevant articles. These summaries are combined into the final literature review that I write for my proposal or research study. In addition, I am including precise references to the literature using an appropriate style, such as that contained in the American Psychological Association style manual (American Psychological Association, 2001), so that I have a complete reference to use at the end of my proposal or study.

Step 7 After summarizing the literature, I then assemble the literature review, in which I structure the literature thematically or organize it by important concepts addressed in the study. I would end my literature review with a summary of the major themes found in the literature and suggest that we need further research on the topic along the lines of my proposed study.

To build on key points in these seven process steps, we will first consider techniques useful in accessing the literature quickly through databases.

Computerized Databases

Information retrieval has become the next frontier of scientific development for social and human science researchers. Using search engines, researchers can locate online literature for a review. Moreover, library holdings can be scanned quickly using the computerized online catalog system. A survey of academic libraries reported that 98% of 119 academic research libraries had bibliographic records of books and journals "online" for computer accessing (Krol, 1993). Using the Internet, catalog holdings of libraries across the country are also available, an example of which would be the CARL (Colorado Association of Research Libraries) system in Colorado. It provides a wide assortment of online text, indices of model school programs, online book reviews, facts about the metropolitan Denver area, and a database on environmental education (Krol, 1993).

Databases now available in libraries provide an opportunity for researchers to access thousands of journals, conference papers, and materials quickly. Several databases form the toolkit of resources for the social science researcher today.

The ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) system is available on CD-ROM and online (see www.accesseric.org). This database provides access to nearly 1 million abstracts of documents and journal articles on educational research and practice. ERIC contains two parts: CIJE, the *Current Index to Journals in Education* (Educational Resources Information Center, 1969–) and RIE, *Resources in Education* (Educational Resources Information Center, 1975–). To best utilize ERIC, it is important to identify appropriate "descriptors" for the topic. Researchers can search through a dictionary of terms using the ERIC *Thesaurus* (Educational Resources Information Center, 1975). However, a random search through the *Thesaurus* for descriptors may be time-consuming and futile. Alternatively, you might use the following procedure:

1. Look through the subject index found at the back of each CIJE and RIE or run an ERIC computer search using keywords that seem close to your topic. Look for a research study as similar as possible to your project.

2. When you find a study, examine the descriptors used for that article. Select the major descriptors used to describe that article (see descriptor terms in the abstract).

3. Use these major descriptors in your computer search. In this way, you utilize the descriptors that individuals at the ERIC Clearinghouses have used to catalog articles for the ERIC system. This, in turn, maximizes the possibility of locating articles relevant for the planned study.

The *Social Sciences Citation Index* (Institute for Scientific Information, 1969–) is also available on CD-ROM and held in many academic libraries. The SSCI covers about 5,700 journals that represent virtually every discipline in the social sciences. It can be used to locate articles and authors who have conducted research on a topic. It is especially useful in locating studies that have referenced an important study. The SSCI enables you to trace all studies since the publication of the key study that have cited the work. Using this system, you can develop a chronological list of references that document the historical evolution of an idea or study.

Another CD-ROM database *is Dissertation Abstracts International* (University Microfilms, 1938–). This database contains abstracts of doctoral dissertations submitted by nearly 500 participating institutions throughout the world. In a full literature review for a dissertation, identify all references, including dissertations, in the search. Look for a few good dissertations from respected institutions that address a topic as close as possible to your topic of study.

To locate research in sociology or on topics that address sociological concepts, search *Sociological Abstracts* (1953–), available on a CD-ROM titled Sociofile. *Sociological Abstracts* is available from Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (see its Web site at http://infoshare1.princeton.edu:2003/databases/about/tips/html/sociofile.html). This database contains abstracts to articles in more than 2,500 journals as well as book reviews and abstracts for dissertations and books. For psychological studies, examine PsycINFO (see www.apa.org/psyinfo/about/), the guide to *Psychological Abstracts* (1927–). This database indexes more than 850 journals under 16 different categories of information. It is available in academic libraries in CD-ROM form and as a Web site version.

In summary, I recommend the following:

- Use computerized resources available in your academic library, such as CD-ROM or Web site versions to access literature about your topic.
- Access multiple databases to conduct a thorough review of the literature. Search databases such as ERIC, SSCI, PsycINFO, Sociofile, and *Dissertation Abstracts International.*

A Priority for Resources in the Literature

I recommend that researchers establish a priority in a search of the literature. What types of literature might be reviewed, and in what priority? Consider the following:

1. Especially if you are examining a topic for the first time and are unaware of the research on it, start with broad syntheses of the literature, such as overviews found in encyclopedias (e.g., Aikin, 1992; Keeves, 1988). You might also look for summaries of the literature on your topic presented in journal articles or abstract series (e.g., *Annual Review of Psychology,* 1950–).

2. Next, turn to journal articles in respected, national journals, especially those that report research studies. By *research,* I mean that the author or authors pose a question or hypothesis, collect data, and try to answer the question or support the hypothesis. Start with the most recent studies about the topic and then work backward in time. In these journal articles, follow up on references at the end of the articles for more sources to examine.

3. Turn to books related to the topic. Begin with research monographs that summarize the scholarly literature, then consider entire books that are on a single topic or contain chapters written by different authors.

4. Follow this search by looking for recent conference papers on a topic. Often conference papers report the latest research developments. Look for major, national conferences and the papers delivered at them. Most major conferences either require or request that authors submit their papers for inclusion in computerized indexes. Make contact with authors of studies. Seek them out at conferences. Write or phone them asking if they know of studies related to the proposed study and inquire if they have an instrument that might be used or modified for use in your study.

5. If time permits, look at the abstracts of dissertations in *Dissertation Abstracts International* (University Microfilms, 1938–). Dissertations vary immensely in quality, and one needs to be selective in examining these studies. A search of the *Abstracts* might result in one or two relevant dissertations. Once you identify these dissertations, request copies of them through interlibrary loan or through the University of Michigan Microfilm Library.

I placed journal articles first on the list because they are the easiest to locate and duplicate. They also report the "research" about a topic. Dissertations are listed last because they vary considerably in quality and are the most difficult material to locate and reproduce.

Web site articles and research studies also are useful materials. The easy access and ability to capture entire articles makes these sources of material attractive. However, reviewers may not have evaluated and screened these articles for quality, and one needs to be cautious about whether they represent rigorous, thoughtful and systematic research for use in a literature review. Online journals, which are becoming more popular, often include articles that have been examined for standards of quality, and researchers might check to see if the journal has a refereed review board that has published standards of quality used in accepting articles for publication.

