In addition to the basic data-gathering methods outlined in Chapter 6, the researcher can choose to incorporate several somewhat more specialized or focused methods in the design of a study, as appropriate. Each of those described in this chapter is a full and complete method in and of itself and has a methodological literature explicating its nuances and subtleties. In some instances, the same terminology is used for data collection methods and for modes of reporting or presentation. For example, some speak of “doing case studies” as a way of collecting data, but more often an entire report, even a book, is a case study. Ethnographers talk of “doing an ethnography” to describe their approach to data collection, when, in fact, an ethnography is a written product—ethno = culture, graphy = writing—or an inscription. Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman (Shostak, 1983) is a book that is the life history of one African woman, and the data collection method is called life history, consisting of long-term participant observation and in-depth and ethnographic interviewing. In addition, some methods discussed here could well be folded into one of the basic methods. Specifically, kinesics and proxemics can be categorized as examples of very focused observing. And using arts in data collection can be seen as a form of document analysis. Others could well be discussed as analysis strategies (e.g., grounded theory approaches). We separate them out here for heuristic reasons. Yes, this is confusing!

The discussions that follow are necessarily simplified and brief, as was the preceding, and the list is not exhaustive. The methods discussed, if used, should always be used with the understanding that observation, participant observation, interviewing, and analyzing documents and artifacts are the basic data collection methods for discovering context-laden patterns and understandings. These might well be supplemented by a variety of more specialized methods. Some of these are variations of the primary four. In this chapter, we discuss

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four areas for consideration: (1) using the Internet and digital applications; (2) multimodal inquiry, including use of videos, photographs, and the arts; (3) interaction analysis; and (4) dilemma analysis. Chapter 7 of the fifth edition of this book also included historical analysis. In this most recent edition, we briefly discussed historical approaches in Chapter 6 under “Documents and Historical Analysis”; the curious reader is referred to the previous edition for more detail on this approach. We have chosen here to focus on the Internet and applications, as well as the multimodal methods, as these are emergent and quite fascinating. Interaction analysis (including a focus on classroom analysis, kinesics, and proxemics) and dilemma analysis are not typically discussed in books such as this one; for that reason, we include them here once again. These categories represent just a sampling of specialized methods; there are many others that qualitative researchers might include. However, at the proposal stage, the researcher considering the use of any of these will have to convince the reader that she is knowledgeable about the method and capable of implementing it thoughtfully and ethically in her study.

Using the Internet and Digital Applications

Since the publication of the fifth edition of this book, the social world and the research community have witnessed the continuing explosion of the potential uses of computer software and the Internet for research purposes. There is no question that the Internet and its associated hardware (desktop and laptop computers, handheld devices such as iPhones and iPods, etc.) are continuing to at times radically change the methodologies of social science research. Searching the Internet for resources (now called “Googling”); using software to assist in transcribing audiotapes, to manage citations, and for data analysis; interviewing by means of e-mail, via Skype, or in dedicated chat rooms; and using dialogues and interactions online as sites for study are all now part and parcel of much scholarship in the social sciences and applied fields, as is the integration of technology into narratives, noted in Chapter 6 under “Digital Storytelling.” In Chapter 2, we noted this emerging method as comprising three major strands: (1) the use of the Internet for gathering data; (2) the use of software packages that support transcribing tapes and analysis of data; and (3) the use of Internet ethnography, in which the Internet itself is a site for research.

These uses of computer software and the Internet are reflected in the three editions of The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000, 2005), when one examines the chapters dedicated to the use of computers in qualitative research. The first edition included a chapter titled “Using Computers in Qualitative Research” (Richards & Richards, 1994), in which the authors described various software programs designed to assist in qualitative data management and analysis. The second edition contained a similar chapter, “Software and Qualitative Research” (Weitzman, 2000). The acronym for this developing field is QDA, for qualitative data analysis. The third edition of the Handbook of Qualitative Research includes no chapter on QDA; instead, Markham’s (2005) chapter focuses on Internet ethnography, illustrating the growing focus on the Internet itself as a site for identity representation and construction. The fourth edition of the handbook includes a chapter titled “Qualitative Research and Technology: In the Midst of a Revolution” (Davidson & di Gregorio, 2011) that incorporates strategies and considerations in using technology and various platforms to gather data. Thus, the evolution of using the Internet is apparent from the four editions of this important handbook, with the development of a focus on using the Internet for directly gathering data through
e-mail, dedicated discussion blogs, and social media platforms. The frequency of using these methods has increased dramatically since the third edition of the handbook was published.

**Gathering Data Using Software Applications**

Use of the powers of the Internet for gathering data has mushroomed in recent years. Two distinctions are useful here: Are the data “naturally occurring or researcher-generated”? (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014, p. 70). Researcher-generated data include online surveys using various survey applications, interviews using e-mail or a chat function (such as Skype chat or Google chat), videos and photos taken using any of a number of video-recording devices (including an iPhone), and material gathered from blogs and YouTube, to mention just a few of the applications in this burgeoning area.

Surveying a large sample using applications such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics is now commonplace. While not typically the case, such applications could include only open-ended questions, as would be appropriate in a qualitative study. E-mail is frequently used to follow up interviews with questions for clarification or elaboration, as are technologies that allow for asynchronous “conversations with participants, especially when they are distant from the researcher” (James & Busher, 2006, p. 403). In addition, dedicated discussion blogs or sites create “virtual” focus-group discussions, as noted earlier. Other intriguing developments include applications that can assist in taking field notes (Evernote, for example, or the voice-memo function on an iPhone) and for locating observations in space using a global positioning system (e.g., GPSLogger, an application that allows you to enter spatial data into field notes).

