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MAKING A LITERATURE REVIEW

Rainier Almazan

A literature review is a fundamental step in doing any research. This article explains what a literature review is, and provides some guidelines on how to do one.

WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

A literature review is both an *activity* and a *written product*. It is an activity because you need to read materials about the phenomenon—in our case land issues—and review them. And after reading everything you need to learn about land reform, you need to convert your research into a written document.

Moreover, it puts current research efforts into perspective. It serves as a foundation for consolidating existing knowledge about the problem, and suggests appropriate ways to expand what is already known.

A literature review is extremely important *before* you start collecting data. It will prevent you from just reinventing the wheel—as well as studying something someone else has already studied.

To avoid that, you need to:

- ➞ Learn about history, origin, scope of the problem
- ➞ Learn about methodologies used successfully to study related research questions
- ➞ Learn what answers already exist for general research questions
- ➞ Identify variables and indicators that need to be measured and learn what methods are already available to measure them
- ➞ Decide the best way to acquire data
- ➞ Refine research questions and propose answers to them in the form of hypotheses
- ➞ Select appropriate statistical analyses to be used

And *after* you collect data, you need a literature review to:

- Attempt to explain differences between current findings and existing knowledge
- Identify ways in which current findings are consistent with and support existing knowledge
- Specify how current findings advance knowledge
- Develop theories and formulate hypotheses
- Help identify areas where further research is needed—and where action is needed.

WHERE CAN I FIND LITERATURE SOURCES?

- Academic journals
- Books
- Theses and dissertations
- Government documents
- Private sources (non-profit organizations or for-profit organizations): annual reports, business reports, project/program documents
- Newspapers and magazines
- *Reliable* internet sources (remember that not everything you see and read on the internet is reliable!)
- Photos, videos, audio materials

HOW DO I KNOW IF A LITERATURE REVIEW IS ADEQUATE?

- Reasonable number of references: usually 15–20.
You don't need 100 references. But of course, *if* you are industrious and have the time, you can go beyond the 20.
- The literature you should be studying should be recent—with the exception of classic literature.





What is recent? The materials should be within 10 years from the time the study is conducted. For example, if you are going to conduct research on land reform today, then the materials that need to be studied should be those materials published within the past 10 years. However, the classics, such as the works of Max Weber or Karl Marx, whose ideas are still valid today, are important references that can and should be read regardless of era.

➔ Does it focus on research topic?

➔ Does it describe differing viewpoints?

It is important you do not just do a review of literature that supports only your premise or your views. Some people only review materials that support their own position, which is not the correct way of doing research. You need to study both what is against and what is for your ideas or your hypothesis.

➔ Does it describe the methods used?

PLAN YOUR SEARCH

One of the most common weaknesses of students is *the failure to plan their search*. They go to the library without any clear plan. Then they get overwhelmed by the amount of literature available in the library and on the internet—and do not finish their work.

You must plan accordingly:

➔ Decide on the type of review, its extensiveness, and the types of materials to include.

➔ Key: systematic and organized

➔ Set parameters:

⊙ Schedule. How much time do you really have? As activists, we are engaged in research, and many other activities. We are all busy, so our research must be clearly time-bound.

⊙ Minimum number of literature/materials to review.

PLAN YOUR SEARCH (con't.)

- ⊙ Scope. How many libraries or knowledge centers you will visit, etc. This will also depend on your schedule and financial resources.
- ➔ Decide how to record bibliographic citation for each reference and how to take notes, e.g. notebook, 3x5 card, computer file.

MAKING A LITERATURE REVIEW

- ➔ Critically review each article in terms of key concepts, findings and/or methodologies and viewpoints stressed
- ➔ Summarize and compare the articles with one another. Note similarities and differences—and the bases for these differences.
- ➔ Make bibliographic notes [Figure 1]. This will make things easier for you when you begin writing up your research.
- ➔ Prioritize articles according to their direct connection to your research topic.
- ➔ Integrate the various articles into one review article, which will form the core of your Review of Literature.





EXAMPLES OF NOTES ON AN ARTICLE—FULL CITATION ON A BIBLIOGRAPHIC CARD AND A NOTE CARD

FULL CITATION ON BIBLIOGRAPHY CARD

Pierce, John C., M. N. Steger, N. P. Lovrich, P. S. Steef, 1988. "Public Information on Acid Rain in Canada and the United States." *Social Science Quarterly* 96:193–202.

NOTE CARD

Pierce et al. 1988

TOPICS Factors that shape people's knowledge about public issues. Acid Rain, Self-interest. U.S. and Canada.

Based on a prior study, the researchers note that education alone does not lead to knowledge about a public policy issue. Knowledge can be based on characteristics of the individual (e.g. gender, income, education), which works in general regardless of a specific policy, or on motivation due to the relevance of a policy for individual self-son's motivation to acquire information. They looked at one policy, acid rain, and asked: Does motivation affect knowledge in different settings—Canadian culture, which is more collectivistic and where people are the victims of U.S. policy and the individualistic U.S. culture?

Hypotheses People acquire knowledge about a public issue when they perceive it affecting their self-interest.

Method The authors mailed questionnaires to samples of 1,000 people living in Michigan and 1,000 in Ontario. A little over half were completed and returned. They measured knowledge about the issue in four ways. They also looked at motivational variables. Including general characteristics and the personal sensitivity of relevance of the issue.