A Literature Map of the Research

One of the first tasks for a researcher working with a new topic is to organize the literature about the topic. This enables a researcher to understand how his or her study of the topic adds to, extends, or replicates research already completed.

A useful tool for this task is a literature map of the research about a topic. This map is a visual summary of the research that has been conducted by others, and it is typically represented in a figure. Literature maps are organized in different ways. One is a hierarchical structure, with a top-down presentation of the literature ending at the bottom with a proposed study that will extend the literature. Another might be similar to a flowchart in which the reader understands the literature unfolding from left to right, with the studies furthest to the right advancing a proposed study that adds to the literature. A third model might be composed of circles, with each circle representing a body of literature and the intersection of the circles indicating the place at which future research is needed. I have seen examples drawn by students of all of these possibilities.

The central idea is that the researcher begins to build a visual picture of existing research about a topic. This literature map presents an overview of existing literature. It will help others—such as a dissertation or master's thesis committee, a group of participants assembled at a conference, or journal reviewers—visualize how the study relates to the larger literature on the topic.

To illustrate a literature map and the process involved in generating one, I will first show a complete map and then discuss some general

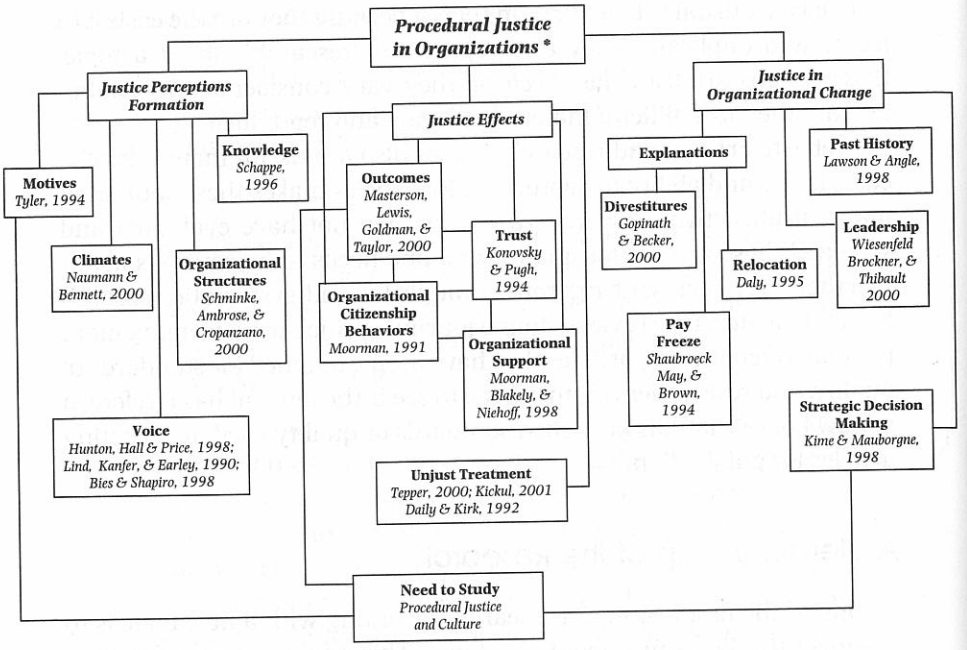

Figure 2.1 A Literature Map

SOURCE: From Janovec (2001). Reprinted by permission of Terese Janovec.

*Employees' concerns about the fairness of and the making of managerial decisions.

guidelines for designing this map. See Figure 2.1, which shows the literature found on the topic of procedural justice in organizations (Janovec, 2001). Janovec's map illustrates a hierarchical design for a map. She used several principles of good map design.

- She placed the topic of the literature review in the box at the top of the hierarchy.
- Next, she took the studies that she found in computer searches, located copies of these studies, and organized them into three broad subtopics (i.e., justice perceptions formation, justice effects, and justice in organizational change). For another map, the researcher may have more or less than four major categories, depending on the extent of publications on the topic.
- Within each box are labels that describe the nature of the studies in the box (i.e., "outcomes").

- Also, within each box are references to major citations illustrating the content of the box. It is useful to use references that are current and illustrative of the topic of the box, and to briefly state the references in an appropriate style manual form for an in-text reference (e.g., Smith, xxxx).
- Consider several levels for the literature map. In other words, major topics lead to subtopics, and then other sub-subtopics.
- Some branches of the chart are more developed than other branches. This depth will depend on the amount of literature available and the depth of the exploration of the literature by the researcher.
- After organizing the literature into a diagram, Janovec considered the branches of the figure that provide a springboard for her proposed study. She placed a "need to study" (or "proposed study") box at the bottom of the map, she briefly identified the nature of this proposed study ("procedural justice and culture"), and she drew lines to past literature that her project would extend. She proposed this study based on ideas suggested by other authors in the "future research" sections of their studies.

Abstracting Studies

When reviewing the content of research studies, researchers record essential information from them for a review of the literature. In this process, researchers need to consider what material to extract from a research study and to summarize in a "review of related literature" section. This is important information when reviewing perhaps dozens if not hundreds of studies. A good literature review summary of a research article reported in a journal might include the following points:

- Mention the problem being addressed.
- State the central purpose or focus of the study.
- Briefly state information about the sample, population, or participants.
- Review key results that relate to the study.
- Depending on whether the review is a methodological review (Cooper, 1984), point out technical and methodological flaws in the study.

When examining an article to develop a summary, there are places in research studies to look for these parts. In well-crafted journal articles, the problem and purpose statements are found and clearly stated in the introduction to the article. Information about the sample, population, or participants is found midway through the article in a method (or procedure) section, and the results are often reported toward the end of the article. In the results sections, look for passages in which the researchers report information to answer or address each research question or hypothesis. For book-length research studies, look for the same points. Consider the following example.

Example 2.1 *Review of a Quantitative Study*

In this example, I will present a paragraph summarizing the major components of a quantitative study (Creswell, Seagren, & Henry, 1979), much like the paragraph might appear in a "review of the literature" section of a dissertation or a journal article. In this passage, I have chosen key components to be abstracted.

> Creswell, Seagren, and Henry (1979) tested the Biglan model, a three-dimensional model clustering thirty-six academic areas into hard or soft, pure or applied, life or non-life areas, as a predictor of chairpersons' professional development needs. Eighty department chairpersons located in four state colleges and one university of a Midwestern state participated in the study. Results showed that chairpersons in different academic areas differed in terms of their professional development needs. Based on the findings, the authors recommended that those who develop in-service programs need to consider differences among disciplines when they plan for programs.

I began with an "in-text" reference in accord with the format in the American Psychological Association style manual, *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, 2001). Next, I reviewed the central purpose of the study. I followed the review with information about the data collection. I ended by stating the major results of the study and presenting the practical implications of these results.