All these uses of such applications present challenges and questions: Are data collected from a discussion blog as rich as, for example, in-person interviews or focus groups? What cues are missing when the data are gathered without actually seeing, sensing, or directly interacting with the participants? What intuitive inferences are lost? Furthermore, how can you protect the anonymity of your sources if you collect data online? And how do you justify a sample that is made up of only people who are computer literate, comfortable with the medium, and have computer access? Despite these challenges, computer-mediated data gathering may offer an alternative to face-to-face interviewing and be most appropriate for certain research projects. Because of technology’s pervasiveness in today’s society, Seymour (2001) explored the experiences of individuals with different kinds of disabilities (paralysis as a result of spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, and amputated arms or hands) in using various hardware and software applications, seeking to understand if and how they felt excluded from the communication channels embodied in the Internet.

Gathering naturally occurring data happens when the researcher focuses her gaze on an online community. As noted previously, the ubiquity of social networking compels many social scientists to attempt to understand this phenomenon. As Paulus et al. note (2014), “discussion groups, blogs, social networking sites and virtual worlds are all sites of interaction that are important for social scientists to understand” (p. 76). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 6, scholars from a number of disciplines have taken up this fascination, focusing on online communities and blogs as sites for their research, giving birth to a new genre of qualitative research—Internet ethnography. In particular, the fields of communication and cultural studies have contributed fascinating studies of the Internet and its wealth of opportunities to reflect changing social identities, communities, and cultures (see, e.g., Baym, 2000; Gatson & Zwerink, 2004; Hine, 2000; Kendall, 2002; Miller & Slater, 2000). Their fascination emerges in
part from the postmodern turn that has examined and problematized the embodied construction of identity. The Internet provides a disembodied site where social identities (gender, social class, sexual orientation, etc.) are hidden. Thus emerges the possibility of studying the construction of identity solely through text. As Markham (2005) notes, “although we recognize that reality is socially negotiated through discursive practice, the dialogic nature of identity and culture is thrown into high relief in computer-mediated environments” (p. 795). A qualitative study could be designed to focus exclusively on a particular blog, as did Gatson and Zwerink (2004) in their studies of sites dedicated to fans of the popular movie *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

As noted in Chapter 2, one major advantage in using the Internet to gather data is that one’s sample can quite literally be global. Computers also provide access to populations uncomfortable with or unwilling to engage in face-to-face interactions. At the proposal stage, the researcher will have to provide a sound rationale for gathering data using the Internet, as with any method, arguing that this strategy flows logically from the conceptual framework and research questions. She will also need to convince the readers that she is capable of using the medium successfully.

**Ethical Issues in Using Software Applications and Internet Sites**

Gathering data using software applications poses one set of ethical issues; using various software applications poses others; and focusing on online communities as research sites brings its own considerations. When gathering data using various applications, there are particular concerns about protecting anonymity and privacy. As interviews and observations are increasingly digitized, the researcher cannot claim, with strict confidence, that the data will be destroyed at the end of the study (a common requirement from institutional review boards). Files stored on a computer are easily hacked into; files that are backed up automatically onto a server are never “destroyed” and remain accessible, despite the researcher’s best intentions. Considering these ethical issues at the proposal stage is critically important. Using applications to transcribe tapes poses challenges similar to those discussed above, and they center on respecting one’s interview partners in how their words are represented. This is not unique to using software but remains an important ethical concern.

Finally, conducting ethnographies of online communities poses a different set of ethical issues. Are all participants informed that research is going on? Have they willingly consented to participate? If they are on the site as avatars (a computer user’s representation of herself, which can be three-dimensional or a photo or text), can the researcher easily request that they be allowed to review the transcripts or analyses prior to her publishing them? And does conducting research change the dynamics of interaction on the site such that the ethnography is really a study of online blog participants’ engagement in a study? Paulus et al. (2014) present a matrix for assessing how and when to use informed consent when gathering data from an online community (see Figure 7.1). They note four dimensions to consider and weigh: (1) whether the online community is more public or more private, (2) whether the topic is more or less sensitive, (3) the degree of interaction with participants using the site, and (4) whether the participants are more or less vulnerable. Judgments about these four dimensions shape the final column: whether consent is necessary or not likely. These dimensions help researchers think through issues around informed consent when working in the increasingly ambiguous Internet environment.
### Multimodal Approaches

**Multimedia Data in the Digital Age**

*By Rachael B. Lawrence*

As qualitative data management systems have advanced in the digital age and the Internet has created new platforms in which people work, learn, and play, qualitative researchers across many disciplines have gained access to a broad array of media that can serve as data sources. These media include photographs, audio and/or video recordings, graphics, sketches, and other artifacts. Qualitative researchers have always gathered data in multimedia contexts; however, data collection traditionally focused on the written and spoken word:

> Clearly, data in the field are by their very nature composed of diverse media (they are likely to include sounds, objects, visual designs, people’s actions and bodies, etc.). Data, then, are necessarily composed of a diverse and shifting range of media. (Dicks, Soyinka, & Coffey, 2006, p. 78)

While researchers have traditionally recorded observations in field notes, it is now possible to collect, store, analyze, and incorporate multimedia into research.

New platforms for management and virtual spaces that allow for the creation of *hypermedia* (interactive text, image, and sound presentations) may make consideration of these data from multimedia sources more feasible for today’s researchers than for their peers in the past (Dicks, Mason, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2005). Any qualitative method or design can incorporate multimedia data, including traditional ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies. However, multimedia data figure prominently in *multimodal inquiry* and *arts-informed inquiry*. 
Multimodal inquiry as a research field uses multimedia and hypermedia sources to analyze communication beyond the written and spoken word and can use qualitative and quantitative methods (see O’Halloran & Smith, 2011, also Jewitt, 2009). Originating in communication studies, this field of inquiry examines body language, what pictures on a pamphlet or textures might be communicating, how people interact with objects in 3-D contexts, and other modes of communication (Norris, 2004; Pink, 2011). Multimodal is sometimes conflated with multimedia data collection, but the term is really specific to the form of information the study is seeking.

Arts-informed inquiry may also use multimedia data but, instead of primarily analyzing communication, seeks meaning making through aesthetic principals and choices. Multimedia data may contribute to the creation of creative literature, performance art, interactive art, collage, music, poetry, or other art forms that are intended to make research findings accessible and interesting to a wider audience (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Pink, 2011; Stanley, 2009). Both multimodal and arts-informed inquiries are interested in communication beyond the traditional written word—in arts-informed inquiry, research efforts contribute to an aesthetic focus, rather than analysis of communication. Table 7.1 examines how a medium may be used in the various research approaches.