Findings Using statistics and percentaged tables, they found that motivational factors (e.g., personal sensitivity and relevance) led to greater knowledge of the acid rain issue than general characteristics, although both had some effect. Motivation or personal relevance was stronger in Canada, where the national context heightened sensitivity.

The first part is a full citation on a bibliography card; while the second part is about the content of the article: summary, hypothesis, method, and findings. Don't make life difficult for yourself—adopt the good practice of making bibliographic notes.

The sample bibliographic card and note card were taken from:
Neuman, W.L. (2003) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. USA: Allyn & Bacon, Incorporated.

RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH AND DESIGN

Rainier Almazan

This article presents a very simple and easy-to-understand introduction to the different categories of research, as well as how to begin designing your research.

TYPES OF RESEARCH

1. BASIC vs. APPLIED

- ➔ Driven by researcher interests
- ➔ Unrelated to immediate practical issues/concerns

- ➔ Driven by organizational/community interests
- ➔ Closely related to immediate practical issues/concerns

In our case, we are doing applied research, as our research is driven by the land rights agenda. Our research is or will be practically applicable to our present work. Basic researchers will not be concerned with practical purposes per se.

2. QUALITATIVE vs. QUANTITATIVE

- ➔ Stresses inductive logic
- ➔ Seeks to understand human experience from the perspective of those who experience them
- ➔ It emphasizes words like subjective, relative, or contextual
- ➔ Data collection is less structured and standardized
- ➔ Sample representativeness of a population is not a major concern

- ➔ Stresses use of deductive (linear) logic towards a conclusion
- ➔ Careful measurement of variables
- ➔ Relatively large, representative case samples
- ➔ Control of other variables through randomization or other methods
- ➔ Standardized data collection methods
- ➔ Statistical analyses of data





Data collection for qualitative research is less standardized. Your sample does not have to be representative or random. For as long as your sample population meets certain criteria, they can be interviewed. Whereas for quantitative research, you will need to use standard questionnaires and random sampling. You will use statistical tools for analyses.

One strength of *quantitative research*, especially if you use it correctly and use random selection, is that you can actually project the conclusions onto the whole population. You can draw generalizations about the behavior of a particular population based on a small sample.

For example, a group that studies electoral behavior in a certain electorate can project with some accuracy whom the people will vote for president if the election is held now. In contrast, the power of *qualitative research* is that it allows you to study something in greater depth. Rather than simple yes or no questions, you can probe. However, you can only make conclusions about the behavior of your interviewees, you cannot project them onto the larger population.

Qualitative and quantitative methods for research are usually presented as an either-or debate. There are certainly researchers who believe the qualitative approach is superior to the quantitative approach, just as there are some who suggest that quantitative methods are better than their qualitative counterparts. In reality, the approaches are not only *complementary*, but are also often two sides of the same coin.

Data collected, presented, and analyzed in a quantitative manner are not by nature any more reliable than qualitative information. The assumptions and biases of the researcher inform both types of research, with one type often convertible to the other. Moreover, all quantitative data are based on qualitative judgments; and all qualitative data can be described and manipulated numerically.

But it does not have to be either-or. Quantitative and qualitative methods can go together, strengthening each other. If you have the resources, do both.

3. EXPLORATORY vs. EXPLANATORY

- ➔ Small sample of participants
- ➔ Usually not concerned with representativeness
- ➔ Data collection uses flexible instruments with qualitative properties

- ➔ Larger samples of participants
- ➔ Concerned with representativeness
- ➔ Instruments are typically quantitative
- ➔ Meets standards of validity and reliability

We use exploratory research to learn more about a particular subject. It can also serve as a preliminary activity to explanatory research—where we seek to find out even more about the topic so as to explain and draw conclusions.

STEPS IN RESEARCH

1. Choosing the question.

This is usually the most difficult part. We would need to work backwards—reviewing past studies about the question or topic, before defining the question.

2. Designing the research methods.

Designing the research method is both art and science. It is science because you need to follow certain protocols for your research to become valid, while it is art because it requires practice. Note that each country has its own systems for collecting data, so it is difficult to compare one dataset with a dataset from another country. For example, various definitions exist for your indicators. Those classified as “landless” in Bangladesh may not be considered “landless” in Nepal. Or they may be called “land poor”. To produce comparable data, we must gather data using the same methods.

3. Collecting the data

The first question is: What data are available? What data do we need to generate ourselves? How much work would





this entail? Who should get it—staff, external consultants, student volunteers or the people themselves? For example, in terms of the people to gather data—your decision will affect the kind of data collected. External consultants may generate good data, but may be very expensive to hire. Student volunteers will be relatively affordable, but may come at the expense of data quality.