How are studies that are not research studies—essays, opinions, typologies, and syntheses of past research—abstracted? When abstracting these non-empirical studies, the researcher should

- Mention the problem being addressed by the article or book
- Identify the central theme of the study
- State the major conclusions related to this theme
- Mention flaws in reasoning, logic, force of argument, and so forth if the review type is methodological

Consider the following example that illustrates the inclusion of these aspects.

Example 2.2 *Review of a Study Advancing a Typology*

Sudduth (1992) completed a quantitative dissertation in political science on the topic of the use of strategic adaptation in rural hospitals. He reviewed the literature in several chapters at the beginning of the study. In an example of summarizing a single study advancing a typology, Sudduth summarized the problem, the theme, and the typology.

> Ginter, Duncan, Richardson, and Swayne (1991) recognize the impact of the external environment on a hospital's ability to adapt to change. They advocate a process that they call environmental analysis which allows the organization to strategically determine the best responses to change occurring in the environment. However, after examining the multiple techniques used for environmental analysis, it appears that no comprehensive conceptual scheme or computer model has been developed to provide a complete analysis of environmental issues (Ginter et al., 1991). The result is an essential part of strategic change that relies heavily on a non-quantifiable and judgmental process of evaluation. To assist the hospital manager to carefully assess the external environment, Ginter et al. (1991) have developed the typology given in Figure 2.1. (p. 44)

Style Manuals

A basic tenet in reviewing the literature is to use an appropriate and consistent reference style. When identifying a useful reference for a literature review, make a complete reference to the source using an

appropriate style. For dissertation proposals, graduate students should seek guidance from faculty, dissertation committee members, or department or college officials about the appropriate style manual to use for citing references.

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.) (American Psychological Association, 2001) is widely used in the fields of education and psychology. The University of Chicago's manual (*A Manual of Style*, 1982), Turabian (Turabian, 1973), and Campbell and Ballou (1977) are also extensively used in the social sciences. Some journals have even developed their own variation of the popular styles. I recommend adopting a style manual early in the planning process and identifying one that is acceptable for your writing audiences.

The most important style manual considerations involve use of in-text citations, end-of-text references, headings, and figures and tables. Some suggestions for scholarly writing using style manuals follow.

- When writing *in-text citations*, keep in mind the appropriate form for types of citations and pay close attention to the format for multiple citations.
- When writing the *end-of-text references*, note whether the style manual calls for them to be alphabetized or numbered. Also, cross-check that each in-text citation is matched by an end-of-text reference.
- The *headings* are ordered in a scholarly paper in terms of levels. First, note how many levels of headings you will have in your research study. Then, refer to the style manual for the appropriate format for each level that you use. Typically, research reports contain between two and four levels of headings.
- If *footnotes* are used, consult the style manual for their proper placement. Footnotes are used less frequently in scholarly papers today than they were a few years ago. If you include them, note whether they go at the bottom of the page or at the end of the paper.
- *Tables* and *figures* have a specific form in each style manual. Note such aspects as bold lines, titles, and spacing in the examples given in the style manual.

In summary, the most important aspect of using a style manual is to be consistent in the approach throughout the manuscript.

A MODEL FOR WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

When composing a review of the literature, it is difficult to determine how much literature to review. To address this problem, I have developed a model that provides parameters for the literature review, especially as it might be designed for a quantitative or mixed methods study that employs a standard literature review section. For a qualitative study, the literature review might explore aspects of the central phenomenon being addressed and divide it into topical areas.

For a quantitative or mixed methods review, write a review of the literature that contains sections about the literature related to major independent variables, major dependent variables, and studies that relate the independent and dependent variables (more material on variables will appear in Chapter 4). This approach seems appropriate for dissertations and for conceptualizing the literature to be introduced in a journal article. Consider a literature review (in a dissertation or proposal) to be composed of five components: an introduction, topic 1 (about the independent variable), topic 2 (about the dependent variable), topic 3 (studies that address both the independent and dependent variables), and a summary. Here is more detail about each section:

1. *Introduce the section* by telling the reader about the sections included in the literature review. This passage is a statement about the organization of the section.

2. Review topic 1, which addresses the scholarly literature about the *independent variable or variables*. With several independent variables, consider subsections or focus on the single most important variable. Remember to address only the literature about the independent variable; keep the literature about the independent and dependent variables separate in this model.

3. Review topic 2, which incorporates the scholarly literature about the *dependent variable or variables*. With multiple dependent variables, write subsections about each variable or focus on a single, important dependent variable.

4. Review topic 3, which includes the scholarly literature that relates the *independent variable(s)* to the *dependent variable(s)*. Here we are at the crux of the proposed study. Thus, this section should be relatively short and contain studies that are extremely close in topic to the proposed study. Perhaps nothing has been written on the topic. Construct a section that is as

close as possible to the topic, or review studies that address the topic at a more general level.

5. Provide a *summary* of the review that highlights the most important studies, captures major themes in the review, and suggests why we need more research on the topic.

This model focuses the literature review, relates it closely to the variables in the research questions and hypotheses, and sufficiently narrows the study. It becomes a logical point of departure for the method section.

SUMMARY

Before searching the literature, identify your topic using such strategies as drafting a brief title or stating the central research question to be addressed. Also consider whether this topic can and should be researched by reviewing whether there is access to participants and resources and whether the topic will add to social science knowledge, be of interest to others, and be consistent with personal goals.

Researchers use the scholarly literature in a study to present results of similar studies, to relate the present study to the ongoing dialogue in the literature, and to provide a framework for comparing results of a study with other studies. For qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs, the literature serves different purposes. In qualitative research, the literature helps substantiate the research problem, but it does not constrain the views of participants. A popular approach is to include more literature at the end of a qualitative study than at the beginning. In quantitative research, the literature not only helps to substantiate the problem but also suggests possible questions or hypotheses that need to be addressed. A separate "literature review" section typically is found in quantitative studies. In mixed methods research, the use of literature will depend on the type of strategy of inquiry and the weight given to qualitative or qualitative research in the study.

When conducting a literature review, identify key words for searching the literature, then search the library resources, relying on computerized databases in the library and for fields of study, such as ERIC, PsycINFO, Sociofile, and the Social Science Citation Index. Then, locate articles or books based on a priority of searching first for journal articles and then books. Identify references that will make a contribution to

your literature review. Group these studies into a literature map that shows the major categories of studies and positions your proposed study within those categories. Begin writing summaries of the studies, noting complete references according to a style manual (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2001) and extracting information about the research that includes the research problem, the questions, the data collection and analysis, and the final results. Finally, consider the overall structure for organizing these studies. One model is to divide the review into sections according to major variables (a quantitative approach) or major subthemes of the central phenomenon (a qualitative approach) that you are studying.