**Videos and Photographs**

With the advent of digital cameras, which take not only pictures but also short videos, visually recording events at research sites and participants’ interactions is quite easy. In parallel, the advent of the video-sharing website YouTube makes the uploading and sharing of videos commonplace. These recent developments bring opportunities and ethical risks (discussed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Multimodal</th>
<th>Arts Informed</th>
<th>“Traditional” Qualitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>May be analyzed for gesture, communication occurring in the background, and movement.</td>
<td>May contribute to collage, inspire a painting, be used to create scenery for a play, contribute to a poem, etc.</td>
<td>May provide record of event occurring, show use of a technique, or help identify participants or populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketches</td>
<td>May be used to capture observations of communication in 3-D settings.</td>
<td>May serve as data source if created by participants, may be part of presentation of findings, among others.</td>
<td>May be used to describe the setting of naturalistic inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>May be used for analysis of gesture, background communication, movement, sign language, etc.</td>
<td>May be presentation of findings, recording of events that might be developed into a play, etc. Could be data collection or end product.</td>
<td>May be used to record interviews or events as they occur for later transcription and analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table: Specialized and Focused Data Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Multimodal</th>
<th>Arts Informed</th>
<th>“Traditional” Qualitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graphic objects</td>
<td>May be used for analysis of gesture, background communication, movement, sign language, etc.</td>
<td>May be part of the end product, part of data that contributes to the end product.</td>
<td>Less frequently used in traditional qualitative methods but could be incorporated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio recordings</td>
<td>May be linked in with text to create hypermedia; may be analyzed for tone and inflection.</td>
<td>May be part of data collection leading to creation of a dramatic work or literature, may be final product of a musical work, etc.</td>
<td>May be used to record interviews or events as they occur for later transcription and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Usually not considered in isolation but in the context of other medium above for communication (overt and subtle).</td>
<td>May be used as part of a creative work, part of data collection, or may not be a primary focus, depending on the artist-researcher.</td>
<td>The “lifeblood” of traditional qualitative research; usually field notes and transcripts of interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypermedia</td>
<td>May be used as data source (e.g., “clickable” text on a website) or presentation of data.</td>
<td>May be used as data source (e.g., “clickable” text on a website) or presentation of data.</td>
<td>Although not included as part of traditional qualitative research methods, may be used as data source (e.g., “clickable” text on a website) or presentation of data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Rachel B. Lawrence.

below) and link to a long tradition in anthropology and other social science disciplines, as well as highly respected work in documentary filmmaking. Note their relationship to digital storytelling, discussed in Chapter 6.

Historically, using films and photography constituted the field of **visual anthropology** or **film ethnography**, where interactions and activities were systematically recorded to depict a cultural group or event. The Visual Anthropology Society's website facilitates knowledge sharing within the discipline and provides links to its journal, *Visual Anthropology Review*. The various forms of film can be used for data collection and for organizing, interpreting, and validating qualitative inquiry (Szto, Furman, & Langer, 2005). As Banks (2001) illustrates, films of marriage ceremonies in different social strata in contemporary India, coupled with historical photos and documents, raised key questions in his search for cultural understanding of the interconnections between economics and tradition in handicrafts, dowries, and trousseaux.

The tools of **videos** and **photographs** are used in many disciplines: communication, cultural studies, anthropology, and many applied fields. Scholars focus on visual media as sites for analyses and use the production of visual representation to depict their analyses. From what can be argued as a cultural studies perspective, Hurdley (2007) studied photographs...
DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

on living room mantelpieces as “domestic display” (p. 355), expressive of the “complexities of ‘doing’ home cultures” (p. 355). Videos and photographs have the unique ability to capture visual phenomena in a seemingly objective manner—yet always from the perspective of the filmmaker, just as with other forms of observation. The filmmaker—the observer—must decide what to focus on while recording and then how to interpret the data in that recording (whether on film or in field notes). More recently, photo-elicitation methods have emerged where participants are asked their reactions to and thoughts about photos, videos, graffiti, and other visual content (see Bignante, 2009; Harper, 2002). A PhD student in sports management recently used video elicitation in his small-scale study of highly identified sports fans and their preference for attending sporting events live or viewing from home. He showed a short video clip of a highly identified fan discussing his preferences as a method to elicit his interviewees’ perspectives (Larkin, 2014). Increasingly, these methods are being used in marketing research.

Some photo-elicitation approaches espouse an explicit empowerment ideology (see Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Pies, 2004). Described as a “participatory action research methodology” (Wang & Pies, 2004, p. 95), these methods are used by ordinary community members to document and describe their community by taking photographs. They often blend photography with social action, encouraging community members to build awareness of and commitment to changes in their community’s circumstances. Several websites describing this method are included at the end of this chapter.

Researchers choose to use photographs or videos for their obvious strengths. Visual representations are evocative and can be profoundly moving. Videos and photographs can document rituals and ceremonies, creating a visual record of cultural events to pass on to successive generations. They can document social conflicts (court proceedings, public speeches, protests, Senate sessions, etc.). Videos can be especially valuable for documenting nonverbal behavior and communication patterns such as facial expressions, gestures, and emotions. These visual records can help preserve unique, disappearing, rare, or deeply disturbing events (as with the uprisings in Egypt and other countries that became known as the “Arab Spring”). However, interpretation of the images in film can be problematic, as with other forms of observation and in the use of documents and artifacts. One strategy could be to share the images with participants and invite them to share their interpretations as a form of member validation. This strategy is central to some photo-elicitation methods, where participants narrate the images they have collected. Two excellent examples of classic ethnographic films are Educating Peter (Home Box Office Project Knowledge, 1992), which shows the experiences of a boy with severe cognitive challenges in a regular classroom, and High School (Wiseman, 1969), a depiction of life in a comprehensive high school in the early 1970s. A more recent example is The Crash Reel (Walker & Cautherly, 2013), which presents a moving portrayal of world-class snowboarder Kevin Pearce—his triumphs, fierce competitiveness, and tragic accident.