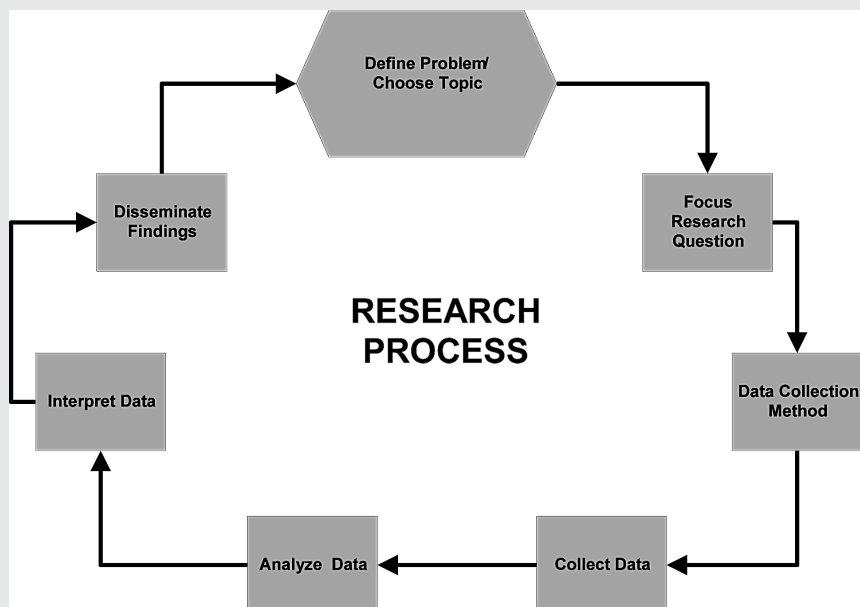
4. Analyzing and interpreting data

This is a tricky step unless you are careful. Many researchers have different perspectives on how to view the data collected. It pays to be sensitive to one's perspective or philosophy when interpreting data.

5. Reporting the results

Since we are doing research as a public service, in order to change the world, we have to disseminate that information and present it in a way that the public understands.

STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS



When you follow these steps, you are making a research design!

Making a research design has similarities with a plan of intervention worked out by a community organizer, or an agriculturist doing field work. Remember that before you do field work, you prepare by coming up with a plan. *A research design is a plan.* It describes how, what, when, why the data will be collected.

Here are some questions you specifically need to ask as you do your research:

- Where and when should the research be conducted?
- What data should be collected?
- From whom or what can the data be best obtained (sources)?
- How should data be collected?
- What variables will need to be measured?
- How should they be measured?
- What other variables, if any, need to be controlled, and how should this be accomplished?
- How should the data collected be organized and analyzed?
- How should research findings be disseminated?
- How much funds do we need to perform the research? How should the funding be allocated?

Don't forget that *the more data you want, the more expensive the research becomes.* Each dataset you need has a corresponding monetary value. You cannot simply get all the data out there. Therefore, you must choose wisely which data you want to get.

Finally, in determining what kind of research is needed, the following questions can guide you as you go about designing your research.

- What are the goals and desired outcomes of the project?
- What are the activities needed to achieve those goals and outcomes?
- What information is needed along the way, at various points in the project cycle, to support those activities?
- How can that information be best obtained?

This is easier said than done. You must really sit down and think about how to go about the plan, how to carry on your research effectively and efficiently so you won't waste time, money, and people's resources. #





QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Rainier V. Almazan

Recall the differences between qualitative and quantitative research in **“RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH AND DESIGN”** (see previous chapter). The two types of research are different in terms of logic (inductive vs. deductive), data collection methods, and focus. The table below highlights other differences between quantitative and qualitative research.

QUANTITATIVE VS. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Starts with test hypothesis	Captures and discovers meaning from data
Concepts are in form of variables	Concepts are in form of themes, motifs, generalizations and taxonomies
Defines and uses measurements	Measures created in ad hoc manner and often specific to individual setting
Data are numerical based on measurement	Data are in form of words: documents, observations, transcripts
Theory is largely causal and deductive	Theory can be causal or non-causal and often inductive
Procedures are standard and replicable	Research procedures are particular and replication is rare
Data analysis—statistics	Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalizations from evidence and organizing data to present coherent picture

Qualitative research takes on a non-positivist perspective. Such a perspective relies on both interpretative and critical approaches.

Interpretative approach is concerned with studying how ordinary people manage their practical affairs in everyday life or how they get things done. It is also concerned with people’s interactions. Plain observation, participant observation, interviewing, case study, grounded theory, and field research use this interpretative approach.

Critical approach is the process of study that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world so that people can change it. Historical analyses, comparative analysis, political economy analyses use the critical approach.

The social context is critical

In qualitative research, the **social** context is critical—it is key to understanding a social phenomenon. This requires taking note of the past and what surrounds the focus of the study—it sets parts of social life in the context of the larger whole. For example, you must describe the situation of poverty in a town in a Negros Occidental before going into details about the local sugar industry.

Moreover, social context is important because the same events or behaviors may actually have different meanings in different cultures or historical eras. Elections in the United States will hold a different significance from elections in the People's Republic of China. Women's rights have come a long way—how we understand women's rights today is vastly different from how they were perceived in colonial times.

Focus on a few cases

Qualitative research focuses on a few cases rather than many, choosing to *go into greater depth and detail* when gathering data. The researcher is *immersed in people's lives and culture*, looking for patterns in the lives, actions and words of people in the context of the complete case as a whole.

To understand more about the difference between qualitative and quantitative research, let's hear about how two researchers would approach the topic of women and gender roles in the home, in terms of focus and methodology. A *quantitative* research surveys 1,000 married couples. Her research finds that women perform the household chore of washing dishes in 70% of the cases involving women who work outside the home, and in 90% of the cases involving full-time housewives.

A *qualitative* researcher observes all chores and activities of 10 married couples for six months. In that time, he or she discovers that if a woman works outside the home, interpersonal tension over doing chores is greater, and the male is likely to assist in small household chores but without taking full responsibility for traditional female tasks.





Researcher integrity

An issue that arises in qualitative research is the question of trust in the qualitative researcher—in terms of objectivity and reliability. How do we check for this?

We suggest the following checking mechanism:

- Triangulation—look for internal consistency
- Historical evidence
- Great volume of detailed written notes
- Supporting evidence such as photos, audio/video recordings, documents, maps, diagrams, etc.
- Awareness of personal biases
- Make a self-disclosure in the study.