Writing Exercises

1. Develop a visual map of the literature related to the topic. Include in the map the proposed study, and draw lines from the proposed study to other categories of studies so that a reader can easily see how the study will extend existing literature.
2. Organize a "Review of the Literature" for a quantitative study and follow the model for delimiting the literature to reflect the variables in the study. As an alternative, organize a review of literature for a qualitative study and include it in an introduction as a rationale for the research problem in the study.
3. Identify the number of heading levels in a published journal article. Do this by creating an outline of the levels using appropriate APA (5th ed.) form.
4. Run an ERIC search on a topic by identifying key terms, combining them, and using the Web site www.accesseric.org. As an extention of this exercise, select one of the search results that is close to the type of literature being sought, note the descriptors used, and re-run the ERIC search to obtain literature more central to the literature review.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lawrence Locke, Waneen Spirduso, and Stephen Silverman describe 15 steps in the process of developing a review of literature. These 15 steps involve three stages: developing the concepts that provide the rationale for the study, developing the subtopics for each major concept, and adding the most important references that support each subtopic. These steps involve stages such as identifying the concepts that provide the rationale for the study, selecting the subtopics for each major concept, and adding the most important references that support each subtopic. They also provide a "diagrammatic overview of the related literature" as a model for visualizing the literature.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sharan Merriam provides an extensive discussion about the use of literature in qualitative studies. She identifies steps in reviewing the literature and poses useful criteria for selecting references. These include checking to see if the author is an authority on the topic, how recent the work was published, whether the resource is relevant to the proposed research topic, and the quality of the resource. Merriam further suggests that the literature review is not a linear process of reading the literature, identifying the theoretical framework, and then writing the problem statement. Instead, the process is highly interactive among these steps.

Punch, K. F. (1998). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches.* London: Sage.

Keith Punch provides a guide to social research that equally addresses quantitative and qualitative approaches. He conceptualizes key differences between the two approaches in several ways. When writing a literature review, Punch notes that the point to concentrate on in the literature varies in different styles of research. Factors that affect when to concentrate on the literature will depend on the style of research, the overall research strategy, and how closely the study will address the directions in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

Writing Strategies and Ethical Considerations

Before designing a proposal, it is important to consider how to write it. Those considerations should include which topics will convey the best argument for the need and quality of the study. Now is the best time to adopt writing practices that will ensure a consistent and highly readable proposal (and research project). It is also timely to anticipate the ethical issues that will surface during a study and to incorporate good practices into the research proposal. This chapter focuses on arguments and topics to include in a proposal, the adoption of writing strategies for the process of research, and anticipating ethical issues likely to arise in a study.

WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Central Arguments to Make

It is helpful to consider the topics that will go into a proposal. All the topics need to be interrelated so that they provide a cohesive picture of the entire proposed project. An outline of topics will be helpful, but the topics will differ depending on whether the proposal is for a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study. Overall, however, there are central arguments that frame any proposal. They are introduced as nine central arguments by Maxwell (1996). I pose them here as questions to be addressed in a scholarly proposal.

1. What do we need to better understand your topic?
2. What do we know little about in terms of your topic?
3. What do you propose to study?

4. What are the setting and the people that you will study?
5. What methods do you plan to use to provide data?
6. How will you analyze the data?
7. How will you validate your findings?
8. What ethical issues will your study present?
9. What do preliminary results show about the practicability and value of the proposed study?

These nine questions, if adequately addressed in one section for each question, constitute the foundation of good research, and they could provide the overall structure for a proposal. The inclusion of validating findings, ethical considerations (to be addressed shortly), the need for preliminary results, and early evidence of practical significance of the proposed study focus a reader's attention on key elements often overlooked in discussions about proposed projects.

Format for a Qualitative Proposal

Besides these nine questions, it is often helpful to conceptualize in more detail the topics that are included in proposals. Knowledge of these topics is useful at the beginning of proposal development so that you can conceptualize the entire process.

No commonly accepted format exists for a qualitative proposal, although authors such as Berg (2001), Marshall and Rossman (1999), and Maxwell (1996) advance recommendations for topics. A fundamental characteristic should be that the design is consistent with the constructivism/interpretive and advocacy/participatory knowledge claims as mentioned in Chapter 1. With qualitative research now represented by distinct strategies of inquiry, the proposal should also contain the type of inquiry being used as well as detailed procedures of data collection and analysis.

In the light of these points, I propose two alternative models. Example 3.1 is drawn from a constructivist/interpretivist perspective, whereas Example 3.2 is based more on an advocacy/participatory model of qualitative research.

Example 3.1 *A Qualitative Constructivist/Interpretivist Format*

Introduction

Statement of the problem (including existing literature about the problem)

Purpose of the study

The research questions
Delimitations and limitations
Procedures
Characteristics of qualitative research (optional)
Qualitative research strategy
Role of the researcher
Data collection procedures
Data analysis procedures
Strategies for validating findings
Narrative structure
Anticipated ethical issues
Significance of the study
Preliminary pilot findings
Expected outcomes
Appendices: Interview questions, observational forms, timeline, and proposed budget

---

In this example, the writer includes only two major sections, the introduction and the procedures. A review of the literature may be included, but it is optional, and, as discussed in Chapter 2, the literature may be included to a greater extent at the end of the study or in the expected outcomes section. This format does include a special section on the researcher's role in the study. As described by Marshall and Rossman (1999), this section would address decisions about gaining access to the participants and site and negotiating entry to the site and/or participants. It also includes mentioning the interpersonal skills the researcher brings to the project and the researcher's sensitivity to reciprocity or giving back to the people in the study.

Example 3.2 *A Qualitative Advocacy/Participatory Format*

Introduction
Statement of the problem (including existing literature about the problem)
The advocacy/participatory issue
Purpose of the study
The research questions
Delimitations and limitations
Procedures
Characteristics of qualitative research (optional)
Qualitative research strategy
Role of the researcher

Data collection procedures (including the collaborative approaches used with participants)
Data recording procedures
Data analysis procedures
Strategies for validating findings
Narrative structure
Anticipated ethical issues
Significance of the study
Preliminary pilot findings
Expected advocacy/participatory changes
Appendices: Interview questions, observational forms, timeline, and proposed budget

---

This format is similar to the constructivist/interpretivist format except that the inquirer is specific about the advocacy/particpatory issue being explored in the study (e.g., marginalization, empowerment), advances a collaborative form of data collection, and mentions the anticipated changes that the research study will likely bring.