However, the use of film, in its various forms, comes with certain challenges. Videos and pictures can appear to be “true” and “accurate” when the viewer is not mindful that the film was taken by an individual with her own positionality. What might be the professional subjectivity and interests of the filmmaker? Moreover, good-quality equipment can be expensive,
and most research budgets are quite modest. And production can be problematic, especially in creating a smooth final product—a flowing video or collage of photographs interspersed with text and, perhaps, music. The researcher may need technical expertise, although there is now software, such as Pinnacle Studio 12, that helps even novice researchers produce high-quality videos. Historically, videos and photographs were not easily included in a book, journal article, or dissertation, but this has changed in recent years. Many journals accept—even encourage—the inclusion of images in an article. Moreover, dissertations and other academic works are increasingly required to be submitted electronically, making the inclusion of images quite simple (although consuming more bytes).

**Ethical Issues With Videos and Photographs**

Do the participants know that photos or videos are being made? Are they fully aware? And most important, have they given their consent to be represented in a photo or video? Especially problematic with visual representations of people is the recurring question of protecting their identities. Furthermore, these representations, once digitized, may spread without the researcher's knowledge. Institutional review boards are increasingly requiring that the use of photos be explicitly outlined in an informed consent form. In the proposal, the researcher should indicate how she will protect the identities of the participants, scrupulously, and how well she is prepared to use these media ethically and sensitively.

**Using the Arts for Data Collection**

*By Rachael B. Lawrence*

As stated earlier (Chapter 2), the arts can inform any step within qualitative research design (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Knowles & Cole, 2008). Much of the writing on arts-informed inquiry focuses on the production and presentation of knowledge in the form of fine art, literary, or other artistic creations, but the arts can be used to generate and collect data. Arts-informed data may help address a wide variety of research questions, such as, “How do children interpret an experience?” and “How did this change over time?” and many more. The generative and creative nature of these data can inform research questions in ways not possible through text alone. The arts can be used for data collection in two main ways: data drawn from observation and interaction with artworks, and art generated by the researcher or participants to inform research questions. Additionally, the arts can be used to help map ideas or concepts during data collection.

Here are a few examples of how qualitative researchers can use the arts in data collection. Data on interacting with the arts:

- Transcribing an “interview” of a piece of art (Sullivan, 2010, p. 204)
- Transcribing thinking in reaction to a work of art (Sullivan, 2010, p. 205)
- Quantifying and categorizing objects contained within a work of art (Rose, 2012)
- Interviewing participants on their interpretations of photographs (Laplenta, 2011)
Arts created for data collection purposes:

- Rephotography to document change over time (Rieger, 2011)
- Collection of images, paintings, screenshots, and other arts objects (Rose, 2012)
- Participatory arts (drama, painting, collage) in reaction to participants' lived experience (O'Neill, 2012)
- Sketching for visual memory (Sullivan, 2010)
- Collecting drawings created by children (Ganesh, 2011)
- Visual anthropology (MacDougall, 2011)
- Photo diaries (Chaplin, 2011)
- Cartography of studied communities (Grasseni, 2012)

Arts for mapping concepts or ideas:

- Cartographic mapping of concepts, relationships, or policies (Butler-Kisber, 2010)

This list is by no means exhaustive but provides a starting point from which a researcher can generate novel approaches to gathering data to inform research questions.

**Ethical Issues in Arts-Based Data Collection**

When gathering media created by someone else, whether it be an artistic medium, a fictive story, or interpretation of a photograph, ownership of the data is a key ethical concern for the researcher (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Working with film and photography brings additional ethical concerns for her; if a work is taken out of context or placed in an unintended context, the potential for embarrassment or misunderstanding of participants' intentions arises (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Do participants fully understand how you intend to use their art (or words about art), and do you have their permission? These are essential considerations when engaging in this type of data collection.

**Interaction Analysis**

**Interaction analysis** is an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the interactions among and between people and their environments in naturally occurring settings. The focus of many interaction analysis studies is on “human activities such as talk, nonverbal interaction, and the use of artifacts and technologies, identifying routine practices and problems and the resources for their solution” (Jordan & Henderson, 1995, p. 39). The approach has emerged from ethnography (with its focus on participant observation), sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology (the study of the methods people use to accomplish ordered social interactions), conversation analysis, kinesics (the study of how nonverbal gestures, posture, and movement send communicative messages), and proxemics (the study of how people interact in terms of their spatial relationship to each other).

What distinguishes interaction analysis as a specialized method is its reliance on video and audio recording and a noninterventionist stance toward the collection of data. Thus, those employing interaction analysis seek to unobtrusively observe naturally occurring interactions,
record them on tape, and subsequently analyze those recordings through a particular analytic lens. What typically does not occur in interaction analysis is direct talk—interviewing—with participants in the setting chosen for study. First used as a method for studying small groups in organizations in the 1920s, interaction analysis gained prominence as a method for observing classrooms (Rex & Green, 2008; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs, & McEachen, 2002; Rex, Steadman, & Graciano, 2006) and for aiding teacher training (Flanders, 1970). Recently, it has been used in research on couples to develop coding systems that can powerfully analyze an ongoing stream of dyadic behaviors (Baucom & Kerg, 2004). Power dynamics are revealed with interaction analysis in micropolitical studies of organizations such as school boards, state legislatures, employment agencies, and corporations, as well as in street gangs and on playgrounds. One can see how conflicts are resolved, how dominance is maintained, and how ideologies are imposed (Corson, 1995).

Because interaction analysis has been widely used in education, specifically in studies of classroom interaction, we discuss this strand and then briefly describe kinesics and proxemics because of their generative historical role in the development of interaction analysis.