ETHICS IN RESEARCH: PLAGIARISM

*This section is culled from **plagiarism.org**, which is an excellent resource on plagiarism and how to avoid it. We cannot emphasize enough how serious an offence plagiarism is. It is highly unethical to plagiarize. Further, plagiarized work erodes our credibility, and therefore undermines our efforts in advocacy. Also, see the related section on **Acknowledging Sources**.*

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to “plagiarize” means:

- ▷ To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another)
- ▷ To use (another’s production) without crediting the source
- ▷ To commit literary theft
- ▷ To present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else’s work and lying about it afterward.

1. But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to Philippine and US law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered *intellectual property*, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

The following are considered plagiarism:

- ➔ Turning in someone else’s work as your own
- ➔ Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- ➔ Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- ➔ Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- ➔ Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- ➔ Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you credit them or not.

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

1. Sources not cited

Plagiarism is not always a black and white issue. The boundary between plagiarism and research is often unclear. Learning to recognize the various forms of plagiarism, especially the more ambiguous ones, is an important step towards effective prevention.

☞ **“The Ghost Writer”**

The writer turns in another’s work, word-for-word, as his or her own.

☞ **“The Photocopy”**

The writer copies significant portions of text straight from a single source, without alteration.

☞ **“The Potluck Paper”**

The writer tries to disguise plagiarism by copying from several different sources, tweaking the sentences to make them fit together while retaining most of the original phrasing.

☞ **“The Poor Disguise”**

Although the writer has retained the essential content of the source, he or she has altered the paper’s appearance slightly by changing key words and phrases.

☞ **“The Labor of Laziness”**

The writer takes the time to paraphrase most of the paper from other sources and make it all fit together, instead of spending the same effort on original work.

☞ **“The Self-Stealer”**

The writer “borrows” generously from his or her previous work, violating policies concerning the expectation of originality adopted by most academic institutions.





2. Sources cited (but still plagiarized!)

☞ “The Forgotten Footnote”

The writer mentions an author’s name for a source, but neglects to include specific information on the location of the material referenced. This often masks other forms of plagiarism by obscuring source locations.

☞ “The Misinformer”

The writer provides inaccurate information regarding the sources, making it impossible to find them.

☞ “The Too-Perfect Paraphrase”

The writer properly cites a source, but neglects to put in quotation marks text that has been copied word-for-word, or close to it. Although attributing the basic ideas to the source, the writer is falsely claiming original presentation and interpretation of the information.

☞ “The Resourceful Citer”

The writer properly cites all sources, paraphrasing and using quotations appropriately. The catch? The paper contains almost no original work! It is sometimes difficult to spot this form of plagiarism because it looks like any other well-researched document.

☞ “The Perfect Crime”

Well, we all know it doesn’t exist. In this case, the writer properly quotes and cites sources in some places, but goes on to paraphrase other arguments from those sources without citation. This way, the writer tries to pass off the paraphrased material as his or her own analysis of the cited material.

Source

What is Plagiarism? (n.d.) Retrieved May 6, 2013, from <http://plagiarism.org/citing-sources/whats-a-citation>. Also retrieved October 29, 2013.

Types of Plagiarism. (n.d.) Retrieved October 29, 2013. http://www.aub.edu.lb/it/acps/Documents/PDF/types_of_plagiarism.pdf

HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH PLAGIARISM?

Discussions from the training¹

➤ **Have a policy on plagiarism.**

Your organization should have a clear policy on plagiarism, which contains procedures and protocols of reviewing. For example, you can have someone like an editor in the organization review your papers. Somebody else should read your papers to prevent possible plagiarism. A clear policy will also make it clear what the sanctions are if any member of the staff is caught plagiarizing. You can also have an orientation among staff on plagiarism, so everyone is aware of what it is.

➤ **Checking for plagiarism.**

These days, copy-pasting is easy. But at the same time, it is also easy to check for plagiarism. Google can do this. Anti-plagiarism software is also available. An easy way to check is to simply randomly select suspected lines or paragraphs, and put it in the Google search bar, and Google will find it for you. Enclosing the suspected lines in quotation marks will refine your search.

➤ **Copyrights.**

A copyright is the legal right granted to the creator of an original work, and is considered a form of intellectual property. You can have a copyright exclusively yours. Having a copyright protects your work. Many NGOs waive their copyrights, and allow others to distribute these for free, for advocacy or educational purposes. For example, ANGOC publications are copyright-free (no need for royalties) but need to be acknowledged properly. If you use it for such purposes, it should be used for *free*. Once you start selling work, you will be charged royalty fees.

EXERCISE

Why do you think students/advocates plagiarize? Identify possible reasons.
Identify possible ways to prevent plagiarism.

¹ Training on enhancing land reform monitoring effectiveness—May 2013, Bangkok.



ETHICS IN RESEARCH

Rainier Almazan

This article explores what ethical considerations should govern our advocacy, particularly in the Land Watch Asia campaign. It acknowledges that though moral standards vary, there are basic principles in research that can help us ensure the integrity of our work.

ETHICS

Ethics—from the Greek word *ethos*, which roughly means “character”—is the study of society’s standards of right and wrong; dealing with moral conduct; duty and judgment; the formal and professional rules of conduct; and moral principles by which a person is guided. Unfortunately, ethical issues are not that straightforward and many ethical considerations are subjective.