Format for a Quantitative Proposal

For a quantitative study, the format conforms to standards easily identified in journal articles and research studies. The form generally follows the model of an introduction, a literature review, methods, results, and discussion. In planning a quantitative study and designing a dissertation proposal, consider the following format to sketch the overall plan.

Example 3.3 *A Quantitative Format*

Introduction
Statement of the problem
Purpose of the study
Theoretical perspective
Research questions or hypotheses
Definition of terms
Delimitations and limitations
Review of the literature
Methods
Type of research design
Sample, population, and participants

Data collection instruments, variables, and materials
Data analysis procedures
Anticipated ethical issues in the study
Preliminary studies or pilot tests
Significance of the study
Appendixes: Instruments, timeline, and proposed budget

Example 3.3 is a standard format for a social science study, although the order of the sections, especially in the introduction, may vary from study to study (see, for example, Miller, 1991; Rudestam & Newton, 1992). It presents a useful model for designing the sections for a plan for a dissertation or sketching the topics for a scholarly study.

Format for a Mixed Methods Proposal

In a mixed methods design format, the researcher brings together approaches that are included in both the quantitative and qualitative formats (see Creswell, 1999). An example of such a format appears in Example 3.4.

Example 3.4 *A Mixed Methods Format*

Introduction
Statement of the problem
Purpose of the study (include both qualitative and quantitative statements and a rationale for mixing methods)
Research questions (include both qualitative and quantitative)
Review of the literature (separate section, if quantitative)
Procedures or methods
Characteristics of mixed methods research
Type of mixed methods design (including decisions involved in its choice)
Visual model and procedures of the design
Data collection procedures
Types of data
Sampling strategy
Data analysis and validity procedures
Report presentation structure
Role of the researcher
Potential ethical issues

Significance of the study
Preliminary pilot findings
Expected outcomes
Appendixes: Instruments or protocols, outline for chapters, and proposed budget

---

This format shows that the researcher poses both a purpose statement and research questions for quantitative and qualitative components. Further, it is important to specify a rationale for the mixed methods approach in the study. The researcher also identifies key elements of this design, such as the type of mixed methods study, a visual picture of the procedures, and both the quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures and analysis.

WRITING TIPS

Writing as Thinking

Beyond the more general format, proposal developers need to consider the writing process involved in research. One sign of inexperienced writers is that they prefer to discuss their proposed study rather than write about it. All experienced writers know that writing is thinking and conceptualizing a topic. I recommend the following:

- Early in the process of research, write ideas down rather than talk about them. Writing specialists see writing as thinking (Bailey, 1984). Zinsser (1983) discusses the need to get words out of our heads and onto paper. Advisers react better when they read the printed text on paper than when they hear and discuss a research topic with a student or colleague. When a researcher renders ideas on paper, a reader can visualize the final product, actually "see" how it looks, and begin to clarify ideas. The concept of working ideas out on paper has served many experienced writers well.

- Work through several drafts of a paper rather than trying to polish the first draft. It is illuminating to see how people think on paper. Zinsser (1983) identified two types of writers: the "bricklayer," who makes every paragraph just right before going on to the next paragraph, and the "let-it-all-hang-out-on-the-first-draft" writer, who

writes an entire first draft not caring how sloppy it looks or how badly it is written. In between would be someone like Peter Elbow (Elbow, 1973), who recommends that one should go through the iterative process of writing, reviewing, and rewriting. For example, he cites this exercise: With only 1 hour to write a passage, write four drafts (one every 15 minutes) rather than one draft (typically in the last 15 minutes) during the hour. Most experienced researchers write the first draft carefully but do not work for a polished draft; the polish comes relatively late in the writing process. I use Franklin's (1986) three-stage model in my writing:

1. Develop an outline—it could be a sentence or word outline or a visual map of ideas.
2. Write out a draft and then shift and sort ideas, moving around entire paragraphs in the manuscript.
3. Finally, edit and polish each sentence.

The Habit of Writing

Establish the discipline of writing on a continuous and regular basis. Setting the manuscript aside for a long period results in a loss of concentration and effort. The actual writing of words on a page is only part of a more extended process of thinking, collecting information, and reviewing that goes into manuscript production.

Select a time of day to work that is best for you, then use discipline to write at this time each day. Choose a place free of distractions. Boice (1990, pp. 77-78) offers ideas about establishing good writing habits:

- With the aid of the priority principle, make writing a daily activity, regardless of mood, regardless of readiness to write.
- If you feel you do not have time for regular writing, begin by charting your daily activities for a week or two in half-hour blocks.
- Write while you are fresh.
- Avoid writing in binges.
- Write in small, regular amounts.
- Schedule writing tasks so that you plan to work on specific, manageable units of writing in each session.

- Keep daily charts. Graph at least three things: (a) time spent writing, (b) page equivalents finished, and (c) percentage of planned task completed.
- Plan beyond daily goals.
- Share your writing with supportive, constructive friends before you feel ready to go public.
- Try to work on two or three writing projects concurrently.

In addition to these thoughts, one needs to acknowledge that writing moves along slowly and that a writer must ease into writing. Like the runner who stretches before a road race, the writer needs warm-up exercises for both the mind and the fingers. Some leisurely writing activity, such as writing a letter to a friend, brainstorming on the computer, reading some good writing, or studying a favorite poem, can make the actual task of writing easier. I am reminded of John Steinbeck's (1969) "warm-up period" (p. 42) described in detail in *Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters*. Steinbeck began each writing day by writing a letter to his editor and close friend, Pascal Covici, in a large notebook supplied by Covici.

Other exercises may prove useful. Carroll (1990) provides examples of exercises to improve a writer's control over descriptive and emotive passages:

- Describe an object by its parts and dimensions, without first telling the reader its name.
- Write a conversation between two people on any dramatic or intriguing subject.
- Write a set of directions for a complicated task.
- Take a subject and write about it three different ways. (Carroll, 1990, pp. 113-116)

This last exercise seems appropriate for qualitative researchers who analyze their data for multiple codes and themes (see Chapter 10 for qualitative data analysis).

Consider also the implements of writing and the physical location that aids the process of disciplined writing. The implements of writing—a computer, a yellow legal-sized pad, a favorite pen, a pencil, even coffee

and Triscuits (Wolcott, 2001)—offer the writer options for ways to be comfortable when writing. The physical setting for writing can also help. Annie Dillard, the Pulitzer prize-winning novelist, avoided appealing workplaces:

> One wants a room with no view, so imagination can meet memory in the dark. When I furnished this study seven years ago, I pushed the long desk against a blank wall, so I could not see from either window. Once, fifteen years ago, I wrote in a cinder-block cell over a parking lot. It overlooked a tar-and-gravel roof. This pine shed under trees is not quite so good as the cinder-block study was, but it will do. (Dillard, 1989, pp. 26-27)

Readability of the Manuscript

Before beginning the process of writing a proposal, consider how you will enhance the readability of it for other people. It is important to use consistent terms, a staging and foreshadowing of ideas, and coherence built into the plan.