**Classroom Interaction Analysis**

With a long history drawing on multiple disciplines, classroom interaction analysis has tended to focus on the language in use in classrooms and how these interactions reflect, reproduce, and shape wider social processes such as the power dynamics of class, race, and gender. While interaction analysis has diverse strands, studies typically “examine behaviors and strategies used by teachers and students . . . [and how these] correlate with student performance measures or student learning indices” (Rex & Green, 2008, p. 571). Researchers typically rely on videotaping and audiotaping to produce a permanent record of the interactions of interest. Representative of studies in this genre is the work of Rex et al. (2002), who studied the stories that teachers tell in classrooms, using videotaping as the primary method for gathering data. They argue that the frequency, duration, and kinds of stories that teachers tell and the occasions on which they tell them shape the norms for how students think they need to present themselves, what students count as knowledge, and how students display achievement in their classroom (p. 768). Rex and her graduate assistant took daily videos of classroom “talk”; they then coded these, noting “teachers’ use of narrative-like constructions when addressing their classes” (p. 773). The theoretical notions that this research was embedded in helped frame their analyses.

Another relatively new development in interaction analysis, broadly construed, is gesture research in classrooms. This research focuses on ways gestures contribute to meaning making in the teaching–learning interaction. The assumption here is that gestures and other paralinguistic movements convey substantial meaning that may enhance or detract from the explicit verbal message (also see the subsection on kinesics below). Work in this domain has focused on learning science concepts and skills among middle school students (Singer, Radinsky, & Goldman, 2008) and on learning algebra concepts (Alibali & Nathan, 2007).

One strength of interaction analysis is that a permanent record is obtained through video and audio recording; this helps preserve the original data but does raise ethical issues (discussed below). Depending on how tightly focused the analytic categories are, the method
can produce quantifiable data, should this be desired. Interaction analysis may be particularly useful for testing out patterns that were identified in early participant observations or interviews.

Clearly, interaction analysis is only as generative as the categories used to focus the observations. When these are culturally biased, too reflective of the researcher’s prejudgments, or not well designed for the setting, the categories may not be particularly fruitful. Two well-developed “grandparents” of interaction analysis broadly construed—kinesics and proxemics—offer examples of finely focused analyses. We discuss these below.

**Ethical Issues in Interaction Analysis**

The ethical issues that arise when conducting interaction analyses center on protection of and respect for the persons participating in the research. In today’s age, as mentioned before, when digitized data are never fully deleted from a computer, disk, or jump drive, protecting participants from future unwarranted or even harmful use of the data is problematic. Hacking into computers and cybersleuthing have become daily events; therefore, the protection of the data—and, more important, the participants—is of paramount concern. Furthermore, the temptation to use video segments when presenting research findings is seductive but might well violate promises made to participants about ensuring their anonymity. This would be especially true for children—as in classroom interaction analysis—and other vulnerable populations.

We now turn to a brief discussion of kinesics and proxemics—two generative methods that are closely linked to interaction analysis.

**Kinesics**

Learning about society can be enhanced if we study not only what people say but also what their body movements and other subtle, nonverbal cues reveal; this is the working assumption behind **kinesics**, which is the study of body motion, including nonverbal gestures and postures, and their communicative messages. Movement is analyzed systematically so researchers can identify and interpret significant patterns in communication events.

The classic work of Birdwhistell (1970) asserted that nonverbal body behaviors function like significant sounds and combine like words into single or relatively complex units. Body movements ranging from a single nod of the head to a series of hand and leg gestures can attach additional meaning to spoken words. (Remember these gestures when transcribing an interview.) Kinesics research rests on the assumption that individuals are unaware of being engaged constantly in adjustments to the presence and activities of other persons. People modify their behavior and react verbally and nonverbally. Their nonverbal behavior is influenced by culture, gender, age, and other factors associated with psychological and social development.

However, correctly understanding just what these body movements mean is the main challenge in using kinesics. Novice body readers who have a “pop-psych” understanding of the science of kinesics may make incorrect, and perhaps damaging, interpretations of behavior. But note the wide popularity of *Blink* (Gladwell, 2005). On his website, the author states that this book is
about rapid cognition, about the kind of thinking that happens in a blink of an eye. When you meet someone for the first time, or walk into a house you are thinking of buying, or read the first few sentences of a book, your mind takes about two seconds to jump to a series of conclusions. Well, “Blink” is a book about those two seconds, because I think those instant conclusions that we reach are really powerful and really important and, occasionally, really good. (Gladwell, n.d.)

We also note here the development since the 1960s of the method of “microexpression,” developed and elaborated by Ekman and his colleagues (see, e.g., Ekman, Campos, Davidson, & de Waal, 2003; Ekman & Friesen, 1975). This extension and elaboration of the basic principles of kinesic analysis has focused on microexpressions, which are involuntary, fleeting facial expression that, the authors argue, occur when one is trying to conceal an emotion. As developed by Ekman and his colleagues (2003), analysis of these fleeting, microsecond expressions may reveal when the individual is lying. Their analyses formed the basis for the Fox series Lie to Me (2009–2011), in which the central character was based on Ekman.

One strength of kinesic analysis is that it provides another perspective on interactions in specific settings. With caution, a researcher may be more confident about the integrity of the data provided by an interview partner if the speaker's body language is congruent with his words. Also, she can monitor her own nonverbal behavior to clarify messages sent to the research participant and to stay in touch with her feelings during data collection.

Kinesic analysis has limitations, however, because the meanings conveyed in specific body movements or gestures are certainly not universal; researchers must be aware of cultural differences. Gestures signal different meanings in different cultures. In some countries, moving the head up and down signifies no, and moving it from side to side means yes. Body movements should be interpreted very tentatively and with exquisite sensitivity to the context.

Proxemics

Another classic example of the analysis of interaction, proxemics is the study of people's use of space in relation to their cultures and environments. The term was developed by Hall (1966), although he did not perform the original work in this area. Many studies have been conducted on human activities in bars, airports, subways, elevators, and other public places where individuals have to deal with one another in a limited space. Using proxemics, the researcher focuses on how space is defined and managed, from interpersonal distance to the arrangement of furniture and architecture. Anthropologists, for example, have used proxemics to determine the territorial customs of cultures. Proxemics has been useful in the study of the behavior of students in the classroom and of marital partners undergoing counseling.