Ethics answers questions such as: Who should benefit or suffer from the researcher’s actions? Whose rights should take priority? Does the end (i.e., increased knowledge) justify the means (i.e., methods used to acquire it and its potential for harm)?

Research is confronted with various ethical issues. We will briefly discuss a few here.

Labeling: Subjects, partners, participants

How will you call your subjects—partners? research participants? Each word has some kind of premise. When you call your research respondents “subjects”, there is a premise you are more powerful than the person you are interviewing. If I am the researcher, it implies I am “intellectually superior” than the person. If you use partner, does that mean we are equal in doing the research? Is it a partnership between you and the farmer; or are they just plain participants?

Volunteers

When you undertake research, you may mobilize volunteers. But what is a volunteer? Many people tend to associate the word “volunteer”





with “free labor”. However, this is untrue—not everything about volunteerism is free. It’s not possible to get everything free. You should at least feed your volunteers, cover their transportation and meals. How do you reward volunteers? How do you take into consideration cultural differences, as well as power differentials? Most volunteers are students; this has power implications. For example, how are you going to treat them? Are you going to acknowledge them in your paper or not? Some do, some don’t.

Dual-role relationships

How do you define your independence as a researcher? For instance, in scientific research in the pharmaceutical industry, it happens that doctors who conduct the research are also physicians. What if you find out the medicine or drug you are testing is not working? These mark a conflict of interest.

Deception/covert (secret) observation

Deception is generally not a preferred method. For example, if you want to observe a community in its natural state, if you say you are an observer or researcher, the people in the community may change their behavior. It is essential you don’t tell them you are a researcher. But if you do that, you are deceiving people by not telling the whole truth. That is also an ethical question. Researchers are therefore divided on this issue—it is a judgement call. To the extent possible, you should have full disclosure. But you must be very careful about that.

Moreover, if you are using deception in your research, it should be accompanied by a debriefing. In the case of the Reader’s Digest social experiment—where researchers “lost” 12 wallets in 16 cities around the world, with each wallet containing about \$50, plus the owner’s contact information and family photo. All of the people who returned the wallets were debriefed. The reporting team explained to them what the experiment was all about. You owe it to the subjects of the research to explain it to them.

PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH

The following are some principles of research.

1. Veracity

You are bound to tell the truth even if findings go against the premise or what you want to come out with. Failure to do so will make you lose your credibility.

2. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an active attempt to remove from records elements that might indicate the participants' identity such as by using pseudonyms for subjects and places, different demographics, etc., while anonymity means subjects remain nameless throughout the entire process, even the researcher, such as with some types of self-administered questionnaires.

If you are dealing with child abuse, women in difficult situations, you cannot expose them to the public. You must protect their identity. If something is told to you "in confidence", such as a family secret, will you include that in your research work?

3. Fidelity or promise keeping

You may have promised people in the community that you will help them if they help you in your research. Do not forget your promises and run away after your research is finished.

4. Objectivity and reporting

It is part of the researcher's responsibility to put forth valid data and interpretations. In line with research principles (usefulness, validity), it is the responsibility of researchers to disseminate their findings.





WHY BE ETHICAL?

We can give three excellent reasons why you should be ethical:

1. You will be more respected.
2. You will avoid public humiliation.
3. It's good for your health and conscience—you'll probably sleep better at night.

ARE THERE LIMITS TO WHAT WE CAN STUDY?

It depends on your country's political, cultural, and economic context. In some countries, such as the United States and the Philippines, only a few restrictions exist, so almost anything can be studied as long as it is evidence-based. Still, in many other countries, researchers fear being thrown into jail for covering political, social, or cultural taboos. For example, in some countries, stem cell research that uses human embryos is being restricted.

On balance, most academic, private and public officials recognize that an open and autonomous social scientific community is the best path to generating unbiased, valid knowledge.

INFORMED CONSENT AND IMPLIED CONSENT

Informed consent refers to the individual's express agreement to participate free of fraud, deceit, and duress of similar inducement or manipulation; whereas implied consent is indicated by the action of the participant such as taking time to fill up a self-administered questionnaire or agreeing to participate in the study on tape.

A rule in research is if you interview a person, you need his or her consent. A signed consent is ideal, but if not possible, then implied consent is fine. In participatory research, if you ask a farmer to sign an informed consent form, he or she may not want to sign a document. But

if you specifically ask him or her whether he or she is willing to participate in this research, and he or she agrees, and this is reflected in the minutes of the meeting, then it should be acceptable as consent.

Special considerations must be made when it comes to informed consent. First, be aware of the power differences between participants and the researcher. For example, there may be a poor-rich dichotomy: If I don't give in to your request, you might not give me money.

Second, there is inadvertent and advertent manipulation—through payments and incentives, such as making it a practice to pay people for their responses. Such arrangements destroy the pureness of intentions of future researchers.