- Use *consistent terms* throughout the manuscript. Use the same term each time a variable is mentioned in a quantitative study or a central phenomenon is mentioned in a qualitative study. Refrain from using synonyms for these terms, a problem that causes the reader to work at understanding the meaning of ideas and to monitor subtle shifts in meaning.
- Consider how narrative "thoughts" of different types guide a reader. This concept was advanced by Tarshis (1982), who recommended that writers stage "thoughts" to guide readers. These were of four types:

  1. Umbrella thoughts—the general or core ideas one is trying to get across
  2. Big thoughts—specific ideas or images that fall within the realm of umbrella thoughts and serve to reinforce, clarify, or elaborate upon the umbrella thoughts
  3. Little thoughts—ideas or images whose chief function is to reinforce big thoughts
  4. Attention or interest thoughts—ideas whose purposes are to keep the reader on track, organize ideas, and keep an individual's attention

Beginning researchers, I believe, struggle most with "umbrella" thoughts and "attention" thoughts. A manuscript may include too many "umbrella" ideas, with the content not sufficiently detailed to support large ideas. A clear mark of this problem is a continual shift of ideas from one major idea to another in a manuscript. Often, one will see short paragraphs, like those found written by journalists in newspaper articles. Thinking in terms of a detailed narrative to support "umbrella" ideas may help this problem. Goldberg (1986) not only talks about the power of detail but also illustrates it using the example of the Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., where names—even middle names—of 50,000 killed American soldiers are listed.

Lack of "attention" thoughts also derails a good narrative. Readers need "road signs" to guide them from one major idea to the next (Chapters 5 and 6 of this book discuss major road signs in research, such as purpose statements and research questions and hypotheses). Readers need to see the overall organization of the ideas through introductory paragraphs and to be told, in a summary, the most salient points they should remember.

- Use *coherence* to add to the readability of the manuscript. In presenting the topics in this book, I introduce components of the research process to present a systematic whole. For example, the repetition of variables in the title, the purpose statement, the research questions, and the review of the literature headings in a quantitative project illustrates this thinking. This approach builds coherence into the study. Furthermore, emphasizing a consistent order of variables whenever independent and dependent variables are mentioned in quantitative studies also reinforces this idea.

On a more detailed level, coherence builds through connecting sentences and paragraphs in the manuscript. Zinsser (1983) suggests that every sentence should be a logical sequel to the one that preceded it. A useful exercise is the "hook-and-eye" exercise (Wilkinson, 1991) for connecting thoughts from sentence to sentence (or paragraph to paragraph).

The following passage from a draft of a student's paper shows a high level of coherence. It comes from the introductory section to a draft of a qualitative dissertation project about at-risk students. In this passage, I have taken the liberty of drawing "hooks" and "eyes" to connect the ideas from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph. The objective of the "hook-and-eye" exercise (Wilkinson, 1991) is to connect major thoughts of each sentence and paragraph. If such a connection

cannot easily be made, the written passage lacks coherence and the writer needs to add transitional words, phrases, or sentences to establish a clear connection.

Example 3.5 *A Sample Passage Illustrating the Hook-and-Eye Technique*

They sit in the back of the room not because they want to but because it was the place designated to them. Invisible barriers that exist in most classrooms divide the room and separate the students. At the front of the room are the "good" students who wait with their hands poised ready to fly into the air at a moment's notice. Slouched down like giant insects caught in educational traps, the athletes and their following occupy the center of the room. Those less sure of themselves and their position within the room sit in the back and around the edge of the student body.

The students seated in the outer circle make up a population whom for a variety of reasons are not succeeding in the American public education system. They have always been part of the student population. In the past they have been called disadvantaged, low achieving, retards, impoverished, laggards and a variety of other titles (Cuban, 1989; Presseisen, 1988). Today they are called students-at-risk. Their faces are changing and in urban settings their numbers are growing (Hodgkinson, 1985).

In the past eight years there has been an unprecedented amount of research on the need for excellence in education and the at-risk student. In 1983 the government released a document entitled *A Nation At-Risk* that identified problems within the American education system and called for major reform. Much of the early reform focused on more vigorous courses of study and higher standards of student achievement (Barber, 1987). In the midst of attention to excellence, it became apparent the needs of the marginal student were not being met. The question of what it would take to guarantee that all students have a fair chance at a quality education was receiving little attention (Hamilton, 1987; Toch, 1984). As the push for excellence in education increased, the needs of the at-risk student became more apparent.

Much of the early research focused on identifying characteristics of the at-risk student (OERI, 1987; Barber & McClellan, 1987; Hahn, 1987; Rumberger, 1987), while others in educational

research called for reform and developed programs for at-risk students (Mann, 1987; Presseisen, 1988; Whelage, 1988; Whelege & Lipman, 1988; Stocklinski, 1991; and Levin, 1991). Studies and research on this topic have included experts within the field of education, business and industry as well as many government agencies.

Although progress has been made in identifying characteristics of the at-risk students and in developing programs to meet their needs, the essence of the at-risk issue continues to plague the American school system. Some educators feel that we do not need further research (DeBlois, 1989; Hann, 1987). Others call for a stronger network between business and education (DeBlois, 1989; Mann, 1987; Whelege, 1988). Still others call for total restructuring of our education system (OERI, 1987; Gainer, 1987; Levin, 1988; McCune, 1988).

After all the research and studies by the experts, we still have students hanging on to the fringe of education. The uniqueness of this study will shift the focus from causes and curriculum to the student. It is time to question the students and to listen to their responses. This added dimension should bring further understanding to research already available and lead to further areas of reform. Dropouts and potential dropouts will be interviewed in depth to discover if there are common factors within the public school setting that interfere with their learning process. This information should be helpful to both the researcher who will continue to look for new approaches in education and the practitioner who works with these students everyday.

Voice, Tense, and "Fat"

From working with broad thoughts and paragraphs, I move on to the level of writing sentences and words. In Franklin's (1986) terms, one is now working at the "polish" level of writing, a stage addressed late in the writing process. One can find an abundance of writing books about rules and principles to follow concerning good sentence construction and word choice. Wolcott (2001), for example, talks about honing editorial skills to eliminate unnecessary words, delete the passive voice, scale down qualifiers, eliminate overused phrases, and reduce excessive quotations, use of italics, and parenthetical comments. The following

additional ideas about active voice, verb tense, and reduced "fat" can strengthen and invigorate scholarly writing.