There are several strengths to the use of proxemics. It is unobtrusive, and, usually, it is difficult for a research participant to mislead the observer deliberately. As with kinesics, because proxemics focuses on nonverbal behavior, participants would have to be skillful to “lie” about their feelings. Proxemics is useful for studying the way individuals react to the invasion of their territory. Likewise, proxemics can be used in cross-cultural studies, because people's use of personal space varies greatly from one culture to the next. Finally, proxemic analysis is useful
for studies in areas such as the effect of seating arrangements on student behavior or the effect of crowding on workplace productivity.

The greatest challenge with proxemics as a data collection method is that the researcher must be cautious when interpreting the observed behaviors. If she is observing a conference or a business meeting, the manner in which the participants take their seats can be of vital importance for shaping the decisions that emerge in the meeting, but the data must be interpreted carefully. When used exclusively, proxemics could be misleading, because the researcher's analysis might suggest relationships that do not exist. Proxemics, however, can provide fresh insights into a social group or interactions when coupled with other methods.

**Ethical Issues in Proxemics**

The ethical issues that arise when using proxemics as a method of data gathering center on informed consent and representation. If researchers are observing people in large, public spaces, such as airports or shopping malls, is it ethical to do so without their informed understanding? Are public spaces “exempt” from the ethical considerations of research with humans? And how does the researcher “represent” these individuals without making unwarranted assumptions about their social class, ethnicity, and the like? These are all considerations that need to be pondered at the proposal stage when using proxemics.

### Dilemma Analysis

**Dilemma analysis** focuses on research participants’ reactions to situations that have no right answers—that is, dilemmas. The method can be used as a focused part of interviewing, particularly to get at the core of the interviewee's processes of thinking, assessing, valuing, and judging. It has been refined primarily in developmental psychology; however, it can be adapted wherever the research focuses on moral issues and practical decision-making processes. We describe two common types.

The first, the *hypothetical, researcher-generated dilemma*, is the most common. Several research participants are given a standardized dilemma and asked what they would do and what would guide their decision making. The famous example devised by Kohlberg (1981) elicited research participants’ moral reasoning in response to the so-called Heinz dilemma. In this dilemma, Heinz's wife has a terminal illness, and the only way to obtain a life-saving drug is to break a biblical commandment: violate someone's property, commit a crime, or steal the drug. Kohlberg used this method to generate theory on moral development. Shortly afterward, Gilligan (1982) critiqued Kohlberg's theory and methodology, arguing that the theory was gender biased because his samples were college-age men. She devised data collection strategies that were more contextualized and more attuned to real lives, as well as ones that focused on women. As a result, she reached very different conclusions about moral development. The real-life, researcher-generated dilemma uses a real crisis—from history or from typical workplace or family life situations—and asks for research participants’ choices and the thoughts and feelings surrounding those choices.

The second, the *real-life, respondent-generated dilemma*, encourages research participants to describe the most difficult or heart-wrenching choices they have made, for example, while...
growing up, at work, or in their families. Thus, the situations are generated in a more naturalistic fashion. Although they are focused, they are closer to a straightforward interview, allowing respondents, at least to some extent, to choose what to focus on. For example, Marshall (1992, 1993; Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, & Steele, 1996) asked assistant principals to describe a situation that, in the past 2 years, had created ethical dilemmas for them in their workplaces. She guided them through standard questions to probe the parameters affecting the choices they made. In the interviews, telling the stories in depth to a sympathetic, nonjudgmental ear seemed cathartic for the assistant principals. The rich data included stories of denying services to students because of policy, firing teachers, turning down promotions to avoid upsetting their family stability, and so on. While the interviews were wonderfully rich with personal context, pulling them together in data analysis and reporting was no easy task.

Dilemma analysis can be fascinating, as it may elicit interviewees’ deepest thinking and moral reasoning processes. Commonly focusing on one interviewee at a time, it produces a thematic coherence that does not depend on academic theories or hunches of the researcher (Winter, 1982). It opens doors to innermost thoughts and can be designed to collect standardized data across several interviewees. Real-life, researcher-generated dilemmas, if well constructed and using insights from previous research, can be very useful, especially for focusing and standardizing data collection, when appropriate. Gathering data through real-life dilemmas is often enjoyable. People like to recount poignant, heroic, and angst-provoking situations—when they are in the past and when they believe that they have created an adequate resolution. However, dilemma analysis can be dilemma laden, too. As in the Heinz example, people may not take the situation seriously, and the data may well reflect this. Also, the choice of a dilemma and the interview questions may be skewed to shape the choices and thus produce “interesting” data. In addition, the very personalized data elicited from real-life but respondent-generated dilemmas may be difficult to interpret and to compare with other data.

**Ethical Issues in Dilemma Analysis**

The ethical issues that may arise using dilemma analysis center on the potential for reasoning through thorny circumstances to elicit strong emotional reactions. This may be particularly true for the respondent-generated dilemma when uncovering problematic circumstances—ones that may still be raw and sore—elicits tears or anger from participants. At the proposal stage, the researcher should articulate how she might handle such situations, with respect for the persons and sensitivity to their emotional reactions.