Finally, recognize that children and cognitively challenged subjects cannot make a decision. #





GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING FOR RESEARCH

Rainier V. Almazan

INTERVIEWS

- ▷ Method of data gathering that involves a conversation between two or more people (the interviewer and the interviewee) where **questions** are asked by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee.
- ▷ Interviews can be divided into two types, interviews for assessment and interviews for information.
- ▷ Could be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (informal)

SOME TYPES OF NON-RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Type	Purpose
Job/Scholarship interview	Determine the suitability of a job applicant for a given job position; for scholarship; usually confidential
Assistance (therapeutic) interview	Determine the nature of client's problem & recommend course of action/solution; usually confidential
Journalistic interview	To create newsworthy press releases; sources may be confidential
Investigative (forensic) interview	Determine the nature, extent, motive & culpability of a suspect behind a crime & the victim; gather evidence; results may be used in court of law
Entertainment interview	Stimulate interest, enjoyment among listening or viewing audience

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING REQUIRES SKILL IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

- Listening
- Paraphrasing
- Asking questions/probing
- Note taking

Listening

- Sit or stand still where you are
- Look at the speaker, make a note of non-verbal communication
- Listen for basic facts and main ideas
- Listen for attitudes, opinions, or beliefs
- Do not interrupt the speaker
- Use positive, non-verbal communication to prompt the speaker

Paraphrasing

- Repeat your understanding of their comments in your own words
- Ask the speaker if what you have said is correct and ask for any clarifications
- Make sure key points by the speaker are captured
- Ask as a check to verify understanding
- It can be useful to summarize discussions onto flip charts and points during the discussion. This allows participants to correct any misunderstandings, and also to discuss ideas disconnected from the original speaker. This may allow them to be more honest and/ or critical.





Probing

- ▷ **Open probe:** Questions that begin with how, what, which, when, and who. Effective to encourage responsiveness and reduce defensiveness.
- ▷ **Compare and contrast:** Questions that ask the other person to look for and discuss similarities or differences. These types of questions help the responder develop and express ideas while allowing the interviewer to steer the direction of the interview.
- ▷ **Extension:** A question that builds on information already provided.
- ▷ **Clarification:** Questions designed to get further explanation about something already said.
- ▷ **Laundry list:** Techniques where the interviewer provides a list of choice options to the interviewee. This encourages the other person to see beyond a single choice and to state a preference.
- ▷ **Imagining:** Any question which allows the individual to imagine or explore an alternative reality by giving themselves a different viewpoint or perspective.

Note taking

- ▷ It is important to capture the information from the interview as accurately as possible. Material from an audio recording can be used later to fill in gaps. Modern and compact recording gadgets such as MP3 recorders can be very useful.
- ▷ Video documentation can also be useful to record not only the proceedings of the interview but also to analyze non-verbal reactions and behavior of the interviewee; or in the case of the focus group discussion (FGD), the interaction of the participants.

INTERVIEWER BIAS

Type	Nature/Description
Respondent error	→ Forgetting, embarrassment, misunderstanding or lying by respondent, or influenced by interviewer appearance, demeanor, etc.
Interviewer sloppiness	→ Contacting wrong respondent, misreading a question, omitting question, reading questions in wrong order, recording wrong answer, misunderstanding respondent
Intentional subversion	→ Purposeful alteration of answers, omission or rewording of questions, choice of alternative respondent
Failure to probe	→ Failure to probe general or vague answers





GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS¹

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WHAT IS A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION?

- ▷ A carefully planned group discussion designed to obtain perceptions of a defined area of interest in a permissive and non- threatening environment;
- ▷ Group participants can influence each other by responding to ideas and peception;
- ▷ Conducted with approximately 7–10 participants by a skilled interviewer-moderator.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL GOAL OF FGD AND ROLE OF THE MODERATOR?

- ➔ The goal is to obtain as much useful information as possible. Confidentiality helps. Group interaction can bring out additional information.
- ➔ The moderator stimulates the group discussion and keeps it on course, as necessary. S/he should not take a position on anything, but should listen.
- ➔ Every response is considered valid. There is no attempt to support or criticize any response, resolve any issue, address any individual problem or concern or reach any conclusion. Both concrete information and opinions are relevant (Sherraden, 2001).
- ➔ The moderator should not be concerned if the group is silent at any point. It may be the first time that participants have thought about the issue you are discussing.

1 This section draws heavily from Chronic Poverty Research Centre (2014).

CPRC Methods Toolbox: Retrieved from www.chronicpoverty.org/page/toolbox.

FGD MEMBERSHIP

- ▷ The membership of each group should be as **homogenous** as possible, representing a particular segment of the population.
- ▷ Group members should not be close friends (Sherraden, 2001). The aim is to *“create conditions that promote both comfort and independence of thought, in order to maximize discussion and self-disclosure”* (ibid.).

BASIC SEQUENCE OF FGD EVENTS

1. Formulate the research question.
2. Identify and train moderators.
3. Generate, pre-test, and revise the interview guide.
4. Develop the sampling frame.
5. Decide what incentives to use to encourage people to attend. Choose one or more from: payment, food and drink, childcare, feedback on findings, a token gift, transport to and from the site, etc.
6. Recruit participants—use local contacts to identify participants.
7. Make necessary arrangements (setting, equipment, food and drinks, and childcare).
8. Schedule the groups—check that the sessions are at appropriate times for participants.
9. Introduce everyone—give name badges if it is locally appropriate.
10. Explain the purpose of the focus group, how long it will take, and what feedback they will get. Explain that what participants say will be confidential.
11. Give the participants time alone together to talk, if you think that would be appropriate.
12. Sit everyone down so that everyone can see everyone else.
13. Start the discussion, starting with easy topics first, but make sure that the topics that you most want to cover are towards the beginning of the session.





14. Keep a record—tape recorder (audio tape with multi-directional microphone/MP3 recorder/video cam) and/or any systematic recording form.
15. Prepare data and analyze.
16. Report.