- Use the active voice as much as possible in scholarly writing. According to Ross-Larson (1982), "if the subject acts, the voice is active. If the subject is acted on, the voice is passive" (p. 29). In addition, a sign of passive construction is some variation of an auxiliary verb, such as "was." Examples include "will be," "have been," and "is being." Writers can use the passive construction when the person acting can logically be left out of the sentence and when what is acted on is the subject of the rest of the paragraph (Ross-Larson, 1982).
- Use strong verbs and verb tenses appropriate for the passage in the study. Lazy verbs are those that lack action ("is" or "was," for example) or those used as adjectives or adverbs.
- A common practice is to use the past tense to review the literature and report results of a study. The future tense would be appropriate at all other times in research proposals and plans. For completed studies, use the present tense to add vigor to a study, especially in the introduction.
- Expect to edit and revise drafts of a manuscript to trim excess words, the "fat," from the prose. Writing multiple drafts of a manuscript is standard practice for most writers. The process typically consists of writing, reviewing, and editing. In the editing process, trim excess words from sentences, such as piled-up modifiers, excessive prepositions, and "the . . . of" constructions (for example, "the study of"), that add unnecessary verbiage to a study (Ross-Larson, 1982). I was reminded of the unnecessary prose that comes into writing by the example mentioned by Bunge (1985):

> Nowadays you can almost see bright people struggling to reinvent the complex sentence before your eyes. A friend of mine who is a college administrator every now and then has to say a complex sentence, and he will get into one of those morasses that begins, "I would hope that we would be able . . ." He never talked that way when I first met him, but even at his age, at his distance from the crisis in the lives of younger people, he's been to some extent alienated from easy speech. (Bunge, 1985, p. 172)

Begin studying good writing that uses qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs. In good writing, the eye does not pause and the

mind does not stumble on a passage. In this present book, I have attempted to draw examples of good prose from human and social science journals such asthe *American Journal of Sociology, The American Cartographer, Journal of Applied Psychology, Administrative Science Quarterly, American Educational Research Journal, Sociology of Education,* and *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship.* In the qualitative area, good literature serves to illustrate clear prose and detailed passages. Individuals who teach qualitative research assign classical literature such as *Moby Dick, The Scarlet Letter,* and *The Bonfire of the Vanities* as reading assignments in qualitative courses (Webb & Glesne, 1992). Journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry, Qualitative Research, Symbolic Interaction, Qualitative Family Research,* and *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* represent good, scholarly journals to examine. In mixed methods research, examine journals that report studies with combined qualitative and quantitative data, including many social science journals, such as *Field Methods.* Examine the numerous journal articles cited in the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002).

ETHICAL ISSUES TO ANTICIPATE

In addition to conceptualizing the writing process for a proposal, researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies. As mentioned earlier, writing about these issues is required in making an argument for a study as well as being an important topic in the format for proposals.

In the literature, ethical issues arise in discussions about codes of professional conduct for researchers and in commentaries about ethical dilemmas and their potential solutions (Punch, 1998). Many national associations have published standards or codes of ethics on their Web sites for professionals in their fields. For example, see

- The American Psychological Association's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct,* written in 1992, available at www.apa.org/ethics/code.html
- The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics, adopted in 1997 and available at www.asanet.org/members/ecoderev.html
- The American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics, approved in June 1998, available at www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm

- The American Educational Research Association Ethical Standards, updated in November 2001, available at www.aera.net/about/policy/_vti_cnf/ethics.htm
- The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses–Provisions, approved in June 2001, and available at www.ana.org/ethic/chcode.htm

In addition to these codes of ethical practice, writers detail ethical dilemmas for investigators and inquirers (e.g., see Berg, 2001; Punch, 1998; and Sieber, 1998). These issues apply to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. Moreover, proposal writers need to anticipate them and specify them in their research plans. In the chapters to follow, in Part II, I refer to ethical issues in many stages of the process of research. By foreshadowing them at this point, I hope to encourage the proposal writer to actively design them into sections of a proposal. Although this discussion will not comprehensively cover all ethical issues, it addresses major ones. These issues arise primarily in specifying the research problem (Chapter 4), identifying a purpose statement and research questions (Chapters 5 and 6), and collecting, analyzing, and writing up the results of data (Chapters 9, 10, and 11).

Ethical Issues in the Research Problem Statement

In writing an introduction to a study, the researcher identifies a significant problem or issue to study and presents a rationale for its importance. During the identification of the research problem, it is important to identify a problem that will benefit individuals being studied. A core idea of action/participatory research is that the inquirer will not further marginalize or disempower the study participants. To guard against this, proposal developers can conduct a pilot project to establish trust and respect with the participants so that inquirers can detect any marginalization before the proposal is developed and the study begun.

Ethical Issues in the Purpose Statement and Research Questions

In developing the purpose statement or the central intent and questions for a study, proposal developers need to convey the purpose of the study that will be described to the participants. Deception occurs when participants understand one purpose for a study but the researcher has

a different purpose in mind. It is also important for researchers to specify the sponsorship of their study. For example, in designing cover letters for survey research, sponsorship will be an important element in establishing trust and credibility for a mailed survey instrument.

Ethical Issues in Data Collection

As researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants and the sites for research. Many ethical issues arise during this stage of the research.

- Do not put participants at risk, and respect vulnerable populations. Researchers need to have their research plans reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on their college and university campuses. IRB committees exist on campuses because of federal regulations that provide protection against human rights violations. For a researcher, the IRB process requires assessing the potential for risk, such as physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm (Sieber, 1998) to participants in a study. Also, the researcher needs to consider the special needs of vulnerable populations, such as minors under the age of 19, mentally incompetent participants, victims, persons with neurological impairments, pregnant women or fetuses, prisoners, and individuals with AIDS. Investigators file research proposals containing the procedures and information about the participants with the IRB campus committee so that the boards can review the extent to which the research being proposed subjects individuals to risk. In addition to this proposal, the researcher develops an *informed consent form* for participants to sign before they engage in the research. This form acknowledges that participants' rights have been protected during data collection. Elements of this consent form include the following (Creswell, 2002):
  - The right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time, so that the individual is not being coerced into participation
  - The purpose of the study, so that individuals understand the nature of the research and its likely impact on them
  - The procedures of the study, so that individuals can reasonably expect what to anticipate in the research

  - The right to ask questions, obtain a copy of the results, and have their privacy respected
  - The benefits of the study that will accrue to the individual
  - Signatures of both the participant and the researcher agreeing to these provisions

- Other procedures during data collection involve gaining the permission of individuals in authority (e.g., gatekeepers) to provide access to study participants at research sites. This often involves writing a letter that identifies the extent of time, the potential impact, and the outcomes for the research.