* * * * *

The above discussions provide a mosaic of various specialized methods that a qualitative researcher might choose to implement to generate useful and insightful data. As we have noted throughout, it is quite common for a qualitative study to draw on more than one method. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 offer criteria for assessing the usefulness and challenges of building one of these methods into a proposal. We then discuss some key considerations in combining methods and use two vignettes to illustrate the choices and decisions to be made at the proposal stage.
Table 7.2  Strengths of Specialized Data Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IDA</th>
<th>PVA</th>
<th>IA</th>
<th>DA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fosters face-to-face interactions with participants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for uncovering participants' perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collected in a natural setting.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates immediate follow-up for clarification.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable for documenting major events, crises, and conflicts.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for learning about participants' unconscious thoughts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for describing complex interactions.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for obtaining data on nonverbal behavior and communication.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates discovery of nuances in culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides for flexibility in formulating working hypotheses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides information on context.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates analysis, validity checks, and triangulation.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages cooperation and collaboration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data are easy to work with and categorize for analysis.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtains large amounts of data quickly.</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows wide ranges of types of data and participants.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy and efficient to administer and manage.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily quantifiable and amenable to statistical analysis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to establish generalizability or usefulness for other settings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May draw on established instruments.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expands access to distant participants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** X = Strength exists; D = Depends on use; IDA = Internet and digital applications; PVA = Photos, video, the arts; IA = Interaction analysis; DA = Dilemma analysis.
Table 7.3  Challenges in Using Specialized Data Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IDA</th>
<th>PVA</th>
<th>IA</th>
<th>DA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leads researcher to fixate on details.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible misinterpretations due to cultural differences.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires technical training.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on cooperation of key individuals.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readily open to ethical dilemmas.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to replicate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data more affected by researcher presence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive materials and equipment.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can cause discomfort or even danger to researcher.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too dependent on participant openness/honesty.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too artistic an interpretation undermines the research.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on power of initial research questions.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on researcher’s interpersonal skills.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: X = Challenges exists; D = Depends on use; IDA = Internet and digital applications; PVA = Photos, video, the arts; IA = Interaction analysis; DA = Dilemma analysis.

Combining Data Collection Methods

Many qualitative studies combine several data collection methods over the course of the study, as seen in Shadduck-Hernandez’s (1997) proposal discussed in Vignette 20 (see Chapter 6). The researcher can assess the strengths and challenges of each method and then decide if that method will work with the questions and in the setting for a given study. In drafting a proposal, she should consider whether the method will provide good, rich data and be cost-effective and feasible in terms of the subtleties of the setting and the resources available for the study (the “do-ability”). As we have noted, the relative emphasis on participation and direct interaction suggests a focus on the primary methods discussed in Chapter 6. Judicious use of the secondary and specialized methods might, however, be quite generative in responding to the research questions. The rationale for their use should be integral to the overall argument in the proposal.

When considering the use of various methods, the researcher might usefully consider three questions; these can be applied to the overall research questions but are crucial in developing the design and methods section of the proposal. First, should a specific method be implemented in a more open-ended way, or should it be more tightly prefigured? Second,
how should the different methods be sequenced throughout a study (the ebb and flow)? And, third, should a method be implemented more broadly or more in depth? Combining various methods encourages the proposal writer to consider these questions. She will be well served by developing a clear (albeit flexible) plan for implementing various methods (interviewing and then observing or vice versa), for writing about whether the focus will be broad (many events, many participants) or more in depth (a few crucial events, a few individuals), and for making decisions about approaching interviews and observations, for example, with a wide-angle lens or a more focused one. Thinking through these issues of combining methods and articulating the reasoning behind the decisions is important for demonstrating that she has thought through these issues and has a clear plan in mind. The reviewers of a proposal that provides a strong level of elaboration for design and implementation choices will likely be pleased. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 list strengths and challenges in using specialized data collection methods.

We illustrate the above discussion with Vignette 21, which describes how a researcher selected data collection methods in a study about a long-term health care facility.

**Vignette 21  Choosing Data Collection Methods**

How might one’s view of life be shaped by residence in a long-term health care facility? A doctoral student in health care management (Kalnins, 1986) wanted to examine—in depth and in detail—the contexts, processes, and interactions that shaped patients’ perspectives. She reasoned that a qualitative approach would be most fruitful in picking up everyday actions and interactions about complex social structures.

From the variety of data collection strategies, she proposed a combination of direct observation, participant observation, and semistructured interviewing. Her beginning point would be direct observation of residents and staff in various areas of the facility, “witnessing events which particularly preoccupied the hosts, or indicated special symbolic importance to them” (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 59). This would allow her to get a holistic view and to gather data that would inform the interview process.

Kalnins’s (1986) plan as a participant observer would be to observe the residents and staff in the natural setting of the long-term health care facility, requiring her “commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their day-to-day experiences” (Denzin, 1970, p. 185). In her proposal, Kalnins anticipated that participant observation and interviewing would run concurrently, allowing data from each to be used to substantiate events, explore emerging hypotheses, and make further decisions about the conduct of the research. Her role as participant observer would mean that Kalnins would become immersed in the lives and activities of those she was studying. She understood the interactive–adaptive nature of participant observation, reflecting the complex relationship between field observation and emerging theory, and the impact of this relationship on decisions about further data collection. Her decisions about the data to be collected and methods for collecting them would be guided by Wilson’s (1977) list of five relevant types of data employed to get at meaning structures: (1) the form and content of verbal interaction between participants; (2) the form and content of their verbal interaction with the researcher; (3) nonverbal behavior; (4) patterns of actions and nonaction; and (5) traces, archival records, artifacts, and documents (p. 255).
To generate facts, opinions, and insights (Yin, 2014), Kalnins (1986) planned for open-ended structured interviews (using questionnaires) that would enable the exploration of many topics but could focus on cultural nuances; firsthand encounters; and the perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of others. Information would also be gathered from various documents and archives, lending a historical perspective to the study.

Vignette 21 illustrates how a researcher chose an array of data collection methods, knowing that each method had particular strengths and that each would help elicit certain desired information. It shows that data collection strategies and methods cannot be chosen in a vacuum. Intensively examining the possible methods; trying them out; examining their potential; and fitting them to the research question, site, and sample are important design considerations. In addition, researchers should consider their own personal abilities to successfully implement any particular overall approach or method. Thus, the proposal should convince the reviewer that she is capable of selecting, refining, and implementing data collection methods that are appropriate, well thought out, and thorough. As discussed in Chapter 1, demonstrating competence with methods is a central part of the do-ability of a study. As we have noted throughout, however, a challenge at the proposal stage is retaining flexibility in the design and implementation of the study—one of the hallmarks of qualitative inquiry. The reality is that the research questions may change as the research progresses; in response, the specific methods used may need to change to pursue the intriguing new directions. The researcher is challenged to reserve this flexibility. Vignette 22 provides an example that is fictitious but based on experiences similar to those of our graduate students.