SAMPLING FRAME

- ▷ The sampling frame is developed by identifying key population groups whose opinions you are interested in hearing. This may follow a stakeholder analysis exercise, or some other method of identifying differentiated groups.
- ▷ This may result in the ‘population’ being divided by characteristics such as age, wealth, gender, ethnicity, and health status.
- ▷ The research team will need to decide how many “levels” of each characteristic are meaningful for the purposes of the study (e.g., perhaps four income levels, three for age) and form a group for each level of each important characteristic.

IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

- ↻ Take care when recruiting participants to avoid systematic bias and friendship groups. Systematic (even random) procedures may be desirable.
- ↻ The researcher will need to make initial contact with prospective participants, assure them of confidentiality and then ask them several questions to ensure that they fit within one of the groups that are being recruited for.
- ↻ The researcher will also need to clarify the participants’ expectations and find out whether they are willing to participate in the focus group discussion.
- ↻ In reality, the identification and recruitment function may need to be delegated to local NGOs or research assistants. If this is the case, it is important that they follow guidelines agreed upon by the research team.

DESIGNING THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

- The purpose of the interview guide is to provide an overall direction for the discussion. It is not the equivalent of a survey instrument and is not to be followed in detail or even necessarily in order.
- The guide provides the moderator with topics and issues that are, to the extent possible, to be covered at some point during the group discussion. The guide is loosely structured and does not suggest potential responses (Sherraden, 2001).
- The guide should proceed logically from one topic to another, and from the general to the specific. It is often useful to have broad questions at the start, to enable the moderator to get the feel of the group, and to contextualize later and more specific responses. Questions that are more important to the research agenda should be presented early in the session, if possible (ibid.).
- Questions should be unstructured, unbiased, non-threatening, and very simple.
- Specification should almost always be left to the participants, unless the discussion is decidedly 'off track' at which time the moderator should gently redirect it.
- The guide should not be overly detailed or have too many questions. A good focus group interview guide consists of 20 questions or less.
- Pre-testing the guide with several 'mock' focus groups is essential. The aim is to structure questions so that they are clear and stimulate discussion. Several stages of revisions may be necessary before the guide is ready to be used (ibid.).

FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION AND RECORDING

- Each focus group should have a moderator and a recorder or note taker. It is ideal if the moderator is fluent in the local languages, but if absolutely necessary s/he can work through





a research assistant/ translator. It is essential that the recorder/ note taker is fluent in the local languages, as the discussion may contain nuances which will be missed otherwise.

- Even where local people are fluent in English or the national language, they should be encouraged to hold the discussion in their local mother-tongue.
- The moderator's task is to make participants feel at ease and to facilitate open communication on selected topics by asking broad, often open-ended questions, by probing for additional information when necessary, and by keeping the discussion appropriately focused (See also interviewing techniques).
- The moderator should generally follow the interview guide, but participants should be able to express opinions, experiences, and suggestions and should be allowed to lead the discussion in new directions as long as they are relevant to the research in general (Sherraden, 2001). As a result, the discussion may not follow the interview guide in the order suggested.
- The recorder (audio &/or video) should record the discussion and keep notes of comments in the local language (for later translation, as necessary) on a 'recording instrument' form.
- Ensure that you have the participant's permission to record the session. Make sure the equipment will pick up all voices at the venue. Much detail can be lost by attempting to simultaneously translate into English or another non-local language, and verbatim quotes may be required later for inclusion in reports.
- The 'recording instrument' is similar to the interview guide, except probes are removed and plenty of blank space is inserted between questions to provide room for comments. Because the recorder is unlikely to be able to write down all comments as they occur, it is important to record the session.
- Soon after the session, the recorder will use this tape to fill in key comments and quotations on the recording instrument.

ANALYZING THE TRANSCRIPT THROUGH GROUNDED THEORY

- ▷ Once the transcript is finalized, proceed with its analysis using Grounded Theory Method.
- ▷ The method of grounded theory requires researchers to find key topics in a set of texts in order to develop hypotheses.
- ▷ This inductive method is especially useful when researchers try to discover patterns of behavior or thought in a particular group of people.
- ▷ Grounded theory is one of the most-used methods in analyzing written materials, especially interview/FGD transcripts.
- ▷ In addition, the opposite approach of grounded theory is a deductive one, where researchers first shape hypotheses and test them on a set of texts.
- ▷ Researchers use either approach depending on the research purpose.