- Researchers need to respect research sites so that the sites are left undisturbed after a research study. This requires that inquirers, especially in qualitative studies involving prolonged observation or interviewing at a site, be cognizant of their impact and minimize their disruption of the physical setting. For example, they might time visits so that they intrude little on the flow of activities of participants.

- In experimental studies, investigators need to collect data so that all participants, and not only an experimental group, benefit from the treatments. This issue may require providing *some* treatment to all groups or staging the treatment so that ultimately all groups receive the beneficial treatment.

- Means need to be considered for reciprocating between the researcher and the participants. In some research situations, power can easily be abused and participants can be coerced into a project. Involving individuals collaboratively in the design and research questions prior to data collection, as well as actively seeking their support during all phases of the research, can help reduce these issues.

- Researchers also need to anticipate the possibility of harmful information being disclosed during the data collection process. For example, a student may discuss parental abuse or prisoners may talk about an escape. In these situations, the ethical code for researchers is to protect the privacy of the participants and to convey this protection to all individuals involved in a study.

Ethical Issues in the Data Analysis and Interpretation

When the researcher analyzes and interprets both quantitative and qualitative data, issues emerge that call for good ethical decisions. In anticipating a research study, consider the following:

- How the study will protect the anonymity of individuals, roles, and incidents in the project. For example, in survey research, investigators disassociate names from responses during the coding and recording process. In qualitative research, inquirers use aliases or pseudonyms for individuals and places to protect identities.

- Data, once analyzed, need to be kept for a reasonable period of time (e.g., Sieber, 1998, recommends 5-10 years). Investigators should then discard data so that it does not fall into the hands of other researchers who might appropriate it for other purposes.

- Who owns the data once it is collected and analyzed also can be an issue that splits research teams and divides individuals against each other. A proposal might mention this issue of ownership and discuss how it will be resolved, such as through the development of a clear understanding between the researcher, the participants, and possibly the faculty advisors. Berg (2001) recommends the use of "personal agreements" to designate ownership of research data. An extension of this idea is to guard against sharing the data with individuals not involved in the project.

- In the interpretation of data, researchers need to provide an accurate account of the information. This accuracy may require "debriefing" between the researcher and participants in quantitative research (Berg, 2001). It may include, in qualitative research, using one or more of the strategies (see validation strategies in Chapter 10) to check the accuracy of the data with participants or across different data sources.

Ethics in Writing and Disseminating the Research

The ethical issues do not stop with data collection and analysis; they also extend into the actual writing and dissemination of the final research report. For example:

- Discuss how the research will not use language or words that are biased against persons because of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.) (American Psychological Association, 2001) suggests three guidelines. First, present unbiased language at an appropriate level of specificity (e.g., rather than say, "the client's behavior was typically male," state, "the client's behavior was _____ [specify]"). Second, use language that is sensitive to labels (e.g., rather than "400 Hispanics," indicate "400 Mexicans, Spaniards, and Puerto Ricans"). Third, acknowledge participants in a study (e.g., rather than "subject," use the word "participant," and rather than "woman doctor" use "doctor" or "physician").

- Other ethical issues in writing the research will involve the potential of suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet a researcher's or an audience's needs. These fraudulent practices are not accepted in professional research communities, and they constitute scientific misconduct (Neuman, 2000). A proposal might contain a proactive stance by the researcher to not engage in these practices.

- In planning a study, it is important to anticipate the repercussions of conducting the research on certain audiences and not to misuse the results to the advantage of one group or another.

- Finally, it is important to release the details of the research with the study design so that readers can determine for themselves the credibility of the study (Neuman, 2000). The emphasis on detailed procedures for quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research will be emphasized in the chapters to follow.

SUMMARY

It is helpful to consider how to write a research proposal before actually engaging in the process. Consider the nine arguments advanced by Maxwell (1996) as the key elements to include and then use one of the four topical outlines provided to craft a thorough qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods proposal.

During the writing process, begin putting words down on paper to think through ideas, establish the habit of writing on a regular basis, and use strategies such as applying consistent terms, different levels of narrative thoughts, and coherence to strengthen writing. Writing in the active voice, using strong verbs, and revising and editing will help as well.

Before writing the proposal, it is useful to consider the ethical issues that can be anticipated and described in the proposal. These issues relate to all phases of the research process. With consideration for participants, research sites, and potential readers, studies can be designed that contain ethical practices.

WRITING EXERCISES

Writing Exercises

1. Develop a topical outline for a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods proposal. Include the major topics in the examples included in this chapter.
2. Locate a journal article that reports qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research. Examine the introduction to the article, and, using the "hook-and-eye" method illustrated in this chapter, identify the deficiencies in the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph.
3. Consider one of the following ethical dilemmas that may face a researcher. Describe ways you might anticipate the problem and actively address it in your research proposal.
    a. A prisoner you are interviewing tells you about a potential breakout at the prison that night. What do you do?
    b. A researcher on your team copies sentences from another study and incorporates them into the final written report for your project. What do you do?
    c. A student collects data for her project from several individuals she has interviewed in families in your city. After the fourth interview, she tells you that she has not received approval for the project from the Institutional Review Board. What do you do?

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Maxwell, J. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Joe Maxwell provides a good overview of the proposal development process for qualitative research that, in many ways, is applicable to quantitative and mixed methods research as well. He states that a proposal is an argument to conduct a study and presents an example that describes nine necessary steps. Moreover, he includes a complete qualitative proposal and analyzes it as an illustration of a good model to follow.

Sieber, J. E. (1998). Planning ethically responsible research. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *Handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 127-156). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Joan Sieber discusses the importance of ethical planning as integral to the process of research design. In this chapter, she provides a comprehensive review of many topics related to ethical issues, such as Institutional Review Boards, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, as well as elements of research risk and vulnerable populations. Her coverage is extensive, and her recommendations for strategies are numerous.

Wolcott, H. F. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Harry Wolcott, an educational ethnographer, has compiled an excellent resource guide addressing numerous aspects of the writing process in qualitative research. It surveys techniques useful in getting started in writing; developing details; linking with the literature, theory, and method; tightening up with revising and editing; and finishing the process by attending to such aspects as the title and appendices. For all aspiring writers, this is an essential book, regardless of whether a study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.