Vignette 22  Design Flexibility

A graduate student, Rodriguez, wanted to explore the implementation of a state mandate for local school councils. He first proposed participant observation of meetings and in-depth interviews with board members. The data collection plan showed a schedule for observing the meetings, goals for interviewing, and a time allowance for analysis of data and follow-up data collection. But in the process of initial data collection and preliminary analysis, he discovered that teacher resentment of the councils was creating a pattern of unintended negative consequences. This discovery could have important implications for policy development. Did Rodriguez have to stay with the original question and data collection plan? Wouldn’t a design alteration offer important insights?

Rodriguez reasoned that if he could describe the processes whereby well-intended policy is thwarted, policymakers could gain insight that might help them make timely alterations in policy development or implementation. Given this possible benefit to the study, he could choose to focus subsequent data collection on the conflicts between teacher needs and the mandate to school boards to implement councils. This would require him to turn to additional literatures on, for example, teacher needs, teacher participation in decision making, or teacher unions. He might also need to employ additional data collection methods (e.g., surveying teacher needs, observing teacher union meetings, and doing historical
research on the reactions of teacher lobbies to mandates for school councils), or he might need to sample additional settings or people. As the research question became more focused, his initial research design and data collection strategy would most likely undergo some changes.

In the example in Vignette 22, the research proposal probably did not include a plan for analysis of lobbying efforts or observation of collective bargaining sessions. It would, however, be entirely appropriate—indeed, recommended—for the researcher to modify the research proposal if an exciting and significant focus emerged from early data collection. In fact, the primary strength of the qualitative approach is this very flexibility, which allows—even encourages—exploration, discovery, and creativity.

Along with choosing appropriate strategies for data collection, the researcher should address the complex processes of managing, recording, and analyzing data. These processes are not discrete, sequential events but occur dialectically throughout the conduct of a qualitative study: Analysis occurs as themes are identified, as the deeper structures of the social setting become clear, and as consequent modifications are made in the initial design. At the proposal stage, however, she should present some initial ideas about how the data will be managed and stored, and provide some preliminary discussion of the processes for analyzing those data. We discuss these issues in the next chapter.

Dialogue Between Authors

Gretchen: Wow—the whole array of somewhat more specialized and focused methods has just exploded. I find it a bit overwhelming, at times, but my students keep me on my toes! And I’m very pleased with the short sections that our students have written—they are very current about the various literatures.

Catherine: Still, I can pick some I love to use, such as dilemma analysis. And I am intrigued with the idea of using video and Internet and digital, but I admit that I’ve never used these approaches to data collection.

Gretchen: And I find using various arts-informed approaches fascinating. I need to delve more deeply into some examples of studies grounded in these approaches. More to do!

Dialogue Between Learners

Dear Keren,

These discussions of methods bring me back to the design process, during which I thought so deeply about which research techniques to use in my dissertation research. I had to balance considerations of what would be most insightful with the practicalities of my own limitations.
I also admit that I was interested in learning new tools so I might use them in the future. For instance, I wanted to learn about privileging student voices, so I tried a photo-elicitation technique that provided students with cameras to take photographs. They then explained these photographs in subsequent focus-group conversations. While the implementation of the technique was certainly not perfect, I found this method intriguing and the results useful for corroborating other information I collected. It was also a good way to prompt discussions with children.

Nonetheless, I wonder if you ever feel overwhelmed with the various methods possible. I often worry that I might be trying to do too much and, perhaps more important, that in using multiple methods, I might miss their points of intersection. I also found that while I might have envisioned relying more heavily on one technique than another, once at site, things might change quite drastically. For instance, during my fieldwork, I planned focus groups with teachers only to find out that they preferred individual meetings. Thank goodness that qualitative research is flexible enough to accommodate all these changes!

Looking forward to your comments!

Karla

***

Karla,

I’m really enjoying our mini conversations, and they help me become even more reflexive in my work!

Since I am now in the process of developing my research proposal, the discussion on choice of data collection method or methods is very timely for me. This is an especially salient issue since some of the data I want to collect are quantitative—I want to juxtapose my qualitative inquiry with some numbers reported by international organizations such as the World Bank. This is challenging, and I’m still not sure how I will do it properly. Regarding qualitative data collection, I initially envisioned interviews and elite interviews as the only methods I would use, but now I think observing daily interactions and even attending staff meetings could be revealing for my research.

For the past 2 years I have been serving as the TA in Catherine’s field techniques class, and the more I learn about the various methods the more I want to experience using them. My challenge is of course to come up with good reasoning in the research proposal for whatever method I decide to use. The reflective nature of qualitative research is echoed, in my opinion, in the initial processes of developing a research question and deciding on data collection methods.

Take care,

Keren
FURTHER READING

The Internet and Digital Applications

Selwyn, N. (2002). Telling tales on technology: The ethical dilemmas of critically researching educational computing. In T. Welland & L. Pugsley (Eds.), Ethical dilemmas in qualitative research (pp. 42–56). Hants, UK: Ashgate.
Seymour, W. S. (2001). In the flesh or online? Exploring qualitative research methodologies. *Qualitative Research, 1*(2), 147–168.


**Software and Applications**

ATLAS.ti (Version 7.0 for Windows) [Computer software]. Trial copy available at http://www.atlasti.com


Dedoose (Version 4.5) [Web application]. Los Angeles, CA: SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC. Available at http://www.dedoose.com


**Multimodal Approaches**


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_ Advances in the visual analysis of social movements: Research in social movements, conflicts and change_. Bingley, UK: Emerald Press.


Arts


Interaction Analysis, Proxemics, and Kinesics


Dilemma Analysis


Some of Our Favorites


---

**KEY CONCEPTS**

- data gathering
- dilemma analysis
- gesture research
- interaction analysis
- Internet ethnography
- kinesics
- microexpressions
- multimodal inquiry
- photographs
- proxemics
- videos