PROCESS OF GROUNDED THEORY METHOD

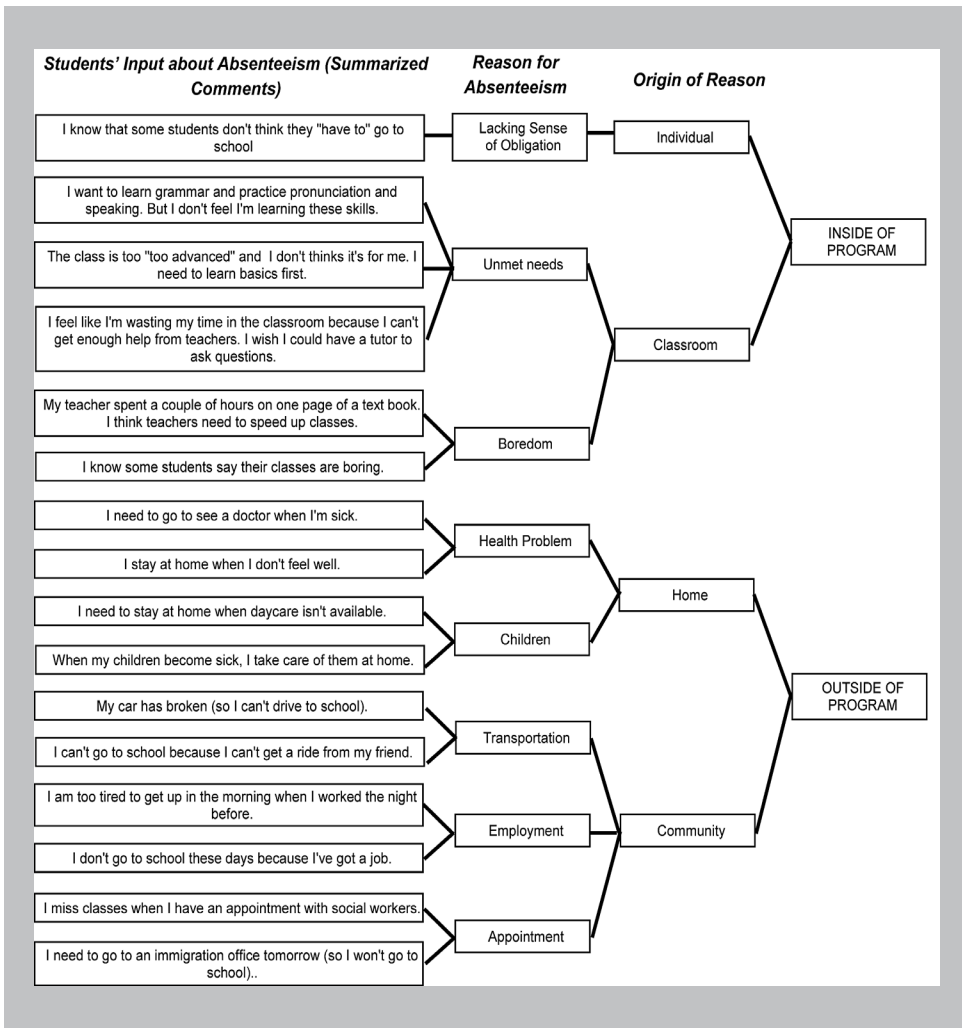
- Read through a sample of texts. Identify topics and highlight them. This marking depends on researchers' ideas and interpretations relevant to their research purposes.
- Categorize topics according to their underlying concepts. The opposite figure shows such categories as lacking sense of obligation, unmet needs, boredom, health problem, childcare, transportation, employment, and appointment as in the case of investigation of adult student absenteeism.
- As categories of topics take shape, note them in the text.
- Think about how categories are related to each other and organize them into theoretical models. Categories are organized by the origins of reason such as individual, classroom, home, and community.
- Compare organized models with the whole texts, especially against those cases that do not fit the models. It is important





to examine negative cases because a complete model should include the full range of variations.

- Confirm the validity of a model by testing it on a new sample. For example, researchers can test their model by presenting it to other students that they did not previously interview.
- Finally, write the results in reports. Besides displaying a model, include quotes from interview transcripts to show the link between the conclusion and original interviews.



GROUNDED THEORY: INTERPRETATIVE PERSPECTIVE

- ▷ In conclusion, this is the main point of grounded theory: “Data do not speak for themselves. You have to develop your ideas about what’s going on, state those ideas clearly, and illustrate them with selected quotes from your respondents.” (Bernard 2002: 473).
- ▷ The format of the figure of causal chain was adapted from the example in *Research Methods in Anthropology* (Bernard 2002: 472). #





NOTES ON PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AS RESEARCH METHOD

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WHAT IS PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

- ▷ A qualitative method with roots in traditional ethnographic research
- ▷ Gathering data while experiencing subjects' social contexts with them
- ▷ People become more comfortable with the researcher, allowing him or her to observe the subjects up close while they go about their daily lives.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION DO YOU GET?

- ↻ The setting: physical environment
- ↻ Gain holistic perspective on social living
- ↻ Understand how things work—understanding how people view the world and how it differs from the researcher
- ↻ Real view of how people behave in their natural setting
- ↻ See guiding principles of organization, sub-groupings or culture
- ↻ Capture social meanings shared by the group
- ↻ To understand how it feels to be part of the group

DISADVANTAGES

- ↻ Time consuming and expensive
- ↻ Need highly trained observers
- ↻ Difficulty in classifying data based on relevance or importance
- ↻ Difficulty in documentation because it relies on memory and diligence of the researcher
- ↻ Researchers' biases might distort data
- ↻ If done incorrectly, might affect the group's behavior
- ↻ Inherently subjective exercise

GETTING ACCESS

- ▷ Among a set of reasonable sites, choose the one easiest to enter
- ▷ Be prepared with written documentation about yourself and your project to back up your identity and purpose.
- ▷ Depend on your local social network. Develop a list of people whom you can tap as local contacts/guides.
- ▷ With organizations, start at the top and work down. Go to the gatekeepers first. Assure them of confidentiality, and don't offer a quid quo pro (exchange deal) that could harm your informants.
- ▷ Do your homework and learn about the setting before you go there. Learn the language if you can. Get comfortable with the physical setting.

DO YOU NEED PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT?

- ▷ It is not necessary to obtain formal informed consent for participant observation.
- ▷ When talking to people informally about the research and your role in it, it is important to emphasize that they are not required to talk to you and that there will be no repercussions if they do not.
- ▷ If your involvement with an individual appears to be progressing beyond participant observation to a formal interview, it is necessary to obtain informed consent before beginning an in-depth interview.



